

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

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"A Great Man in His Pride"

- "Death"

W.B.Yeats, a noted, remarkable and powerful poet, was acclaimed by a number of critics and modern poets as the poetic sage of the twentieth century. In his early career he wrote romantic poetry of light nature with traditional conventions, but as his experiences as a writer became rich, he went on changing both the matter and manner of his verse. It became a habit with him to generalize the personal problems and to personalize the general ones. Yet it must be admitted that his love-affair with Maud Gonne, though tragic, provided substance and inspiration throughout his poetic career.

Yeats was a man of various interests, which are reflected in his poetry. While bringing into his poetry his interests and ambitions, he had to assume several masks. His poetry from first to last shows that he was a poet of self-alienation. In his early poetry there are some minor reflections of self-alienation, which later on become more philosophical.

The volume The Wild Swans at Coole (1919) shows the

changed psychological states of his mind, his feelings and sentiments. At that time Yeats was aware of his growing old age. Growth in age, it is true, brings wisdom; but Yeats felt that mere wisdom was not enough. He was torn between desire and dream on one hand and his mature awareness on the other. He has used different types of images that throw light on his superhuman qualities and show his self-alienation. In this volume he has also presented his loss of power and his inability to do things. His sufferings, ill-treatment of him by the people and the sense of the loss of his reputation all speak for the loss of his self and consequent self-alienation.

Michael Robartes and the Dancer (1921) clearly shows his depth of thought and complex imagery. In one of the poems of this volume, "Easter 1916", Yeats has presented his national feelings but the note of self-criticism is also there in his thoughts about the political situation of the time. In his poem "The Second Coming" he has commented on World War I and the loss of traditional things and also the horrible condition of modern man.

This theme of self-alienation becomes dominant and effective in his famous volume, The Tower (1928). The poems of this volume clearly show Yeats's attack on old age, the loss of his identity, and also his thoughts about Ireland and the city of Byzantium. In the poem "The Tower" he expresses

the contrast between his ageing decaying body and his sensuality. Here the poet feels that he is looking like a scarecrow, a caricature, and not a meaningful personality as before. His self is totally divided against itself. In the poems of this volume he has also presented his thoughts about the World War and about the tragedy the world was undergoing. The losses and destruction caused by the war created disturbances in the mind of the people and also in the poet's mind in which he saw the universal decay and sufferings. In this volume we also find the poet's conflict between intellect and his heart, and the two opposite attitudes towards love here show his inner division.

The poems of the volume The Winding Stair and Other Poems show the theme of the conflict between the spiritual and the material. Here the poet speaks of the cruel effects of Time on the beautiful and lovely things. His famous poem "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" is a contest between Self and Soul. In "Byzantium" (1930) he comments on human life in general. Man is nothing but a bundle of contradictions, conflicts, and confusions which make him an unhappy creature alienated from his true self. The poet's inability to identify the figure of a man in clear-cut terms is suggestive of his self-alienation.

In his last three volumes of poems- A Woman Young and Old, A Full Moon in March, and the Last Poems-Yeats clearly

shows his self-alienation and the frustrated mood in life.

In A Woman Young and Old Yeats deals with sexual themes. This volume is significant and important in Yeats's poetic output. It clearly shows the poet with decrepit body but with burning passions. The poems of this volume depict Yeats's different approaches to women. His early frustrations, and hellish experiences make Yeats bitter against women.

In some poems of the volume A Full Moon in March, Yeats has expressed his thoughts about politics and old age. The poem "Meru" presents the contrast between the world of superficial Reality and the world of the Absolute Reality.

The volume the Last Poems (1935-1939) clearly shows the echoes of the earlier themes and ideas. The shadow of death is always there in his last poems; but he points out that death is not all, it is not an end of life but a new beginning. In "Lapis Lazuli", he has presented tragic atmosphere and the fear of war. His poem "Are You Content" expresses his dissatisfaction and restlessness in his old age. "The Man and the Echo" shows the disintegration of man's self. Here the poet speaks of his inner voice. His restlessness, anxiety and fear are expressed in this poem. The theme of self-alienation thus runs throughout the volumes of his poems.

Yeats once said that when we quarrel with others, we make rhetoric; but when we quarrel with ourselves, we make poetry. All his life Yeats quarreled with himself and gave to the world the best that he could do. His poetic output is nothing but the record of his various conflicting and contradicting moods as a result of which he turned out to be a most powerful poet of self-alienation in our age.

BIBLIOGRAPHY