

## IMAGES AND SYMBOLS

Keep moving, keep moving!

We have not arrived.

(Faiz Ahmed Faiz: *Freedom's Dawn*: 1986 : 31)

Yeats believed that "nations, races and individual men are unified by an image, or bundle of related images" (1966 : 194). So, he set out to create images embodying whatever was "permanent and exalted in the Irish imagination, to bring about a renaissance of vision that would restore Unity of Being to Ireland and spread from Ireland through Europe" (Stock: 1961 : 238). It was not an easy task. Yet his conviction led him on. Through images and symbols he wanted to say things which could not be said so effectively in any other way. He said, "Day after day I sat in my chair turning a symbol over in my mind, exploring all its details, defining and again defining its elements, testing my conventions and those of others by its unity, attempting to substitute particulars for an abstraction like that of algebra" (1937: 301). There has been a great deal of discussion on the effect of symbolism on Yeats's poetry, treatises on how Yeats had been entranced by Hérodiadés address to some sibyl who may have been her nurse and also the moon. The researcher's contention in this chapter is that many of the images and symbols used by Yeats in his poetry not only had strong roots in national tradition, but also stimulated and ordered Irish nationalism.

Irish mythology and folklore provided Yeats a rich treasury

from which he could derive his images and symbols. Unlike Mallarmé, Yeats had a "definite nationalistic motive and his images are rooted deeply in national traditions and legends" (Chatterjee: 1962 : 62). Yeats wanted the Irish to recreate the ancient arts, history and legends in all their art forms. The images that were derived from Celtic myths and legends created a mysterious and eerie atmosphere. They emphasized the Celtic belief in magic, superstition and the supernatural. "Somehow, it was felt, the creative artist must recapture a certain magical quality, a richness of imagery, a deep sense of primeval forces, a large order of aesthetic experience" (Chase: 1969 : 110). Therefore, Yeats used the image of the Sidhe, the fierce horsemen who rode from mountain to mountain, from the farthest corner of Knocknarea to the extreme peak of Ben Bulbin. They were sometimes considered to be the gods of ancient Ireland, the Tuatha de Danaan, or the Tribes of the goddess Dana, or the Sidhe, from Aes Sidhe or Sluagh Sidhe. Sidhe is also Gaelic for wind; the Sidhe were supposed to journey in whirling winds, the winds that were called the dance of the daughters of Herodias in the Middle Ages. When the old Irishmen from the countryside saw the leaves whirling on the roads, they blessed themselves instinctively. They believed that the Sidhe or the gods were passing by. It is interesting to note that the typical Celtic word for wind was "Sidhe". The mythic symbols represent certain values in Yeats's poetry. Juxtaposing complex ideas, they are charged with intense feeling. "In them every part is the whole, and every specimen represents the species, and these appear not so much as symbols as such, as sacred objects, places or being, and their import felt as an

inherent power" (Cassirer: 1946 : 388).

The "white deer with no horns", the "hound with one red ear" and the "boar without bristles" have Irish connotations. In the old Irish story of Oisín's journey to the Island of the Young, Oisín sees amid the waters a hound with one red ear following a deer with no horns. This hound and this deer seem plain images of the "desire of the man 'which is for the women', and 'the desire of the woman which is for the desire of the man', and of all desires that are as these" (Yeats: 1993 : 526). The boar without bristles comes out of the west (68); the Irish considered the west to symbolize darkness and death. The west, associated with sunset, was also taken as the region of "fading and dreaming things" (Jeffares: 1984 : 57). The north is usually symbolic of night and sleep. But Yeats added a different dimension to this commonplace symbol. In the notes attached to the "Poems" (1895), he associated the north with the Fomoroh. The Fomorians were the ancestors of the evil fairies according to the belief of many Gaelic writers. Yeats held that the Fomoroh were the powers of death, darkness, cold and evil generated from the northern territories. Yeats categorically said that he was following "much Irish and other mythology, and the magical tradition in associating ... the east, the place of sunrise with hope, and the south, the place of the sun when at its height, with passion and desire ..." (qtd. in Jeffares: 1984 : 57).

Fergus, the king with endless achievements, was transformed to a symbol to suggest nonchalance or forsaking of earthly, material

pursuits and power. The speaker in "Who goes with Fergus?" seeks to lure the youth and the maiden into a region of dreams, over which Fergus reigns:

Young man, lift up your russet brow,  
And lift your tender eyelids, maid,  
And brood on hopes and fear no more.

(Yeats: 1993 : 49)

The imagery of escape has a dual aspect. It definitely suggests a region of calm and joy. It appears to be an invitation into the Ireland of the past. But the world that Fergus governs is one where he "rules the brazen cars" and "the shadows of the wood". The "white breast of the dim sea" and the "dishevelled wandering stars" of Fergus's world insinuate that there can be no diminution of desire nor of its frustration in this region, but only their unending continuance. It cannot, therefore, be an idealised territory.

"The Collar-Bone of a Hare" is an escape into an unknown territory. From the vantage point, the speaker can watch, as through a magic telescope, through a hole in the collar bone of a hare, worn thin by the lapping of water, the petty routine of the convention-ridden human world. The image of "the collarbone of a hare" was taken from a peasant story. Yeats recorded the story in *Mythologies* (1959):

... a peasant of the neighbourhood once saw the treasure  
[of the O' Byrnes]. He found the skin bone of a hare

lying on the grass. He took it up: there was a hole in it; he looked through the hole, and saw the gold heaped up under the ground. He hurried home to bring a spade, but when he got to the path again he could not find the spot where he had seen it. (87)

The mystery associated with the collar bone is also found in the carefree beggar's philosophy. Billy Byrne decides to sleep on "great-grandfather's battered tomb" (Yeats: 1994 : 154). Rosicross's tomb makes him dream of the "golden king and that wild lady", but this dream sends him back to life with renewed determination because he "cannot find the peace of home/on great-grandfather's battered tomb" (155). Billy Byrne's quest for the 'peace of home' may be equated to the poet's eternal quest for his homeland.

Yeats had read translations of Michael Comyn's poem *The Lay of Oisín in Tír-nán-óige*. He remarked that the legendary hero's journey to the country of the young could be seen as an "exemplum" of the rise and fall of life. He asked himself how the story could be related to himself and his nation. Comyn's account was modified to suit his purpose. In *The Wanderings of Oisín*, Oisín is sent to three islands: the Island of Living, the Island of Victories and the Island of Forgetfulness, representing 'vain gaiety', 'vain battle' and 'vain repose' respectively. The poem is full of symbols. Yeats admitted to Tynan:

In the second part of 'Oisín' under guise of symbolism I have said several things to which only I have the key.

The romance is for my readers. They must not even know there is a symbol anywhere. They will not find out. If they did it would spoil the art.

(1954 : 67)

Yeats's assumption proved to be wrong. Critics and readers have not only found out the symbols, but have also interpreted them variously. The three islands, for example, have been interpreted on several levels. On the primary level, they have been viewed literally as the islands of dancing, of victory and of states of forgetfulness. On the personal level they represent "Yeats's idyllic boyhood at Sligo, his subsequent fights with the English boys in west Kensington because he was Irish, and his day-dreaming adolescence at Howth" (Ellmann: 1953 : 18). They may also appear as periods of childhood, maturity and old age in the lives of all men. They have been accepted as symbols for three types of men: the lover, the active man and the contemplative man. The most pertinent point in this discussion is the fact that the beautiful, enchained lady whom Oisín has to liberate in the second island resembles Yeats's native land. The island itself is the oppressor or the tormenter, that is, England. The demon stands for the tyrannical English rule. In contrast is Oisín's "battles never done", or the long succession of the Irish struggle for independence.

Irish legend is mingled with the Civil War in Ireland to produce a unique image in Yeats's poetry:

When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side,  
What stalked through the Post Office? What intellect,

What calculation, number, measurement, replied?

(1993 : 375)

The past and the present merge in these lines. Ordinary symbols were given extra dimensions at times. For example, water signified not only transparency, but also a certain fruitfulness of the body and dreams of the peasants. The sea is still taken as the symbol of the "drifting indefinite bitterness of life", not only for the peasants but for all people. In contrast the wind, according to typical Gaelic belief, stands for vague desires and hopes.

Among Yeats's poems "The Two Titans" (1886) was subtitled "A Political Poem". Such a claim forces one to accept the sybil and the youth, bound to each other with a coiling chain, as representing England and Ireland respectively. "How Ferencz Renyi Kept Silent" which was first published in *The Pilot* in 1887 mentioned "Hungary of the West", that is, Ireland. Yeats wrote a short commentary on this poem in *United Ireland* which exhibited his patriotic interest in Hungary's struggle against Austria. He saw in this struggle an image of Ireland's strife against England. It has been said that Yeats's early poetry was one of escape: "... it is almost all a flight into fairyland from the real world" (Yeats: 1954 : 63). But one can see that the poetry is as much the poetry of the real world. The "Innisfree cabin" is not only the symbol of the world of Imagination. It also is an actual island cabin in Sligo. The collection of poems published in 1889 was called "Crossways". The title itself suggested that Yeats had arrived at a crossroad. It comprised of a few poems on Indian and Arcadian

themes on the one hand. On the other hand, it had some poems dealing with Irish themes. "Crossways" symbolizes the two paths trodden by Yeats, one English and the other Irish.

Besides folklore, Yeats was deeply interested in theories of the occult, from Rosicrucianism to spiritualism and mystical idealism of every type, including that of Plato and Plotinus. His attraction to "these cults and doctrines had many motivations, but one was overriding: a belief that they provided valuable clues to the unconscious life of mind and spirit and therefore to the sources of creative imagination" (Rosenthall: 38). We are, therefore, recurrently struck by Yeats's use of occult symbols.

In Yeats's poetry, the "Rose" has several implications. Treated in different contexts, it has multifarious significance. At times it becomes an occult symbol, associated with the secret cult of the Golden Dawn. Sometimes it symbolizes Maud Gonne, the vehement nationalist. In Irish patriotic poetry, "Rose" was the common place name of the typical Irish girl with black hair. Generally called "Róisín Dubh" or "Dark Rosaleen", she personified Ireland. In Yeats's poetry the Rose stands for Ireland too. In fact, the collection of poems called the "Rose" reflects Yeats's desire for synthesis: synthesis of his love for Maud Gonne and his occult researches, and his patriotic desire to isolate and liberate the Irish national spirit.

Yeats's study of Shelley and Blake, and his initiation into a Rosicrucian and Kabbalistic society resulted in the composition of

many lyrics linked together by the complex symbols of "Rose" and "Tree", with their multiple meanings. He explained some of the associations of the "Rose" in poetry, religion and the occult sciences. From the works of Blavatsky, Yeats learned that the Anima Mundi or the reservoir of all that has touched mankind, may be evoked by symbols. He received the doctrine of correspondences from Swedenborg. The doctrine of magical incantation and symbols which have power over spiritual and material reality was derived from Eliphas Levi. Boehme provided the idea of signatures. The Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus informed him that "things below are as things above" (Tindall: 1956 : 46). The symbolic ritual of the Rosicrucians confirmed these ideas.

The Rose had a very close association with the doctrine and ritual of the Golden Dawn. The members of the society were informed about the Sephirotic tree of life, the seven planets, the sphinx and the symbols of the four elements on initiation. The candidates of the fourth grade were called the "Unicorns from the Stars". They learned the tenet of correspondences between the microcosm and the macrocosm. They were permitted to inhale the perfume of a rose. The higher initiates were allowed to perform a symbolic ritual centred round the Rose of Ruby and the Cross of Gold. They were also called the "fadeless Rose of Creation" and the "Immortal Cross of Light" or Life itself. They symbolised ecstasy and suffering on the one hand, and union with god on the other. In the vault of initiation there was a rose on the ceiling, a rose with a cross on the floor, and

the vault itself was lit with the ray of a luminous mystic rose. Father Christian Rosenkreutz, the founder of the order regarded the rose as a central symbol in the society. In the Rosicrucian doctrine, a conjunction of a rose with four leaves and a cross formed a fifth element, in addition to the basic four elements. This conjunction signified an esoteric marriage. As a member of the Golden Dawn, Yeats had a first hand knowledge of these associations attached to the primary symbol of the Rose. The rose and the cross had been used together as a symbol of the conjoining of the body and soul, life and death, sleep and waking and other dichotomies in *The Shadowy Waters*. "The Rose of Battle" has an occult aspect. The "Rose of all Roses, Rose of all the World" (Yeats: 1993 : 42) symbolizes god's side in the contention of spirit against matter. This rose inspires occultists and also those who have failed in their endless battle with the materialists. The rose in "To the Rose Upon the Rood of Time" is more complex. It implies the Rosicrucian rose and also the power of the creative imagination.

The Rose gathers many subsidiary meanings in Yeats's poetry: physical and spiritual, pagan and Christian. Yeats said:

I planned a mystical order ... and for ten years to come my most impassioned thought was a vain attempt to find philosophy and to create ritual for that order. I had an unshakable conviction, arising how or whence I cannot tell, that invisible gates would open as they opened for Blake, as they opened for Swedenborg, as

they opened for Boehme, ... that this philosophy would find its manuals of devotion in all imaginative literature and set before Irishmen for special manual an Irish literature which, though made by many minds, would seem the work of a single mind, and turn over places of beauty or legendary association into holy symbols. I did not think this philosophy would be altogether pagan, for it was plain that its symbols must be selected from all those things that had moved men most during many, mainly Christian, centuries.

(1956 : 253-4)

The rose was the flower sacred to Mother Mary and emblematic of Heaven in Dante. It was the flower that transformed the "golden ass" of Apuleius and admitted him into the fellowship of Isis. These religious associations were well known to Christian Ireland. Yeats made use of the pagan and Christian ideas in dealing with the Rose symbol.

Moreover, the "mystical order" included Maud Gonne who had seen a vision of a little temple which she intended "to make the centre of the mystical and literary movements" (Yeats: 1956 : 295). As an occult or magical symbol, the Rose had been impersonal. But by linking it to Maud Gonne, Yeats lent it a personal dimension. The symbol of the Rose therefore became even more complex than any ordinary ritual could imply. Yeats used it to mean much more than Father Rosenkreuz or MacGregor Mathers's implications.

The rose symbolizes earthly love in "The Rose of Peace", but it has more complicated associations in "The Rose of the World". A dual

level is presented: transient, earthly love and beauty; eternal, spiritual love and beauty. "The Rose of the World" is a complex love poem inspired by the poet's passion for Maud Gonne who gradually merges with other figures. First, Helen, the fatal woman whose beauty led to the destruction of Troy. Finally, Deirdre, the Irish counterpart, for the sake of whom "Usna's children" died. Yeats speculates that the woman is an embodiment of the Eternal Beauty which, in Plato as well as in the order of the Golden Dawn, was made coeval with God. She lingered by His seat before the advent of the archangels and the earthly creation. The lady symbolized by the rose is therefore a real lady of exquisite beauty and yet one who is wrapped in a mysterious and ethereal light.

Yeats feared a segregation between spirit and matter. The rose signified an integration or harmony of the self, world and spirit, which he translated as the "Unity of Being". It may be said that the red, proud and sad Rose invoked by Yeats is not only eternal beauty but also a compound of beauty and peace or beauty and wisdom. It cannot be equated with Shelley's concept of Intellectual Beauty for Yeats said: "... the quality symbolized as the Rose differs from the Intellectual Beauty of Shelley and of Spenser in that I have imagined it as suffering with man and not as something pursued and seen from afar" (1993 : 524). His contemplation of the Intellectual Beauty or the Red Rose of Heaven cannot stand in his way, says the poet in "To Ireland in the Coming Times". The Rose has been the inspiration of order and generous deeds in ancient Ireland and can still contribute to her

peace and tranquillity. This poem was the poet's answer to the accusing critics who alleged that Yeats tried to escape from the problems and political activities of contemporary Ireland. Yeats expressed his desire to be counted among the Irish poets who composed with a mission: to "sweeten Ireland's wrong" (1993 : 56). He considered himself to be no less patriotic than the other Irish national poets. His poems were, he believed, more hospitable to the visions of the mystics and the elements of nature. For the benefit of posterity, the poet had endeavoured to record his love and his dreams in a lucid manner.

The Rose had been used in many poems, both Gaelic and English, not merely in love poems but in addresses to Ireland. De Vere's "The little black rose shall be red at last" and Mangan's "Dark Rosaleen" were well known to Irishmen. Yeats identified the Rose with Ireland and suggested her liberation from bondage in "The Secret Rose". He felt the need of infinite sacrifice on the part of the Irish people, so that their "rose tree", symbolizing Ireland, could bloom radiantly again. Pearse and Connolly, two leaders of the Easter Rising, appear in the poem. They discuss the best way to bring about the liberation of their country. They feel that the national tree has become sapless and withered, partly because the people are wasting precious time in talks about a compromise with England. This cold-hearted attitude has led to national degradation. James Connolly suggests that the national rose tree has to be watered, nurtured carefully to make it green and rich once more. The water

that is needed at this crucial period is the blood of patriots. The Irishmen must determinedly come forward, shed their blood for the extrication of their country and for the restoration of her previous dignity.

Pearse and Connolly are no longer political leaders only, but "consecrated priests performing a mystic ritual, that of exorcising the Sacred Rose Tree of the Irish race and nation with a lustral liquid ... their own blood" (Loftus: 1964 : 82-83). The heroism of these men achieves more relevance because Yeats accepts them as part of his heroic symbolism of Ireland's greatness. They come to "rank alongside men like Parnell and, most fitting tribute of all, alongside Cuchulain" (Bushrui: 1982 : 118). Pearse and Connolly become symbolic in Yeats's design.

The Liberty Tree was a patriotic symbol in many countries. It was taken up by the United Irishmen in 1772. George Denis Zimmermann's compilation *Irish Political Street Ballads and Rebel Songs* included a ballad that may have influenced later poets:

A tree has been planted in Ireland,  
And watered with tears of the brave;  
By our great-grandsires it was nourished,  
Who scorned to be held like the slaves.  
The trust they transported to their children,  
To keep it until they were free.  
And yearly the plant has grown stronger  
'Tis called 'Ireland's Liberty Tree'.

The tree, like the rose, has multiple meanings fused into it in Yeats's poems. From each context many ideas emerge to enrich the symbol, just as the symbol, in its turn, enriches the context. The tree symbol was initially derived by Yeats from his occult studies, but the patriotic associations were never forgotten.

"The Dedication to a Book of Stories Selected from the Irish Novelists" presents a contrast between the past and the present of Ireland with the help of a tree image. Once, in the past

There was a green branch hung with many a bell  
When her own people ruled this tragic Eire;  
And from its murmuring greenness, calm of Faery,  
A Druid kindness, on all hearers fell.

(Yeats: 1993 : 51)

The Druid with the symbolic "bell-branch" in hand could then captivate and pacify all classes of Ireland: "charm away the merchant from his guile" and turn "the farmer's memory from his cattle". The bards were "exiles wandering over lands and seas", always looking forward to the future: "planning, plotting always that some morrow/may set a stone upon ancestral sorrow!". The poet now bears a similar bell-branch, but it had been torn from the "green boughs" that the "winds tore and tossed/until the sap of summer had grown weary" (51). The condition in Ireland is no longer congenial. So the bell-branch has withered. Its power over the unreceptive audience is lost. The image of "barren boughs of Eire" suggests the predicament of the country. It has been transformed into a place where "a man can be so crossed/

can be so battered, badgered and destroyed" that he reduces to a "loveless man". In reference to 'tree' image vis-a-vis symbol, one can think of its uses in Indian religious literature like the *Upanishads* or even the *Bhagbad Gita*.

The image of the tree has a dual aspect in "The Lamentation of the Old Pensioner". The old man finds refuge from the rain under a tree, but the tree is a "broken tree". That is, it has lost its youthful vitality. On another level of interpretation, Yeats equates the old man with the broken tree that is symbolic of aridity and sterility: "There's not a woman turns her face/Upon a broken tree" (1993 : 52). The old man's intense defiance: "I spit into the face of time/That has transfigured me" (52), echoes the poet's vehement reaction to old age at a later time when he laments that "decrepit age" has "been tied to me/As to a dog's tail" (218).

Aengus "went out to the hazel wood" and "cut and peeled a hazel wand" (66). The bushy shrub of the birch family was considered to be the Irish tree of life and of knowledge. In Ireland hazel wood was generally associated with the trees of heaven.

The tree symbol reached singular dimension in "The Two Trees". The poem was written as an address to Maud Gonne:

Beloved, gaze in thine own heart,  
The holy tree is growing there. (1993 : 54)

The poem attempts to dissuade the lady from her frantic political

activities in Ireland. Yeats was aware of the conventional "Tree of Life" and the "Tree of knowledge"; goodness and divine energy as opposed to evil and abstraction. Kermode explained the "holy tree in Yeats's poem as the Tree of Life or Imagination" (1957 : 96). In addition to the traditional tree symbol, Yeats was also conscious of the Sephirothic Tree of the Kabbala. This tree involving occult aspects, had two sides, one benign and the other malign. On one side were the "Sephiroth", on the other the dead "Qlippoth". The Kabblists consider man to be a microcosm. The double natured tree is regarded as an image of the universe and the human mind, whose faculties, even the lowest, can work for good or evil. The central tent of the Kabbala is that two trees grow within the mind. One is of joy, spontaneity and beauty. The other is of dogma, pretence and inhumanity. The holy tree, at the beginning of the poem, symbolizes the organic unity of the world of the spirit. Rooted in quietness, it sends forth branches of joy. Its sap is love, both young and innocent. A woman who is so endowed naturally becomes the centre of love, affection and joy. In contrast is the tree of the outside world with its withered roots "half hidden under snow", its "broken boughs and blackened leaves" (Yeats: 1993 : 55). Through the broken branches circle "the ravens of unresting thought" with their "cruel claw and hungry throat" (55). They drain away the natural tenderness of the human heart and fill it with fury and resentment. Under their influence "the tender eyes grow all unkind" (55). Through the complex symbolism of the tree, the poet wanted to express his regret at the growing political fanaticism that he found in Maud Gonne. The tree

image links up the occult, the personal and the national aspects in Yeats's poetry.

In the "Blood and the Moon" Yeats referred to the "haughtier headed Burke that proved the State a tree" (1993 : 268). He said that Berkeley was the first to say that the world is a vision, and Burke the first to assert that the nation is a tree. Burke's passage on the Oak tree in *Reflections, Works II* inspired many of Yeats's ideas on the state. Therefore, the equation of nation-tree was very much known to Yeats. However, Torchiana showed that the symbol was used by Yeats in a speech given in 1893 and in another given in 1903-04: "A nation is like a great tree". This was before he had read Burke in great detail (1966 : 192-3).

The bird imagery in Yeats's poetry is not only dominant but also obsessive. In *The Wanderings of Oisín* its role is "structural rather than decorative" (Unterecker: 1969 : 65). Sometimes the bird image has occult associations. In the "Reveries over Childhood and Youth", Yeats referred to his sister's queer dream of holding a wingless sea-bird in her arms. Yeats interpreted this dream as symbolic of the mortal illness of a Pollexfen relative, for he believed "a sea bird is the omen that announces the death and danger of a Pollexfen" (1956 : 10). Yeats used the "visionary white sea bird" in "In Memory of Alfred Pollexfen", lamenting that "a man should die" (1993 : 177). The bird is not only symbolic of death but it is one that cries out against all mortality.

In her youth Constance Gore Booth had been similar to any "rock-bred, sea-borne bird":

... balanced on the air  
When first it sprang out of the nest  
Upon some lofty rock to stare  
Upon the cloudy canopy,  
While under its storm-beaten breast  
Cried out the hollows of the sea.

(1993 : 207)

The "grey-gull" that enters the prison window when this leader of the Easter Rising is imprisoned, becomes an image of her past life.

The "horrible green parrots" (242) linked to the "green-pated bird" (210) and the parrot that rages "at his own image in the enamelled sea" (15) represent the demoniacal forces that Yeats felt were threatening his family. They may be linked with the "Frustrators" or "the devilish things" he described in "A Prayer for my Son". These were also the "forces of disruption which constantly impeded his work on *A Vision*". (Unterecker: 1969 : 190).

"An Image from Past Life" refers to the "scream/From terrified beast or bird" (Yeats: 1993 : 200) that announces the arrival of the husband's "sweetheart from another life" (201) or an earlier incarnation. It is an "image of poignant recollection" (200) which frightens the young bride. *A Vision* (B) specifies the peacock's scream as a symbol denoting the end of a civilization (1937 : 268). This symbol has been used in Yeats's poetry with a similar connotation.

The swan appears to have two aspects in Yeats's poems. On the one hand, it suggests the "contemplative poet, and possibly the mystery and beauty of his transcendent vision" (Jackaman: 1978 : 82). Their legendary faithfulness makes them a symbol of eternal constancy. On the other hand, the swan appears to be trapped in the transient world of time, doomed to the "brief gleam", threatened with extinction in the "approaching night", singing its "swan-song" (83). The "fifty nine swans" in "The Wild Swans at Coole" have been variously interpreted. The uneven number of birds is popularly accepted as a symbol of loneliness. The swan itself was accepted in the course of time as a representative of the tranquil 'solitary soul'. Shapiro praised Yeats's "ineffable poetic mind" (Fox: 1988 : 55) for having found the "perfect prosodic number" (Shapiro: 1949 : 340-41). But the "number's success depends on more than its music" (Cashwell: 1969 : 84). The exact number becomes more significant in connection with the philosophical and thematic context. Puhvel suggests a relation between the poem's "theme of timelessness and eternity" and the "Thomas Rhymer" ballad (1986 : 30). The particular number may be directly linked to Yeats's view of the cyclic pattern of history. If one looks at the hour-minute-second wheel, the fifty-ninth marks the end of one cycle, and the next is the beginning of the second cycle. Therefore, fifty-nine may be symbolic, suggestive of a span of time or a unit of existence. It has been suggested that "joining October and twilight, this specific flock size represents the stillness of the moment just before a shift, the last segment of time before one goes out of what was and into what will be-for the post-

war world, for Ireland, for Coole Park, for the swans, for Yeats" (Fox: 1988 : 58).

Yeats saw a vision of noble ladies mounted on pure white "unicorns". This symbol had been used in his plays too. "I see Phantoms of Hatred" presented the second vision of a dark night, resonant with the flapping wings of brazen hawks. The hawks symbolized the fierce gaiety of tragic ruin, and also the straight path of logic and mechanism. The hawk has often been equated with the hero Cuchulain.

In Greek mythology "Kentauros" or centaur was a race of monsters, having the head, arms and torso of a man united to the body and legs of a horse. Yeats used the centaur as a symbol in his poem "On a Picture of a Black Centaur by Edmund Dulac". The centaur has been identified as Irish Culture by Unterecker and Yeats's Muse by Ellmann. Yeats himself said, "I thought all art should be a Centaur finding in the popular lore its back and its strong legs" (1956: 191). It may be said that Yeats made the centaur represent the progressive Irish nation.

"Weasels fighting in a hole" (Yeats: 1993 : 233) is a strong image taken from the Irish soil. It was a common feature in the woods at Coole. Lady Wilde's *Ancient Legends of Ireland* says that weasels are "spiteful and malignant" and sometimes "old, withered witches" took this form (179). Lady Gregory said that they were disliked by gamekeepers. The country people felt the need to behave well with

them for they were afraid of them. Infact, some people believed that they were "enchanted" and had a knowledge of all natural and supernatural things. The weasel is not only used as a symbol in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen", but also in *The Countess Cathleen*: "... though the whole land/squeal like a rabbit under a weasel's tooth". The slender, predacious carnivore also symbolizes a treacherous person or situation. "Weasel word" connotes something that weakens a statement by rendering it ambiguous or equivocal.

The warmth of Yeats was "for no abstract multitude but for Ireland, and for men and women he had loved for the greatness he found in them" (Stock: 1961 : 225). Living individuals were sometimes transformed into images by his poetic craft. His father symbolized gregarious aestheticism, his uncle George Pollexfen stood for introverted mysticism. Pollexfen was interested in astrology and symbolism. Yeats took his help and used MacGregor Mather's symbols to induce reveries. It was a kind of game (Yeats: 1956 : 258-60) in which they took the aid of Pollexfen's second-sighted servant, Mary Battle. These occult symbols were incorporated into Yeats's poetry.

Yeats said that once he had believed that a "woman's face" or "the seeming need of my fool-driven land" (1993 : 109) had forced him away from poetry or "craft of verse". But Maud Gonne and Ireland were exactly the themes from which he created most of his poems. Maud Gonne was a part of the poet's "heroic dream" (100) and he

wished to preserve her portrait for "coming time". "No Second Troy" indirectly refers to Helen as her Greek mythological equivalent through the poet's query: "Was there another Troy for her to burn?" (101). She is also the "phoenix" with "the simplicity of a child/And that proud look as though she had gazed into the burning sun" (172). Maud Gonne's youthful image is invoked in "A Memory of Youth"; then she becomes the "fallen Majesty" whose glory can be sung by the poet alone, "like some last courtier at a gypsy camping-place" (138). Till the end of Yeats's life he cherished her early image of a stately figure in the street when she "seemed a burning cloud" (138). Elsewhere Yeats reiterated the idea that she had a tremendous "power over crowds" (1956 : 364) and over himself. The memory of this "love crossed long ago" (1993 : 140), tormented Yeats and so he repeatedly used her as an image in his poems. In "The Cold Heaven", the cold and uncaring heaven expresses the feelings of abandonment that Yeats experienced with Maud Gonne.

Yeats zoomed his craft upon the zestful nationalist who was not only "a Helen of social welfare dream/climb on a wagonette to scream" (388) her ideas, but also the "most gentle woman" (382). Waiting for a train at Howth station, she appeared to be "Pallas Athene" (348), the Goddess of wisdom in Greek mythology with her "straight back and arrogant head". At one time she appeared "half lion, half child", misunderstood by the "dolt" and "knave" and yet "at peace" (104). Yeats accepted her as "part woman, three parts a child" (381) in the "Long-Legged Fly". Then she is transformed into "lion and

woman" (391) She is also "a queen" (174) who symbolized fierce and uncompromising Republicanism.

From the time Yeats met Maud Gonne, he identified her as a woman burdened with a "soul that ... seemed ... incapable of rest" (ed. Donoghue: 1972 : 42). Therefore, the image of the "pilgrim soul" came naturally to Yeats. This image had also appeared in many major occult tracts that were published or privately circulated in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In each of its uses, the phrase refers to the spiritual principle in man, "the undying 'pilgrim' whose task it is to traverse the many rounds of incarnation that the spirit must undergo" (Kinahan: 1988 : 27) before it can achieve its final release from the mundane earth. Yeats's image also echoes the state of Ireland; her soul moves towards emancipation: the past, present and future. In her youth she was quite unlike the "mummy dead" (382) bust. Her youthful form was "all full/As though with magnanimity of light" (382). Her heart was gentle and innocent. The poet is unable to decide "Which of her forms has shown her substance right?" The contrasted images of her old age and youth baffle him. He reminds himself of McTaggart's philosophy that substance itself is composite, and life and death are mere terms in a single series. The reference is probably to *Human Immortality and Pre-existence* where the philosopher asserts that nothing in the world ceases to exist. It is only the form that undergoes a change: Everything which existed once, exists even now, in some form or the other. The poet seeks to bring about a reconciliation of these

contrary images of Maud Gonne and of Ireland. Even in her youth there had been a dash of wildness in her. It seemed as though her prophetic soul had a pre-vision of the terrible changes which the future had in store for her. Such a vision had disturbed her soul and filled her with a strange restlessness. The poet's close association with her had raised the poet's imagination to the highest pitch of intensity. It became a pure flame where all impurities and foreign elements were burnt away. With this keen insight the poet was able to penetrate her exterior and see her utter helplessness. He realized her vulnerability and the fact that his "phoenix" has now become his "child". He desperately wanted her to be shielded from all external threats and worries just as he wanted Ireland to be shielded from outside troubles.

Yeats also equates Deirdre to Maud Gonne. She too becomes a potent symbol for the poet. Both Maud Gonne and Deirdre become the emblems of Ireland. He referred to the fact that he thought of her "as in a sense Ireland, a summing up in one mind of what is best in the romantic political Ireland of my youth" (ed. Donoghue: 1972 : 247). She had always been associated with Yeats's love of folk and fairy lore. He acknowledged this clearly: "... there was an element in her beauty that moved minds full of old Gaelic stories and poems ..." (1956 : 364). She seemed an embodiment of the beauty spoken of in old tales. "From the time Yeats thought of her 'the paradise ... he imagined ... the people of faery land seemed to draw nearer'" (Kinahan: 1988 : 20). This is exactly the sentence that describes Michael's reaction to his growing

love for Margaret in Yeats's novel *The Speckled Bird*.

Yeats was disturbed by his vision of "ideal beauty" wrecked in service of an unworthy cause, or an example of an individual destroyed by a revolutionary and hysterical kind of Irish nationalism. There were some prominent Irish people who were "enchanted to a stone" destined "to trouble the living stream" (Yeats: 1993 : 204). The stone was deliberately used by Yeats as a symbol to show how political workers could devote themselves to a cause without thought of life and love, a life given totally to revolutionary ideals.

The play *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* was Yeats's "most obvious contribution to the swelling tide of nationalism" (Loftus: 1964 : 41) Cathleen's "sad resolve" to aid the famine crazed Irish people was founded upon Maud Gonne's desire and efforts to help the Donegal peasants. Yeats made Cathleen a symbol of Ireland's nobility and passion, an image in which the Irish people could find consolation in their fight for self identity. She was interpreted by the poet "as a symbol of all souls that lose their peace, or their fineness ... in political service" (Hone: 1942 : 87-88). He said that the Countess was "in all things Celtic and Irish" (1986 : 165).

Cathleen served as the symbol of beauty, womanhood and romantic Ireland. In "Plays" (1931) Yeats explained:

One night I had a dream almost as distinct as a vision,  
of a cottage where there was well-being and firelight  
and talk of a marriage. Into the midst of the cottage

there came an old woman in a long cloak. She was Ireland herself, that Cathleen-ni-Houlihan for whom so many songs have been sung ...

(419)

Cathleen is used as a symbol not only in the plays but even in the poems. "Red Hanrahan's Song about Ireland" is a patriotic poem. It deals with the inspiration derived from the heroic sacrifices of the patriot, Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan. When the storm breaks out and the courage of the Irish fighters for freedom begins to dwindle, they find fresh inspiration from the noble image of Cathleen. The cross is generally accepted as the symbol of suffering, love and sacrifice. Cathleen is believed to be more pure than a candle burning before the Holy Rood.

In his symbolic system Yeats placed aggressively beautiful women in phase sixteen. They were considered as rare human beings. He said that they "walk like queens, and seem to carry upon their backs a quiver of arrows, but they are gentle only to those whom they have chosen or subdued" (1937 : 139). They appeared in the phase of those who act rather than suffer violence.

The "human, superhuman" bird-like eyes (1993 : 382) are symbolic. These eyes remind one of the peculiarities of Byzantine ivory works described by the poet in *A Vision*:

Even the drilled pupil of the eye ... undergoes a somnambulistic change, for its deep shadow among the

faint lines of the tablet, its mechanical circle, where all else is rhythmical and flowing, given to Saint or Angel the look of some great bird staring at miracle.

(1937 : 119)

Yeats uses the image of the "tomb-haunter". It has literal associations. Maud Gonne was known for her visits to the funeral ceremonies of the Republicans in long, black flowing garments. On another level of interpretation, she was preoccupied with the dark mysteries of life and the terror of approaching death. Her eyes, fixed on the distant sky, seemed to penetrate the void, but this did not lessen her terror born out of utter emptiness. This "sky-Sweeping gaze" was the only thing that had been able to withstand the ravages of time. Ireland is also a "tomb-haunter", delving into her past and is trying to bring about a resurrection. She, too, stands against time's onslaught. Cannot Yeats himself be insinuated by this image?

Yeats was horrified by "this foul world in its decline and fall" (383). The confusions and transvaluations of the modern degenerate times become apparent in his poems. The world had become topsy-turvy. It was tottering, almost on the brink of ruin. The low families were gaining prominence; the aristocratic ones were declining and degenerating. The old, noble values, that were transmitted through generations, were becoming obsolete: "ancestral pearls all pitched into a sty" (382). Under these circumstances, the 'clown' and 'knave' of the various political groups, became ready to mock at the noble dreams of heroism and the ancient ideals of Ireland. The angelic

guardian of Ireland who watched these changes must have wondered if there was anything left to save in the general holocaust of the time.

The image of the "tomb-haunter" gradually leads to the changes which have come over not only one individual, but also that which have overcome the country as a whole. The decline and degradation that are manifested in the bronze bust of Maud Gonne, are also manifested in the Irish society. Maud Gonne therefore becomes the symbol for her country. In her youth Maud Gonne had appeared in the noble role in two Yeatsian plays, cast especially in the patriotic mould. It is quite natural that the sadness for the decline of her beauty should mingle with an indignation at the degradation of Ireland brought about by politicians.

"We the great gazebo built" (1993 : 264), Yeats asserts in his poem on the two Gore Booth sisters. Perhaps "gazebo" refers to his early vision, more romantic than realistic, of a resurgent Ireland. Stallworthy said: "From the detachment of their ivory tower, he and the Gore Booth sisters had imagined their countrymen casting off the yoke of England, fired by the spirits of Cuchulain and the ancient heroes" (1963 : 172). The metaphor of time cannot be negated. The two "delightful" girls of Lissadell were destroyed by a meaningless political activity which involved the dream to construct a Utopian world from the dregs of society. For all its gracious leisure, the life of serenity and opulence at Lissadell could not satisfy the two sisters.

Political fervour changed them altogether. They became "withered old and skeleton-gaunt/An image of such politics" (1993 : 263). Constance Georgina Gore-Booth who was actively involved in the Sinn Fein politics became a symbol for youth's lonely wildness. She represented local Sligo aristocracy. Yeats was so disappointed by her transformation that he wrote: "Blind and leader of the blind/Drinking the foul ditch where they lie" (1993 : 207).

Lady Gregory was an image of aristocratic courtesy. Her son symbolized aristocratic good breeding. Robert Gregory represented those "young men of promise who, dying young, seem cheated, shining Leonardos" (Unterecker: 1969 : 133). A soldier, scholar and perfect horseman, he became an emblem for the immense defeated possibility of war-slaughtered young warriors. He symbolized "all life's epitome" (Yeats: 1993 : 151) and stood for the lonely aloofness which was part of Yeats's ideal.

Yeats's interest in the occult and mystic thought is evident in "Shepherd and Goatherd" which was written in memory of Robert Gregory. The Goatherd sings of the "Yeatsian reincarnation of Gregory" (Jeffares: 1984 : 146). Wilson draws attention to the "Platonic use of sheep and goats as symbols for young and old souls respectively" (1958: 200). The Irish belief in the return after death is evident in the poem. This is even evident in "Sailing to Byzantium": "Once out of nature I shall never take/My bodily form from any natural thing" (Yeats: 1993 : 218). The souls after death drift on the "miraculous

stream" (1993 : 311). This suggests the Milky Way and was used deliberately as a symbol for the abode of the soul before the next birth.

John Synge symbolized the modern artist or proud literary genius who assumed the heroic mask to face the hostile world. He was so deeply immersed in the life of the Irish folk that he saturated himself in their dialect. Thus attached to the Irish soil, he became Yeats's "rooted man" (1993 : 369) who almost forgot the language of sophisticated society outside the narrow bounds of that Irish peasant life. His "grave deep face" was indicative of his serious vision of life, and his profound insight into the nature of man and his predicament in the world. Yeats believed that Synge "was to do for Ireland ... what Robert Burns did for Scotland" (1956 : 567).

Yeats was deeply touched by Mabel Beardley's courage. With her reckless, almost nonchalant defiance of death, she became Yeats's symbol for any heroic individual who has the mental strength to laugh in the face death. She represents any person who is doomed but does not succumb to the mishap. Rather she triumphs in disaster.

The simple fisherman in Connemara clothes is the sentimental image for Unified Ireland and for the simplicity of the common Irishmen. Yeats conceived him as a symbol when he was disillusioned with the petty squabbles of Ireland:

All day I'd looked in the face

What I had hoped 't would be  
To write for my own race  
And the reality.

(1993 : 166)

The fisherman represents isolation, self containment and natural life of the common man of Ireland. He is the image of the race the poet wished to write for, an image of instinctive dignity and basic virtues, stepping away from the crowd to a world "where stone is dark under froth" (167).

The typical aristocratic houses of Ireland were represented in Yeats's poetry by Coole Park and Lissadell mainly. They are images of elegance, "traditional sanctity and loveliness" (276). The ancestral trees, the "gardens rich in memory" and the great rooms stand for the Irish heritage. The poet felt: "My children may find here/Deep-rooted things" (369).

Yeats prophesied a catastrophic disintegration of a historical "cycle". He suggested that the new era would usher in a stream of irrational force. The mounting political and social crisis in Ireland, the atrocities perpetrated by the British Government with the help of the Black and Tans and the Civil War issuing out of the Anglo-Irish Treaty brought about a turmoil. These reinforced Yeats's prophecy. The disturbances, both within Ireland and in Europe, signified the disruption of values. The shadow of the irrational forces governing mankind is cast in Yeats's poems. There are repeated references to blood and violence. These images provide a hint of the grim reality of

life in Ireland.

Fermor said, "... strong emotional experience is stored in the brief space of an image, and its release illuminates powerfully the emotions, the reflections, the inferences which it is the purpose of the passage to evoke. There is thus an artistic economy in imagery hardly to be equalled by that of any other kind of verbal expression ..." (ed. Calderwood and Toliver: 1968 : 389). In Yeats poetry the symbol of "blood" points not only towards local upheavals but also towards the anarchy in the world at large. The "blood bedabbled breast" (Yeats: 1993: 313) and the "blood and mire" of the "beast-torn wreck" present the final horror. The "red blood" (206) has a positive symbolic reference too. The poet believed that this red blood of fervent, well-meaning martyrs can "make a right Rose Tree". That is one way of saying that their efforts can change the political condition of the country. Here, the "blood" is the means of sustenance, essential for the well-being of Ireland. A reversal of connotation is to be found when Yeats referred to the loosening of the "blood-dimmed tide" in order to drown the "ceremony of innocence" (212).

"September 1913" speaks of the "delirium of the brave" (121), or the emotional sacrifice of the Irish patriots. These nationalists gave their lives for a dream of national greatness. They were an indigenous part of "Romantic Ireland". But they failed to achieve their goal. The poet's agonized query touches the heart: "was it ... for this that all that blood was shed ...?" (121). In another context he admitted

the adverse condition of the country where "base drove out the better blood" (389). Each context brings forward a different association, a different echo that enriches the principal symbol of "blood".

Yeats said, "the blood of innocence has left no stain" (1993 : 269) but "the blood of innocence incarnadined not only civilization, but also his poetry" (Chatterjee: 1962 : 140). That is why Yeats found the "odour of blood on the ancestral stair " (1993 : 269) and the "stain of blood" on "blood saturated ground". He also spoke of how "under heavy loads of trampled clay/Lie bodies of the vampires full of blood" (270).

Confronted with the signs of collapse all around, Yeats's images and symbols took on a hardened and an astringent note. In the poetry of the later phases they suggest a decay of the old order and a break up of the traditions and values of society. His contemplation on the succession of civilizations was provided in *A Vision*:

Each age unwinds the threads another age had wound,  
and it amuses me to remember that before Phidias, and  
his westward moving art, Persia fell, and that when full  
moon came round again, amid eastward moving  
thought, and brought Byzantine glory, Rome fell; and  
that at the outset of our westward moving Renaissance  
Byzantium fell, all things dying each other's life, living  
each other's death. (183)

Byzantium represented the Unity-of-Being that Yeats desired

throughout his poetic career. It suggested an antidote for the tensions that he found in contemporary society. The Japanese "sword" that lay for five hundred years in Sato's house symbolized art produced by a stable society that had genuine Unity of Being. Yeats treated it as a catalyst that could bring the Irish out of their aimlessness. Unity of Being in "Quattrounto", was symbolized by a flourishing "chesnut tree". It has also been represented in the "dance", where the body and the soul, movement and repose, man and his art become a radiant whole. The symbol of the gyres and the wheel suggest a different idea: a change in situation. In the world of pervading chaos, vanished hopes and shattered illusions, he knew that the ideal was a dream, difficult to materialize. So he looked timorously towards the birds and called the honey-bee to build its nest in the crevices of his tower. The honey-bees suggested sweetness amid the lost innocence, sanctity and loveliness.

Yeats, disgusted with the changing life, showed his response to the Irish people's reaction to the need of the hour. Their vitality and spirit of independence at the Easter Rising was commended. The birth of the "terrible beauty" (1993 : 203) was announced equivocally. The act of heroism transformed the ordinary people who "but lived where motley was worn". The sacrifice of the countrymen signified a reawakening or a rebirth. In "Easter 1916" we find a glorification of Irish nationalism and its struggles. The new image in the second half cannot be considered "outside the political and specifically Irish context altogether" (Rosenthal: 1965 : 30). It hints at the determined

stand of the Irish:

Hearts with one purpose alone  
Through summer and winter seem  
Enchanted to a stone  
To trouble the living steam.

(1993 : 204)

"I declare this tower is my symbol" (1993 : 268), asserted Yeats. In the midst of the dissipation and despair, he sought refuge in his home: "Blessed be this place/More blessed still this tower" (267). When he converted the tower in Galway into his home, Yeats made it an ambiguous image with multiple meanings. It was the "focal point from which may be viewed the turbulent stretches of life, past and present" (Chatterjee: 1962 : 105). Rooted in the Irish soil, it dominated the small cottages around it. Therefore, Yeats established it as an emblem of Irish aristocracy. In the course of time, it has gathered many associations. It is now accepted as the

... emblem of the night of war, of violence, of man's aspirations to philosophy, of the decay of civilization, of ancient ceremony, disintegrating in the face of the world - 'the broken crumbling battlements'. The tower is night; but its stability is only apparent. Behind it is the cosmic universe, permanent only in 'the star that marks the hidden pole'.

(Henn: 1966 : 134)

In T.R. Henn's analysis the tower becomes "astronomical", or "the departure-point for man's thought facing the universe". Set against

this majestic structure, man appears to be puny but his endeavours at rectification seem vast. Yeats had taken Rogert Gregory's help in the renovations.

What other could so well have counselled us  
In all lovely intricacies of a house  
As he that practised or that understood  
All work in metal or in wood  
In moulded plaster or in carven stone?

(1993 : 151)

he asked in "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory". However, the tower was not totally restored: "In memory of a time/Half dead at the top" (267). Henn connects this empty room at the top with the traditional symbol of the Seventh Room in Alchemy and the ultimate room in St. Teresa's "The Interior Castle". That is to say, the room in which spiritual revelation ought to be given. The fact that it was empty suggests the impossibility of providing religious or spiritual enlightenment in that particular era. I think it also stands for the limitation of human effort. Though man may try to reach perfection, the Irish ideal or Yeats's quest for the "Unity of Being" remains beyond reach. The aspiration and the tension to achieve is there, but it is difficult to accomplish. Yeats also accepted his tower as a symbol of permanence in this transient world:

And I, that count myself most prosperous,  
Seeing that love and friendship are enough,  
For an old neighbour's friendship chose the house

And decked and altered it for a girl's love,  
And know whatever flourish and decline  
These stones remain their monument and mine.

(1993 : 229)

Yeats was proud that "seven centuries have passed" and yet the tower remained "pure", for "the blood of innocence has left no stain" (1993: 269) upon it.

Yeats believed that the tower, "important in Maeterlinck, as in Shelley, is, like the sea, and rivers, and caves with fountain, a very ancient symbol ..." (1961 : 187). "The Black Tower" was his last poem which utilized this symbol. Mrs. Yeats claimed that this poem was written "on the subject of political propaganda" (Stallworthy: 1963 : 223) :

Those banners come to bribe or threaten,  
Or whisper that a man's a fool  
Who, when his own right king's forgotten,  
Cares what king sets up his rule.  
If he died long ago  
Why do you dread us so?

(1993 : 396-7)

The tower in this particular poem is Thoor Ballylee only so far as Thoor Ballylee is a macrocosm of Ireland.

The "narrow winding stair" of the tower was associated in Yeats's mind with the spiral movement of the gyres:

... I declare

This winding, gyring, spiring treadmill of a stair is  
my ancestral stair;

That Goldsmith and the Dean, Berkeley and Burke have  
travelled there.

(1993 : 268)

Yeats associated "the winding stair" not only with the tower, but also Irish men of prominence with whom Yeats could "claim his kinship proudly" (Jeffares: 1962 : 249). The winding stair as a Yeatsian symbol is the opposite of the tower. The stair suggested Jacob's ladder, as seen by Blake (ed. Ursula Bridges: 1953 : 199). It helped to align him with the past of Ireland, it being rooted in the ground. The "board" of the stair bore evidence of the past conflicts in Ireland:

Before that ruin came, for centuries,  
Rough men-at-arms, cross-gartered to the knees  
Or shod in iron, climbed the narrow stairs,  
And certain men-at-arms there were  
Whose images, in the Great Memory stored,  
Come with loud cry and panting breast  
To break upon a sleeper's rest  
While their great wooden dice beat on the board.

(1993 : 218)

The staircase became "a frame or translucent screen for the processional evocation of the past" (Henn: 1966 : 132) events of Ireland.

In the "Blood and the Moon" the two images are used together.

The tower is Yeats's ancestral symbol, representing the way of life peculiar to the golden age of Irish political life, that is, the eighteenth century. The poet equates his tower with the "beacon tower" (1993 : 268) at Alexandria, the observatory at Babylon and the towers in the poetry of Shelley which were symbols of intellectual sovereignty. The tower and the winding-stair then become a symbol representing the ideals of Goldsmith, Swift, Burke and Berkeley. These great predecessors were regarded as Irish heroes by Yeats.

In many of the poems Yeats developed the theme through a series of images. "The Curse of Cromwell" conveys the general decay of the old world order. "The Second Coming" provides a symbol of the closing of an era and a new annunciation, foreshadowed by the political situation. A mysterious sphinx-like shape comes out of the darkness, indifferent to man, accompanied in its dreadful progress by shrieks and shadows:

Somewhere in sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.

(1993 : 211)

This symbol of violent horror is suddenly darkened. The figure that emerges out of the recesses of the spiritual world is suggestive of evil, violence and an antithetical movement. In Yeats's philosophy of history, the historical movement was symbolized by two interlocking

"cones" or "gyres", one expanding and the other contracting. They are indicative of the interpenetration of the "primary" and "antithetical" phases of Yeats's system. The falcon has soared beyond the control of the falconer. This symbolizes the division of the mind and the heart. The lack of co-ordination in the world is suggested too.

Towards the beginning of his career, Yeats said: "I must leave my sights and images to explain themselves as the years go by, and one poem lights up another" (1899 : 11). Towards the end he said, "I seek an image of the modern mind's discovery of itself" (1934 : 3). The rise of nationalism, the political problems, the shattering and challenging effects of science on old beliefs, the reopening of every question of truth and value entered Yeats's imagination. They were absorbed and transmuted into the symbolic structure of his poetry. Through the poetic symbols and images Yeats wanted to assert his prophetic belief that the Irish having ancient, traditional heritage, shall rise again:

We Irish, born into that ancient sect  
But thrown upon this filthy modern tide  
And by its formless spawning fury wrecked,  
Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace  
The lineaments of a plummet-measured face.

(1993 : 376)