THE WHITE GODDESS AS MUSE IN THE
POETRY OF W. B. YEATS

by

EUNICE SLINN
B.A.(Hons.), University of York, 1966

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department
of
English

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
May, 1969
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of English

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver 8, Canada

Date 11th August, 1971.
ABSTRACT

Inspiration as embodied in the mythical figure of the Muse is an insistent theme in Yeats' poetry. His particular concept of the Muse is drawn from Celtic mythology, and in its principal aspects is synonymous with Robert Graves' sinister White Goddess, which derives from similar or cognate sources in Celtic lore. The White Goddess is described in terms of a triad of mother, beloved and slayer, and may be considered the prototype for the Gaelic Muse, celebrated by poets as the Leanhaun Sidhe. Originally, the Leanhaun Sidhe was a goddess of the Tuatha De Danaan; the Danaans were the divinities of ancient Eire who finally "dwindled in the popular imagination" to become the fairy folk or Sidhe.

Fractions of Yeats' prose and his collections of Celtic stories portray the Sidhe's activities and the Muse's gift of deathly inspiration. The Leanhaun Sidhe and her fairy denizens predominate in Yeats' first major poem "The Wanderings of Oisin" and in his first three volumes of poetry. The Celtic theme of the seduction of a mortal by a fairy enchantress provides the controlling structure of "The Wanderings of Oisin." The ornately beautiful and sinister Niamh entices Oisin away from his cherished Fenian companions and from all human experience; however, after three hundred years in the immortal realm, Oisin longs to return to the insufficiencies of mortality. "The Wanderings of Oisin" establishes the equivocal dialectic of the fairy and human orders, of seductive vision and inescapable fact, which underlies much of Yeats'
later work. The attributes of the Leanhaun Sidhe are also seminal. As White Goddess, she represents the beloved in whom the dualities of creation and destruction coincide; in addition she possesses individual qualities, notably, her sadness. Niamh is comparable to the fairy beguilers of Crossways and particularly to the Muse figures of The Rose. In this second volume, Yeats supplicates the Rose (the Celtic Muse) for the facility to sing Danaan songs. Her inspiration allows him to perceive the essence underlying the phenomenal world, but again the transcendent cannot deny the finite and the immortal Rose remains transfixed upon the Rood of Time ("To the Rose upon the Rood of Time"). Her role as White Goddess is emphatic: she prompts God to create the world, but conversely her beauty effects its destruction. The Wind among the Reeds embodies a climactic treatment of the flight into fairyland. The poet meditates upon the apocalyptic Sidhe with unceasing desire; there is no counterweight to alluring vision.

In the poetry of 1904-10, the Muse retains her role of White Goddess, but becomes a creature of mortality. Since she is both changeful and subject to change, the poet laments her cruel fickleness and her transiency. Although mortal, she is the human original for the heroic archetype, and Yeats endows her with the epic savagery and recklessness of the Celtic warrior queens. The Morrigu becomes the source of inspiration.

After The Green Helmet and Other Poems the Muse no longer serves as a major structural theme. Yeats becomes preoccupied with the finished work of art, the highly-wrought artefact, rather than with the inspiration
for that work. The Muse is the legendary destructive beloved, Mary Hynes or Helen, but the poet creates her, she does not create him. The Muse as artefact proves the invention of the aged poet who cannot render an impassioned dedication to female beauty. "The Tower" is the most prominent poem to treat this change, yet even here Yeats reaffirms his dual allegiance to art and life, the resolution echoing the pattern established in "The Wanderings of Oisin."

In the late poetry, the White Goddess as Muse is totally disavowed and Yeats turns to the persona of the fleshly Crazy Jane; interestingly, the aged poet celebrates the pleasures of the body and of the physical universe.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. THE WHITE GODDESS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE CALL OF THE SIDHE</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE MORTAL AND HEROIC MUSE</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. SELF-CREATION IN OLD AGE: THE MUSE AS ARTEFACT</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE WHITE GODDESS AS MUSE IN THE

POETRY OF W. B. YEATS
The Muse is the mythical embodiment of the source of inspiration, the prompter of the poet's verse. Jung, in his discussion of the genesis of a work of art, states that this stimulus arises from the depths of the psyche which contains man's fathomless primordial experience, the collective unconscious. Images emerge from this mysterious realm and are most viable for Jung when they are of mythological derivation, since mythology is the reservoir of symbols from primitive times. He designates the unconscious "the realm of the mothers," and it is appropriate that a feminine figure should embody the creative impulses generated from this realm. The Muse is the metaphor for inspiration, and this metaphor has developed into various, more complex metaphors, as Yeats' Byzantium images beget fresh ones. There are, for example, the nine Muses presiding over the arts, with Calliope as poetic inspiration. However, all divergent types are subsumed by a highly-wrought metaphor for the Muse—in Robert Graves' terminology, the triple White Goddess.

This comprehensive metaphor for inspiration is directly referable to the Yeatsian Muse, the Leanhaun Sidhe, as a brief survey of the Gravesean creed will indicate. In a prodigious study, Graves claims that the White Goddess is the inspiration for and universal subject of all "true poetry." Clothed in many guises, she is also the protagonist of mythologies from the British Isles to the Caucasus and numerous
examples of the figure are religiously catalogued, such as Alphito, Albina (England's eponymous goddess), Ishtar, Demeter, Danu. Graves describes the Goddess in terms of mother, beloved and slayer, or, as he elaborates, in the triadic pattern of birth and growth, love and battle, death and divination. She is the creator and destroyer, the origin and close of life, and the earthly joy of the beloved between these two ultimates; the vagaries of love cause conflict and battle, leading to the final phase, death.

Graves' trinity represents the duality of creation and destruction as solely dependent upon the figure of the beloved. As the creative principle of Earth Mother, she presides over generation, both physical and intellectual, and specifically over the poet's calling. She encompasses the whole cycle of man's destiny and was thus worshipped appropriately as the moon-goddess with her three-fold face of new, full and waning moon. The moon is, of course, a female symbol in literature and myth, evoking the enchantment of the "feminine mystique," but principally the image is associated with fate. As the moon controls the tides, so woman sits arbitress of destiny, of the ebb and flow of human circumstance; destiny is always endowed with the female gender, for example, in such completely disparate types as the Three Fates and that Elizabethan strumpet of fortune.

In addition to discussing the concept of the Muse, Graves lists the pictorial features, which accompany her portrayal. As her epiphet indicates, she has a white beauty, and Graves registers varied associational and etymological dimensions of the colour, such as the whiteness
of the moon, a woman's body, pearl barley, the foam of a wave, a spectre, death and leprosy.⁶ Leprosy suggests the horrific aspect of her whiteness, which is illustrated in that renowned description of death-in-life in "The Ancient Mariner":

Her lips were red, her looks were free,  
Her locks were yellow as gold,  
Her skin was white as leprosy.  
The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she,  
Who thick's man's blood with cold.

Red lips, yellow hair and starkly white complexion are the usual dramatically pictorial attributes of the Goddess.

Graves' obeisance to the Goddess is essentially unchivalric, for he characterizes her as an all-powerful but not idealized figure. She is the voracious, primitive Earth Mother, who can only love her own fertility, lives for her reproductive function. Melodramatic emphasis is placed upon the original barbarism of the mythical world-picture; Graves' deity is the "Mother of All Living," the queen bee or female spider, whose embrace is hideous death. This savagery should invest the poetry with a palpable horror: "The reason why the hair stands on end, the eyes water, the throat is constricted, the skin crawls and a shiver runs down the spine when one writes or reads a true poem is that a true poem is necessarily an invocation of the White Goddess, or Muse."⁷

Graves' obsessive dedication to a primitive deity may seem irreconcilable with Yeats' fine aristocratic pose and urbane irony, which prevents excess or barbarity. Graves himself would not relish the comparison,⁸ yet Yeats' work shows a profound concern with the White Goddess.
Hoffman has pointed out the similarity between the two poets in this context:

If we are tempted to think of the White Goddess as an idiosyncratic figment of one poet's compulsions, or as a figure shaped by certain modern writers, the inaccuracy of such assumptions should be evident if only because we have met this woman before, bringing her gifts of ecstasy and doom. Yeats called her Aoife. Cuchulain, her mortal lover, took her body in a holy place on the mountain across the sea, in the land of spirits. . . . At the end of The Death of Cuchulain the hero is beset and besieged by female figures of futility: his enemy in battle is Queen Maeve, his dying vision is of Aoife, his divine nemesis is the Morrigu, crow-headed goddess of war who 'arranged the dance' . . . The ritual sacrifice of a mortal lover to an immortal female is the theme also of other late plays of Yeats, A Full Moon in March and The King of the Great Clock Tower. 9

Here, Hoffman makes particular reference to the theatrical Muse, but I intend to concentrate exclusively upon the Muse in her role as Calliope; the White Goddess for Graves is the source of poetic creativity. It is evident in Hoffman's comment that the Yeatsian Muse shares the same origin as Graves' in Celtic lore, and Yeats' mythological knowledge and work show clear evidences of this sinister type.

Both poets possessed a strong interest in and extensive knowledge of Celtic mythology: Graves examined Welsh legend, studying principally in The White Goddess two thirteenth century Welsh poems, the Câd Goddeu and the Hanes Taliesin, whereas Yeats was preoccupied with Irish myth. However, Welsh and Irish folklore comprise the same or cognate myths and the two can be discussed conjointly. The two divisions of Celtic mythology provide numerous correlative types, a prominent example being the equation of Gwion, hero of the Hanes Taliesin, with Fionn or Finn, the celebrated Irish warrior. Another important comparison may be drawn
between "the black screaming hag," Cerridwen, in the Hanes Taliesin and the Irish death and war goddess, the Morrigan; both embody the third aspect of the triple Goddess. The Morrigan also figures in the Arthurian cycle as Morgan le Faye, "le Faye" meaning "the Fate."

Yeats and Graves amply consider the Tuatha De Danaan, who conquered the Formorah, deities of cold, darkness and death, to take up their residence as the gods of ancient Eire. The goddess Danu was the sole parent of these divinities, indicating a matriarchal pantheon and society. Yeats frequently alludes to the Tuatha De Danaan as the race of the gods of Dana (Danu), the mother-goddess. Lady Gregory's Gods and Fighting Men begins with a brief account of the origin and protagonists of the Tuatha De Danaan, culminating in a reference to Dana, mother of the gods, who "was beyond them all." After their defeat by the Gaels, the Tuatha De Danaan retired into the hills and raths of Eire, and the artificer, Manannan, established imperceptible walls around their abodes, so that only the gods might see and pass through them. Finally, as Yeats points out, the Danaans "dwindled in the popular imagination" to become the Sidhe, and it is the Sidhe who assume a pre- eminent role with relation to the Muse in Yeats' early verse.

As I mentioned previously, the Morrigu or Morrigan is the goddess of war and death among the Tuatha De Danaan, and the Irish equivalent of Cerridwen. She embodies the type of the destructive female, the third facet of the Goddess, and is always fiercely engaged in terrible battle, such as at Magh Tuireadh, where "many slipped in the blood that was under their feet, and they fell, striking their heads one against
another." Here, the virulent Morrigu "took the full of her two hands of Indech's blood, and gave it to the armies that were waiting at the ford of Unius; and it was called the Ford of Destruction from that day." Later in Cuchulain's time, the Morrigu causes much dissension and warfare: she fights Cuchulain in various shapes and, at the great Battle of the Brown Bull of Cualgne, incites the opposing ranks "like a lean, grey-haired hag." The destructive aspect of the Goddess often assumes the form of a hideous crone.

Chapter IV in *Gods and Fighting Men* is devoted to the stratagems of the Morrigu, and chapter V focuses upon Aine, the Muse: "And as to Aine, that some said was the daughter of Manannan, but some said was the Morrigu herself, there was a stone belonging to her that was called Cathair Aine. And if any one would sit on that stone he would be in danger of losing his wits . . . and she used to give gifts of poetry and of music, and she often gave her love to men, and they called her the Leanan Sidhe, the Sweetheart of the Sidhe." Here, the Muse is taken to be the goddess of death herself, and the chapter emphasizes Aine's malevolent, vengeful character in a brief relation of how she caused the deaths of Oilioll and his seven sons at Magh Mucruimhe. Graves also mentions the correlation of the two figures. He points out that the Danaan goddess Ana or Anan, a title of Danu, has been identified with the Munster moon-goddess Aine; in her beneficent role, Ana was the creator of the Danaans and goddess of plenty, but in her malign aspect, was the protagonist of the fate trinity, Ana, Babd and Macha, together known as the Morrigan. Thus, the Sweetheart of the Sidhe and the
gruesome Morrigu comprise the Janus-like face of the Muse.

Yeats makes a number of references to the Leanhaun Sidhe in his collections of Irish tales. In *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, he speaks of the Gaelic Muse who "gives inspiration to those she persecutes, and will not let them remain long on earth," and in *Irish Fairy Tales* he observes: "Her lovers waste away for she lives on their life. Most of the Gaelic poets down to recent times, have had a Leanhaun Shee for she gives inspiration to her slaves and is indeed the Gaelic Muse—this malignant fairy. Her lovers, the Gaelic poets, died young." Clearly, the White Goddess would serve as the prototype for the Irish Muse, whose gift of inspiration and love is consumed by the death which she exacts. *Gods and Fighting Men* and *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* furnish several examples of the feminine dual qualities; for example, Brigit, who was worshipped by poets, had one beautiful and one ugly side to her face and her name means "fiery arrow." Also a number of those queens reputed for their fatality meet to the letter Graves' descriptive stipulations. Etain, for example, has the prescribed attributes, even to the detail of that stock analogy for the Goddess' lips—the rowan berry:

Her soft hands were as white as the snow of a single night, and her eyes as blue as any blue flower, and her lips as red as the berries of the rowan-tree, and her body as white as the foam of a wave. The bright light of the moon was in her face.

However, further documentation is superfluous since Yeats' acquaintance with the mythical archetype is sufficiently clear.
Yeats' prose reveals some concern with the type and with the range of significances it accrues in the writings of other poets. Yeats' essay, "On the Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry," illustrates how the figure may be incorporated into a flexible structure of meaning totally distinct from Graves' tight formula, although Yeats still associates the figure with its mythical origins and mythical counterparts. Yeats explains that Shelleyan inspiration is "a kind of death" for it entails separation from the particularities of time and place; thus a symbol born of that inspiration passes beyond death to become "a living soul."

Inspiration requires the poet's death to the concrete particulars of earthly experience, and Yeats remarks that this death comes as a mistress:

Heardst thou not, that those who die
Awake in a world of ecstasy?
That love, when limbs are interwoven,
And sleep, when the night of life is cloven,
And thought, to the world's dim boundaries clinging,
And music, when one beloved is singing,
Is death?

Death imaged as the music-tongued beloved is not the dreadful penalty of the White Goddess exacted through grim battle, but rather the gateway to ecstasy. The poet's inspiration prompts him to create poetry, but simultaneously impels him towards Romantic transcendence, death. There is an implied parallel between sexual and aesthetic creation, and in A Vision the two are united in Phase Fifteen. The death in inspiration establishes a new order of reality, when the poet will "rise above the ordinary nature of man, fade before our imperfect origins."

Yeats regards Shelley in terms of the poet and prophet who foresees his own
death into rapture; Yeats adopts this role himself in *The Wind among the Reeds*. Here, Yeats avers that only death can yield the poet fulfilment, and this satisfaction is described in erotic phrasing as the beloved, often the fairy mistress. He also evisions doom and catastrophe for the world, asserting that, as in "Adonais," our usual understanding of death and life must be reversed. Death is transfiguration, bringing the world enriched life, which Yeats describes by analogy with the alchemical transmutation of base metals into gold. Worldly regeneration facilitated by the demise of the old order is also the central theme of *Prometheus Unbound*; both poets imagine that a phoenix must arise from the ashes of destruction.

Yeats sees the Shelleyan death-in-life beloved as Intellectual Beauty and assigns her a host of ethereal attendants from various cultures—the Devas of the East, the Elemental Spirits of Mediaeval Europe, and the Sidhe. In Yeats' poetry, the mysterious Sidhe seem similarly to minister to the Leanhaun Sidhe as they ride with her in their swift, glittering throng. They are the fleeting promise of an ideal world and of the perfection of essence, or in Yeats' terms the "gleams of a remoter world which visit us in sleep," "spiritual essences whose shadows are the delights of all the senses."26 Yeats ponders Shelley's work among those places haunted by the Sidhe—the Echtge hills and Slieve ná nOg, where the world's last battle will be fought. Thus, he juxtaposes the Shelleyan poetic ethos with Celtic myth, commenting that *Prometheus Unbound* "utters a faith as simple and as ancient as the faith of those country people, in a form suited to a new age."27 The substance of the
Celtic and Shelleyan vision is the same, only the trappings differ.

One of Yeats' motives for turning to Celtic lore is that myth places his poetry within the framework of the popular folk imagination, so that he does not express a closed, private transcendence. In his Preface to Gods and Fighting Men, Yeats voices the necessity for a "marriage of the sun and moon" in art; to the moon he ascribes the thoughts and emotions fashioned by the community, folk songs invented by "spinners and reapers out of the common impulse," and to the sun he ascribes the individual imposition of artistic discipline and joy. Yeats' insistence upon the union of the two for the functioning of the aesthetic process parallels Nietzsche's combination of Apollonian and Dionysian principles in creativity, and these principles are also aligned with sexual creation. Thus, myth, imaged as the moon, provides the source of the artistic process and its matière is shaped by the individual poet and infused with joy, anticipating "Lapis Lazuli." Irish myth is closely associated with the Muse and hence Yeats' concern in the poetry with the Celtic or Gaelic Muse.

In discussing Shelleyan symbolism, Yeats interprets the moon image. Initially, he points out that the Keatsian moon image represents Intellectual Beauty and that it evoked pleasurable sensations in the mind of its creator, whereas Shelley pondered upon the moon with a sense of weariness and trouble. He then unfolds an aggregation of meanings relating to the White Goddess figure. The moon is the very image of change, and "As mistress of the waters she governs the life of instinct and the generation of things, for, as Porphyry says, even the
'apparition of images' in the 'imagination' is through 'an excess of moisture.' Clearly, the moon governs physical and imaginative generation and the flux of destiny. Expanding upon her latter role, he notes that she presides over the "joyless idle drifting" of generated beings. Presumably, the moon envisaged as the controller of man's shapeless, vacillating fortunes provokes Shelley's alleged malaise: Shelley celebrates ordered permanence, relegating existence to a curse in "Adonais," whereas Keats' love of "embodied things," of "emotions made sleepy by the flesh" (to use Yeats' terms), explains his pleasurable acceptance of the image. Yeats himself seems to preserve both responses in much of his poetry.

He assigns further significances to the image saying that the moon, mistress of fate, may also be the mother of God, or may visit men in their experience of joy as in Endymion, or "she may deny life and shoot her arrows." As the sovereign of all earthly vicissitude, she gives life and joy, melancholy and death. She is the source and final destination of all phenomena, as she is the poet's stimulus and final destiny. Other meanings are noted, but Yeats does not consider them exhaustive, since the moon is the "most changeable of symbols" and since any symbol's value seems involved with its Protean changeability that cannot be reduced to a prose listing. In the essay, Yeats repeats his view of the multiplicity of possible significances enclosed within a single image. He considers imagery to be "enwoven with many rich threads" and many "dim meanings," and explains the important purpose of its multi-faceted nature: "It is only by ancient symbols, by symbols that have numberless
meanings besides the one or two the writer lays an emphasis upon, or the half-score he knows of, that any highly subjective art can escape from the barrenness and shallowness of a too conscious arrangement, into the abundance and depth of nature. This symbolic theory underscores a major distinction between Graves' and Yeats' view of the Goddess: the one treats her as a rigid formula, whereas the other clothes her in a variety of complex forms, towards which he evinces an equal variety of complex attitudes. Hoffman points out that although Graves' obsession with his inviolable formula initially liberated and shaped his creative energies, it finally became a Procrustean bed. No such thematic reduction is possible in Yeats' work because of his own particular obsession—the poet's craft. Thus, Yeats' Muse has the characteristic excellence of being a many-coloured and changing image, and one of the intentions of my analysis is to indicate the subtle vitality and variousness of Yeats' conception of the figure. The Muse archetype possesses bold, sculptured meanings and indeterminate, dim nuances, which shade gradually "into the abundance and depth of nature."

A secondary aim of this study is to concentrate upon the mythical associations of the figure, for Yeats often preserves the original mythological names and features. In the early poetry, Niamh and the band of the Sidhe are protagonists, and Yeats often retains the mythical voracity of the Goddess, as in "The Rose of the World" where nations are precipitated into ruin and bloodshed by the languid, inexorable beauties of Deirdre and Helen. This voracity is allied with notions of Romantic transcendence, and with the attribution of individual, even humane aspects.
The multiple expressions of the mythical archetype of the White Goddess in Yeats' poetry defines the specific area of my interest. A particular angle of approach is especially important since the presence of the femme fatale in Yeats' work is self-evident and is established in critical opinion. Frank Kermode, for example, discusses Yeats' figure of Salome as the "Romantic Image," the symbolic dance for which the cost is human sacrifice. He illustrates the precedents for the figure in the Symbolist and Aesthetic Movements. Whilst developing the full complexity of the aesthetic implications of the Herodiade, he seems unnecessarily critical about its close association with mythical Celticdom, even though Yeats sustains this association with such evident and careful design: "... the contamination of Salome by fairies persisted in Yeats's mind, and, appearing from time to time, burst out flourishing in the last years, when he dwelt much upon his own mythologies." Bloom similarly dismisses the "Celtic mythological baggage" of The Wind among the Reeds. Therefore, I hope to emphasize that the Celtic mythological symbolism and allusion are a legitimate and integrated part of Yeats' vision, not the decorative appurtenances, which are merely tolerable. The White Goddess, the Leanhaun Sidhe, is a prominent image in Yeats' poetry and is delineated as a shifting, various figure. In the early poetry, she is the fairy of seductive, at times deceitful, and at times apocalyptic vision. Her portrayal agrees with the orthodox concept of inspiration as a kind of visitation, and she remains external to the poet either because her presence assumes the form of an advent from a transcendent realm or because she is a separate identity in the finite
world, namely Maud Gonne. Finally, the Muse is envisaged as the wrought artefact of the poet's intensive labour, attained only through laborious effort and not through instantaneous vision.
NOTES


5. Graves, p. 70.


8. See Graves' comment in The Crowning Privilege (London: Cassel & Co., 1955): "Yeats had a new technique, but nothing to say, unless one counts the literary ballads written for the Irish War of Liberation. Instead of the Muse, he employs a Ventriloquist's dummy called Crazy Jane. But still he had nothing to say. What will a poor countryman do if he has no sheep of his own and badly needs a warm waistcoat? He will go out with a bag into his neighbour's fields and collect strands of wool from hedges and brambles. This Yeats did." Hereafter all references to Graves will be to The White Goddess.


17. Gods and Fighting Men, p. 86.

18. Graves, p. 370.


25. Essays and Introductions, p. 73.

26. Essays and Introductions, p. 75.

27. Essays and Introductions, p. 75.


29. John Quinn had introduced Yeats to Nietzsche's works in 1901. Yeats read them intensively during the period 1902-3, and it is thus probable that The Birth of Tragedy directly influenced the 1904 Preface.

30. Essays and Introductions, p. 91.

31. Essays and Introductions, p. 87.


possible to the \textit{femme fatale} theme and multiple sources which could be examined. Critics have cited a diversity of influences ranging from the fatal women of Elizabethan tragedy to the deathly enchantresses of the Romantic and Pre-Raphaelite poets. Mario Praz's \textit{The Romantic Agony}, trans. Angus Davidson (London: Oxford University Press, 1954) adopts an entirely different approach to the manifestation of the \textit{femme fatale} in the nineteenth century, studying the pathological aspects of the type, the lovely Medusa. My emphasis is primarily upon its mythological derivation and its mythological expression or associations in Yeats' verse.

\textsuperscript{34} Kermode, p. 75.

CHAPTER II

THE CALL OF THE SIDHE

In a celebrated and abused letter to Katherine Tynan, Yeats says that his early poetry is "almost all a flight into fairyland from the real world, and a summons to that flight. . . . It is not a poetry of insight and knowledge, but of longing and complaint—the cry of the heart against necessity."¹ Critical opinion has usually accepted Yeats' comment as canonical and invested it with the traditional opprobrium that seems to attach to the terms "flight" and "fairyland." Rajan and Lentricchia do point to ambiguities in fairyland: Lentricchia acutely observes that "Yeats' deterministic characterization of the empirical world as 'necessity' suggests that he was shaped by what he so detested,"² whilst Rajan comments "The dream haunts the world, and the world the dream; man, being man, can make no lasting choice between them."³ Yet both finally orientate towards the conventional judgement, finding the early works unsatisfactory because the contraries of the dream and real worlds are "both subdued and aesthetically ineffective."⁴ However, unless poetry is to have a prescribed content, the fairyland theme cannot in itself be censured; further, it does not serve as an ornament of Yeats' youthful escapism, but bears multiple significances. Its relation to the human phenomenal world is frequently more equivocal than critics suggest,
and the haunting summons of the Enchantress of the Sidhe, the Celtic Muse, into supernature is fraught with ambiguity.

The Sidhe's call resonates through Yeats' first three volumes, Crossways, The Rose and The Wind among the Reeds; it is the call of the Beloved of the Sidhe or other fairy denizens. I mentioned in the first chapter that the Sidhe are the fairy folk, the diminutive forms of the Tuatha De Danaan, as Yeats eagerly explains in various contexts. During their fleeting passage through the mortal world, the Sidhe purpose to lure the poet to their island beyond the ravages of sorrow, conflict and change. The Celtic Muse is prominent among this legendary throng, who appear to be her retinue. In "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry," Yeats mentions that the Sidhe are the "ministering spirits" of Intellectual Beauty, a mistress whose enjoyment means the poet's death. The Muse is not described as a mythological stereotype, but is assigned chequered, shifting roles and attributes.

The theme of the seduction of a mortal by a fairy enchantress is common in Celtic literature and myth. It provides the controlling structure for "The Wanderings of Oisin," Yeats' first major poem. Yeats adopted the story from a number of prose and poetic versions of the Oisin legend, principally Michael Comyn's "The Lay of Oisin on the Land of Youth." Though Yeats utilizes established features of this story, he reconstructs the narrative pattern with many innovatory descriptive and narrative details in order to convey his own particular aesthetic intention.

At the beginning of "The Wanderings of Oisin," Oisin relates how
"pearl-pale" Niamh confronted the Fenian hunting-party at the sea's verge. Niamh's pictorial attributes best exemplify the White Goddess in the whole of the Yeatsian canon and are dramatically vivid:

And found on the dove-grey edge of the sea
A pearl-pale, high-born lady, who rode
On a horse with bridle of findrinny;
And like a sunset were her lips,
A stormy sunset on doomed ships;
A citron colour gloomed in her hair,
But down to her feet white vesture flowed,
And with the glimmering crimson glowed
Of many a figured embroidery.

The ornate and sinister description of Niamh on her white horse set against the shadowy margin of the sea conveys her destructive beauty, the fatality of her attraction. Oisin immediately acclaims her as beloved and vouchsafes that she will inspire the creation of his poetry, become his Muse: "'And I will make a thousand songs /And set your name all names above.'" Her destructive role is evident, not in that she effects Oisin's actual death, but rather his death to human experience, to his existence in that present, contemporary society; she entices him away from his companions-at-arms, the richly-cherished Fenians and the glories of the pagan world. She causes his separation from the human condition: "But we rode out from the human lands." Grossman explains the aesthetic Symbolist process which Oisin's departure represents: in culminating his relationship to the Muse, the poet writes a poem which "must, as it approaches closer and closer to creative realization, destroy itself in relation to time." As the poet consummates expression of the creative impulse, he becomes increasingly remote from the temporal flux;
the Leanhaun Sidhe consumes the poet's life through inspiring his poetic fulfilment. As Yeats says in his essay on Shelley, inspiration is a kind of death through which the poet transcends the particularity of time and place. When Oisin finally returns, he is preternaturally aged and close to death; his companions and the entire regal pageant of the pagan world have passed away to be replaced by the alien, weak, "prayerful" Christianity. The nature of reality has irrevocably changed, and Oisin can only wait for impending physical death.

The dialogue between Oisin and Patrick indicates that both are aware of the destructiveness of Niamh's love. In terms of the poem's artifice, Oisin expresses the colourful description of Niamh, showing his recognition of the ambivalence of the Sidhe's love. The bard, Oisin, registers the antinomic values inherent in the transcending processes of the imagination, whereas the saint, Patrick, sees Oisin's pagan love straightforwardly as a destructive evil—a characteristic view of monistic Christianity. The opposition prefigures the dialogue between the poet with his unchristened heart and von Hügel in "Vacillation." Patrick picks up Oisin's image of the doomed ships and applies it directly to Oisin's destruction through the lures of pagandom: "You are still wrecked among heathen dreams," which replaces the original limp rejoinder: "Oisin, thou art half heathen still!" The image may evoke the face that launched a thousand ships—Helen, who became one of Yeats' pre-eminent symbols for the White Goddess.

The moon as a controlling image in Niamh's realm suggests another facet of the White Goddess configuration of roles and symbols. Niamh
alludes to the land where she will be "when the white moon climbs" and they journey towards the setting sun, as in all Celtic quests into the Otherworld. It is a land of moonlit pageantry, where the moon in always "like a white rose." Yeats perhaps refers to the rose as symbolic of Ireland (Mangan's "Dark Rosaleen"), foreshadowing his later invocation of the rose as Celtic Muse in The Rose. Certainly, Oisin experiences an exclusively Celtic transcendence, for the Immortals throw away the harp on which he performed human songs and he adopts their Danaan measures. Oisin's sojourn in the Land of the Living terminates with a Danaan Song, rejoicing in permanency until the forms of nature itself dissolve, and until "the moon like a pale rose wither[s] away." The elusive monotone (probably, the demon's voice) sings of the moon's destructive capacity at the transition between the island of conflict (of Victories) and the island of preternatural age and sleep:

'I hear my soul drop down into decay,  
And Manannan's dark tower, stone after stone, 
Gather sea-slime and fall the seaward way, 
And the moon goad the waters night and day,  
That all be overthrown. 

'But till the moon has taken all, I wage  
War on the mightiest men under the skies, 
And they have fallen or fled, age after age.'

These factors transform what appears a wan, abstract Niamh into a complex, richly-patterned figure, clearly more substantial than "the shadows that people the Howth thicket," though possessing a dream-like enchantment which embellishes, rather than detracts from, her appeal. All these roles and qualities are geared to her relationship to the poet,
Oisin, which requires analysis for Niamh's full importance to be elicited.

Niamh sought out Oisin because of his renown as both warrior and poet. Oisin immediately accepts her offer, having fallen into the "desperate gulf of love"; Oisin's image and its epithet suggest the fatality of his infatuation. Initially, Oisin only renounces the human realm as the subject for his poetry; he intends to preserve the social and military allegiances to his cherished Fenians. Thus, he promises Niamh the spoils of earthly battle, but she enjoins total commitment. Her demand is analogous to the Tennysonian Vivien's "Love me not at all or all in all"; Merlin's final surrender to her exaction causes his permanent separation from the Arthurian world. Graves views this tyrannical injunction as typical of the White Goddess; clearly, the Leahaun Sidhe insists upon it since she is finally satisfied only with the poet's death. Oisin accepts Niamh's terms and, mounting the horse of the Sidhe, rides into the brilliantly white Danaan realm, which comprises three islands—the Land of the Living (of Youth), of Victories and of Forgetfulness. The motif of the three islands constitutes a significant departure from all previous versions of the Oisin legend. Yeats explains in an accompanying note that the Gaelic poems do not record Oisin's journey to more than one island, but that "a story in Silva Gadelica describes 'four paradises,' an island to the north, an island to the west, an island to the south, and Adam's paradise in the east." However, Silva Gadelica was not published until three years after The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems and cannot be regarded as a source. Yeats is tailoring the myth to
accommodate his own aesthetic intention, which is discernible despite the alleged "secret symbols."

The first island is one of perpetual youth, love and joy, where Immortals carouse in endless song and dance. The second island is the arena of perpetual conflict, of the maturity of victorious achievement following youthful revelry. Here, at sunset Oisin casts his demonic opponent's carcass into the waves, but the demon's life is restored every fourth day for he can suffer only a deathless death in an immortal world. Lastly, Yeats portrays the Island of Forgetfulness, a realm of dreaming age, of Tithonic immortality, inhabited by white, preternaturally aged giants, who were "Weary with passions that faded when the sevenfold seas were young." The whiteness of pearl-pale Niamh is superceded by "aged whiteness," reflecting the changing significance of the colour of the poet's vision. Yeats seems to have isolated and transmuted the three principal stages of human process: the period of joyous youth and love, of mature conflict and of somnambulistic decrepitude. The Muse has led the poet through the glass into the permanent tableaux of images of human process embodied in mythical archetypes, or in Platonic terms, into the realm of essence, the unchanging reality beneath the inexorable flux. Lentricchia has pointed out that a distinctive feature of the early poetry is its "transparency," for "poet and poem look into a world of essence." Yeats' symbolism, his archetypal pattern, is the manifestation of poetic vision, which enables him to represent "what actually exists, really or unchangeably."

Strangely, however, the poet finds the three dimensions of the
transcendent vision insufficient. Each one hundred year sojourn is terminated by Oisin's encountering some reminder of the mortal world: a staff from a dead warrior's lance, a beech-bough recalling the Almhuin beech, and a fallen starling like those at his Fenian morning foray with Bran, Sceolan and Lomair. None of the three islands can compensate Oisin for the loss of the human world so that finally he would welcome even human flaws and weaknesses; even Conan's slanderous tongue would be "sweet." Thus, Niamh realizes that she must lose Oisin: "'O wandering Oisin, the strength of the bell-branch is naught, /For there moves alive in your fingers the fluttering sadness of earth.'" Graves mentions that the bell-branch was carried by the sacred poets of Ireland, the ollaves, in honour of their triple-goddess, Brigit, and is therefore the insignia for poetic office. In Yeats' "The Dedication to a Book of Stories Selected from the Irish Novelists," the bell-branch clearly symbolizes the Irish gleeman's calling. Since its fruit induces "inhuman sleep," Bloom interprets the bell-branch as an emblem of what it effects—supernatural sleep, but it is rather a symbol of the poetic calling which transports the poet into the inhuman dream of art. Dreaming is correlated with the poetic process for Yeats, and the eyes of the creatures of Forgetfulness are "dull with the smoke of their dreams." When they sway the bell-branch, the music of its tinkling bells lulls Oisin into dreams, both Lethean and Celtic:

And by me, in soft raiment, the Fenians moved in loud streams,
And Grania, walking and smiling, sewed with her needle of bone.
So lived I and lived not, so wrought I and wrought not, with creatures of dreams.

The Muse has borne him into the world of Celtic mythical archetypes, of the finished, complete forms of love, war and age, but has bereft him of ordinary human sorrow, which Niamh images as a bird, alive, immediate, tangible, in Oisin's hands. Niamh's love has enabled him to penetrate beyond, but to lose irrevocably, the common lot of man. The contraries of the human and fairy domains are poignantly sustained; and following Oisin's return to the dismal earth, his valedictory resolve is never to forsake his companions again, declaring "It were sad to gaze on the blessed and no man I loved of old there." The dream has its cost: the fancy, it seems, cannot cheat so well as she is famed to do.

Niamh's promise to Oisin of a flawless idyll proves, in one sense, a cheat and finally an admitted deception, for Niamh confesses that no one knows which is the island of content: art is an illusion and deceives. At this stage of the quest, the powerful, exotic goddess of the Sidhe is transformed into "lost Niamh" with "weeping head"; strangely, she has contracted sorrow from her human victim, anticipating the ideal beauty which suffers with man in "To the Rose upon the Rood of Time."

Niamh evinces multiple roles and qualities: she is destructive and creative, loving but sinister and deceptive, loftily immortal yet suffering with man. These ambiguities merge into a figure of dream-like enchantment and elegant feminine grace. Though assuming the White Goddess characteristics, she is not the Gravesean bitch-goddess lusting for human blood; nor can she ever be for Yeats, who was too much of a patrician and a gentleman to subscribe to that atavistic image.
They stole little Bridget  
For seven years long;  
When she came down again  
Her friends were all gone.  
They took her lightly back,  
Between the night and morrow,  
They thought that she was fast asleep,  
But she was dead with sorrow.

William Allingham, "The Fairies"

Seductive vision and the ambiguity of flight into fairyland are prominent themes in Yeats' first three volumes of poetry—*Crossways*, *The Rose* and *The Wind among the Reeds*. In *Crossways*, "The Stolen Child" and "The Madness of King Goll" preserve the equivocal dialectic of the fairy and human orders. "The Stolen Child" is based upon the Celtic motif of abduction by the Sidhe and is fittingly anthologized among a group of cognate stories and poems in Yeats' *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, because it belongs essentially to Irish folk culture. In "The Stolen Child," the mischievous Sidhe contrive to lure the human child to their joyous revels on the "leafy island" beyond the human world of sorrow; yet the concluding verse unmasks the fairies' realization of the child's loss. The child is deprived of the homespun pleasures which bring man the peace of domestic simplicity, denied to the Sidhe indulging their boisterous frolics. The fairies are distinctly Celtic-gay, concerned for human sorrow, but ominous and trickily deceptive. Rajan ventures so far as to see an element of sheer terror in the final stanza; certainly the terror of the Sidhe's activities is boldly presented in Allingham's seemingly
light-hearted poem, "The Fairies," which prefaces Yeats' *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*. Yet, Yeats' Terrible Sidhe seem to be reserved for *The Wind among the Reeds*.

The discredited, intellectually disreputable fairies are clearly more than the embroidery of the early poems, and although "The Stolen Child" possesses what Jeffares terms "an airy delicacy and grace," it does not meet exactly his other ascriptions of "an innocence and the charm of unreality." "The Madness of King Goll" realizes more amply the terrors intrinsic to the creative process, as Grossman explains: "Among Yeats' earliest poems, 'King Goll' declares most clearly the impact on Yeats of the muse of Ireland. The active man runs mad. Abdicating his temporal power, he becomes a poet who finds joy in singing, but is overthrown by the madness which is his inspiration and destroys his instrument." Orchil figures as the destructive Muse in the poem, and King Goll, after celebrating her beauty, destroys his harp. Orchil is a Formorian sorceress, and the Formoroh or Fomor are the powers of darkness, cold and death in Celtic myth.

The prefatory poem of *The Rose*, "To the Rose upon the Rood of Time," expresses a dual request for inspiration and the restraint of that inspiration, so that the poet is not totally enclosed or consumed by Celtic dreams. The poet invokes the Rose, which symbolizes the Celtic Muse, the rose being a traditional image of Ireland. Like Niamh, her presence will prompt him to write Danaan songs, and Yeats specifies the two legends of Cuchulain's fight with the sea and Fergus' encounter with a Druid. The Muse's proximity enables him to penetrate to the essence.
of "Eternal Beauty," underlying the finite, phenomenal world. Following
Romantic and Symbolist traditions, poetry becomes a window into the in-
finite, a feature of Yeats' early aesthetic which was evident in "The
Wanderings of Oisin." The second stanza repeats and then qualifies the
opening invocation, because the poet rejects the total commitment init-
ially made to Niamh, desiring a small area of distilled inspiration so
that his essential community with "poor, foolish" human life is not
vitiated:

Come near, come near, come near—Ah, leave me still
A little space for the rose-breath to fill!
Lest I no more hear common things that crave.

The transcendent cannot deny the finite, the immortal Rose must remain
transfixed to the Rood of Time; the lofty proud Celtic Muse is charac-
terized by a sadness as poignant as Niamh's. Yeats explains retro-
spectively this conception of the rose: "I notice upon reading these
poems for the first time for several years that the quality symbolized
as The Rose differs from Intellectual beauty of Shelley and Spenser in
that I have imagined it as suffering with man and not as something pur-
sued and seen from afar." 23

The two subsequent Rose poems narrate the legends of Fergus and
Cuchulain mentioned in "To the Rose upon the Rood of Time." "Fergus and
the Druid" hinges upon a similar antinomy to "King Goll": Fergus renounces
kingship for the "Druid's dreaming wisdom" (Druids were both poets and
magicians), only to discover that Druidic knowledge is inextricably woven
"with great webs of sorrow." In "Cuchulain's Fight with the Sea," Emer
represents the archetype of the destructive beloved, and plots to kill Cuchulain through the unwitting instrument of Cuchulain's only son.

The following poem, "The Rose of the World," affords the quintessential image of inspiration—the rose who inspired the creation of the world, each of the three verses focussing on a principal aspect of the figure. The first stanza centres upon the destructiveness of beauty. Yeats inverts the traditional poetic complaint upon carpe diem themes, devouring time and fading beauty, and sees beauty as the agent rather than the victim of destruction:

Who dreamed that beauty passes like a dream?
For these red lips, with all their mournful pride,
Mournful that no new wonder may betide,
Troy passed away on one high funeral gleam,
And Usna's children died.

In the first line, the use of "dreamed" suggests the process of artistic creation, the poet as dreamer of dreams, and hence in this context it applies to the carpe diem poet. Yeats selects two superlative examples of the archetype of the destructive beloved—Helen and Deirdre. Deirdre is the most renowned of Irish beauties, whom only to see seemed a surety of death; in Lady Gregory's Cuchulain of Muirtheimne, Cathbad prophesies that on her account "more blood will be shed in Ireland since time and race began." The second stanza concentrates upon the Muse as unchanging essence, contrasted with the feverishly transient world, with men's souls "that waver and give place /Like the pale waters in their wintry race." The simile carries the maximum impact of man's ephemerality: life is swiftly-running water under conditions of perpetual winter, so
brief as to appear an unceasing end. The evanescence of all phenomena compared with the Muse is heightened by relating the water image to the apparently changeless stars, which are reduced to "foam of the sky," frothy, ephemeral, insubstantial. The final verse stresses her preeminent inspirational role for she prompted the Creator to fashion the earth: "He made the world to be a grassy road /Before her wandering feet."

"The Rose of the World" is a telescoped lyrical expression of the White Goddess concept, but again there are characteristically Yeatsian divergencies. The Muse is a "mournful," red-lipped beauty, "Weary and kind," suggesting a Pre-Raphaelite sensuousness and languor. Kindness is obviously a paradoxical quality in this context, and A.E. criticized the last verse because of the incongruity of the Rose's attributes. Its inclusion illustrates Yeats' concern with a multifaceted image within which compassion and destructiveness can legitimately operate, for the Muse is the source and reconciliation of antinomies, as both "The Rose of the World" and "The Rose of Peace" indicate.

"The Rose of the World" can be seen as the first poem of a trilogy, since it is followed by two closely related works, "The Rose of Peace" and "The Rose of Battle." In "The Rose of the World," the Muse instigates the cycle of human creation and destruction; she is the fountainhead of dualities, like the Great Mother from whom all life issues and to whom it returns, Ceres and the Infernal Proserpine. In the second poem, the Muse can terminate all conflict, making a "rosy peace" of Heaven and Hell, for her beauty would convert the warrior angel, Michael, to
gentleness. This apocalyptic efficacy foreshadows the Alchemical Rose of *The Wind among the Reeds*.

"The Rose of Battle" is a difficult poem to explicate. It seems to present battle and suffering as the inevitable corollaries of the Rose's inspiration. The Rose and the questors of a "sweet far thing" are gathered at the sea's edge, often the mysterious verge of the fairy realm. The voyagers wage God's war at sea and are probably poets and mystics, those who lead contemplative lives, since they are isolated and their ships have "thought-woven sails." Although they are sad, the Rose participates in their sorrow, as in Christianity God suffers with man:

Rose of all Roses, Rose of all the World!  
You, too, have come where the dim tides are hurled  
Upon the wharves of sorrow, and heard ring  
The bell that calls us on; the sweet far thing.  
Beauty grown sad with its eternity  
Made you of us; and of the dim grey sea.

"The Rose of Battle" looks forward to the poem and series of stories entitled *The Secret Rose*, which have the avowed purpose of expressing "the war of the spiritual with the natural order." The *Secret Rose* stories describe types of both active and contemplative livers, swordsman and poet-saint in Yeatsian terms, who, because they are inspired by a vision of the Rose, suffer in the world, the final cost of their vision being death. The Rose symbol, and also the conjunction of Rose and cross in the prefatory poem, can be associated with the occult Rose of the Order of the Golden Dawn, which Yeats had joined in 1890. Principally, the Hermetic Rose represented sacrificial love, and thus the adepts of the
Order graduated from the contemplation of Rosicrucian to Christian myth. Rajan's opinion that the suffering Rose is Yeats' retrospective superimposition seems invalid and would certainly strip the poetry of a wealth of ambiguity. "The Secret Rose" provides the culmination of Rose symbolism in a volume which culminates the first two books, but more detailed explication must be reserved for a study of The Wind among the Reeds.

For the most part, the remainder of the Rose poems utilize Celtic themes and subjects, consonant with Yeats' introductory invocation. He relates the stories of Diarmuid and Grania, the Countess Cathleen, Fergus, Father Gilligan, the Sidhe ("To Some I have Talked with by the Fire"), and ensconces himself in the Irish literary tradition by claiming the bell-branch in "The Dedication to a Book of Stories Selected from the Irish Novelists." A recurrent motif is the visionary island, such as Innisfree, "the numberless islands" and "many a Danaan shore" of "The White Birds" haunting the poet like Elysian ghosts, and the "woven world-forgotten isle" of "The Man who Dreamed of Faeryland." In this last poem, the dreamer finds death itself is not free from "unhaunted sleep," from the transcendent Arcadian dream, an image, which, even in Yeats' early poetry seems to mock man's enterprise.

There are only a few exceptions to the broad thematic design that has emerged through explication of the Rose poems; these few studies constitute not so much exceptions as bald contrasts, radical inversions, for they are informed by the antithetical theme of the mortal beloved. In "The Pity of Love," the poet laments a love which blends in with the
human scene, with all phenomenal reality, in that it too is an integral part of the relentless flux. "The Sorrow of Love" describes a girl in the same terms as the Rose: she has red mournful lips, is proud and sorrowing, and an inspirational figure, since her emergence provokes the creation of "man's image and his cry." Yet she is the mortal beloved, and the Trojan allusions associated with her have the opposite effect to the Muse's portrayal as Helen, for the girl is "Doomed like Odysseus and the labouring ships /And proud as Priam murdered with his peers." "When You are Old" and "A Dream of Death" envisage that unspeakable pity of love ("beyond all telling"), which is the old age and death of the beloved. The destruction of the mortal woman is contemplated in conjunction with the destructivity of the immortal woman: she is the victim and the cause of time's deprivations. The poet has fulfilled his invocatory desire to transcend, but not to neglect human experience.

The Rose concludes with "The Two Trees," "To Some I have Talked with by the Fire" and "To Ireland in the Coming Times." Although "To Some I have Talked with by the Fire" concerns the matter of Ireland, it is not central to this discussion. "The Two Trees" juxtaposes the idyllic inner vision and external, phenomenal reality, and the poet counsels the beloved to acknowledge only the former—the tree which grows in the heart. It is this Edenic inward view, which has inspired the poet's verse:

The shaking of its leafy head
Has given the waves their melody,
And made my lips and music wed,
Murmuring a wizard song for thee.
An exactly opposite tree is reflected in the "glass of outer weariness," which mirrors conflict, decay, ruin, cruelty and bitterness. As Unterecker points out, the two trees are the Tree of Life and of Good and Evil, and Yeats is drawing from Mathers' *The Kabbalah Unveiled* for their expression. Whereas Oisin finds insufficiencies in both realms and finally yearns for human insufficiency, here the poet subscribes completely to the vision; Yeats' motive appears to be that, in this poem, only to the inner sight are the beloved's eyes kind. Despite the heightened lyricism and Maud Gonne's particular liking for this poem, it seems to carry a remarkably cryptic implication unique in the early poetry, but one which is fully expanded in his later work.

"To Ireland in the Coming Times" provides a fitting, ceremonious epilogue. Yeats reaffirms his community with the figures of Irish literary tradition, although more than in "their rhyming" he has celebrated "the red-rose-bordered hem /Of her, whose history began /Before God made the angelic clan." He has served the Rose of the World, who, "weary and kind," lingered by God's seat before Creation and who is the inspirer of all Celtic song:

```
The measure of her flying feet
Made Ireland's heart begin to beat;
And Time bade all his candles flare
To light a measure here and there.
```

The poet journeys after the trailing hem of her robe towards apocalypse, where even love and dream will be extinguished in "truth's consuming ecstasy," anticipating the controlling theme of *The Wind among the Reeds.*
The Wind among the Reeds is the last volume of Yeats' poetry to focus upon the call into fairyland within the prescribed terms of this analysis; and it embodies a climactic treatment of the theme. Yeats comments that he had pondered over the images of "The Wanderings of Oisin," Crossways, and The Rose in order to fashion the "true symbols" of his third book, which certainly culminates his early themes, and represents the apex of his early concept of the Muse. Afterwards, although aspects of the Niamh Muse occur, they are placed in ironic perspective, often reduced to an artefact of the poet's making, and she is no longer temporarily deceptive, but permanently masked. Critics have singled out The Wind among the Reeds for particular censure, because it describes fairyland with more insistence and with less ambiguity than previously. Delicate evidences of an antinomic view have been felt to rescue the earlier poems from too onerous criticism, and, at times, to contribute towards a qualified excellence, but The Wind among the Reeds offers no counter-weight to the vision. Though critics praise the beauty of Yeats' lyric forms, they have agreed with Parkinson's opinion that he has regrettably "disappeared into eternity and rapture."9

Certainly, The Wind among the Reeds issues an emphatic fairy summons; not only is the Sidhe's amorous appeal efficacious, but also their offer of fulfilment, which is contrasted with unrequited earthly passion. The Wind among the Reeds registers the poverty of the world's attraction which cannot hold any gratification for the poet. He meditates
upon the Sidhe with unceasing desire, for they are the immortal lovers who will terminate earthly frustration and limitations, not through the poet's temporary sojourn in their realm, but through the destruction of the world. They are the heralds of an apocalypse in which vision will replace life. The Sidhe are no longer the mischievous fairies of "The Stolen Child," but the world-destroying Sidhe. The Wind among the Reeds is Yeats' Book of Revelation.

The title of the volume itself refers to the call of the Sidhe, as Yeats explains: "Sidhe is also Gaelic for wind, and certainly the Sidhe have much to do with the wind. They journey in the whirling wind, the winds that were called the dance of the daughters of Herodias in the Middle Ages, Herodias doubtless taking the place of some old goddess. When old country people see the leaves whirling on the road they bless themselves, because they believe the Sidhe to be passing by."31 Also, the wind represents that unconfined, vague desire, which the poet focuses upon the Sidhe and which is the prevailing emotion of the volume: "I use the wind as a symbol of vague desires and hopes, not merely because the Sidhe are in the wind, or because the wind bloweth as it listeth, but because wind and spirit and vague desire have been associated everywhere. A highland scholar tells me that his country people use the wind in their talk as I use it in my poem."32 It is a desire which yearns for the destruction of all that is not itself, all that does not long for transformation through the "great wind of love and hate," the Secret Rose's apocalyptic wind. Thus, the wind image underlies the Sidhe's dual roles: they embody desire, but a desire
which brings death to the lover, and here, climactically, death to the world.

In the first poem, "The Hosting of the Sidhe," the Sidhe ride fiercely in the winds, crying "Away, come away: /Empty your heart of its mortal dream." From the Sidhe's viewpoint and from that of the entire volume, the human and fairy worlds have exchanged significances, exchanged their roles as reality and the dream: life is not only insubstantial in that it is short-lived, but also in that it is imaginary—-a "mortal dream." Art and vision are real and can proffer the poet real fulfilment: "The host is rushing 'twixt night and day, /And where is there hope or deed as fair?" The Sidhe's erotic attraction is sensuously vivid, for they ride with parted lips, heaving bosom, burning hair, gleaming eyes. Among the dazzling company, Yeats mentions only two by name--Niamh and Caoilte--Niamh, who loved a mortal, and Caoilte, who was loved by an Immortal: love and desire are the prerogative of the Sidhe.

The following poem, "The Everlasting Voices," concentrates again upon the voices of the Sidhe, which mingle and resonate in the sounds of nature, birds, wind, boughs, tide: "you call in birds, in wind on the hill, /In shaken boughs, in tide on the shore?" The poet pleads for the voices' cessation because man's weary heart cannot bear their unwearying appeal; rather than summoning the poet, they should command the heavenly powers to annihilate time:

O sweet everlasting Voices, be still;  
Go to the guards of the heavenly fold  
And bid them wander obeying your will,  
Flame under flame, till Time be no more.
The poet is too weak to sustain the tension of the two worlds, and yearns to relinquish human inadequacy. "The Moods" again speaks of the dissolution of the temporal flux, and "Into the Twilight" regards both time and man's heart as "out-worn," twilight, when the Sidhe ride, providing the setting for the majority of the poems in *The Wind among the Reeds*.

In "The Song of the Wandering Aengus" the poet goes at twilight into the hazel wood, where he is enraptured by a glimmering girl of the Sidhe. He has ventured into the forest for inspiration, since the hazel was the Celtic tree of poetic inspiration and knowledge. With a severed hazel branch the poet catches a silver trout that suddenly changes into a girl; according to Yeats, the fish was one of the frequent shape-changes assumed by the Sidhe. She calls his name and vanishes, leaving the poet with the solitary purpose of questing to find her love until his own life and all time dissolve. The inference is that only apocalypse will return her to Aengus, that he "will find no other face fair /Till all the valleys of the world have been withered away" ("He Tells of a Valley Full of Lovers").

In "The Host of the Air" the landscape darkens "At the coming of night-tide," and the Host malevolently abduct Bridget, who sacrifices herself to rescue O'Driscoll from the Sidhe's deceptive enchantments. The Host of the Air were the demonic Sidhe, man-haters, and thus their advent in the poem automatically means "evil chance" to the human victims. The inclusion of this folk legend opens up the possibility of Yeatsian reservations about the terrible Sidhe, but these seem denied in
relation to other poems, such as "The Unappeasable Host." Here, the harpy-like Sidhe ride the desolate, thunderous North winds with the vulture, bearing death to the human mother and child. Yet to wind-shaken hearts, the host have the comeliness of "candles at Mother Mary's feet." This analogy implies that the mortal mother and her baby will become sanctified and immortal in the Golden Age of vision, when the cataclysmic Sidhe will appear only as small flames lighted in their reverence.

Images of cataclysm, of the destruction of the old order, are abundant—for example, the Horses of Disaster, the black pig and the bristleless boar. "The Valley of the Black Pig" describes the prophesied great battle, which will finally bring the Celts power. The black pig image is correlated in Yeats' notes with the bristleless boar, and he interprets them both as types of cold or winter, as death struggling with life. Yeats continues to explain that this conflict is analogous to the Sidhe's fight for the seduction of a human, so that the two images reinforce the controlling motif of The Wind among the Reeds. Finally, like the Sidhe's advent, the two beasts express "the darkness that will at last destroy the gods and the world." The unconventional mythical narrator of "He Mourns for the Change that has Come upon him and his Beloved, and Longs for the End of the World" is a hound with one red ear, who has been transformed by the man carrying a hazel wand, and who continually calls to the hornless white deer. Oisin and his Fenian companions were hunting the hornless deer when they encountered Niamh, and later Oisin is puzzled by these two somewhat picturesque animals on his journey to the Land of the Living. Yeats interprets this Celtic
image of the hound as man's desire for woman, so that, in the poem, the poet has been transformed by the hazel wand of poetic inspiration into a disembodied desire, yearning for an apparently unattainable beloved, for apocalypse. Passion detached from all earthly stimulus and satisfaction should probably be associated with the original narrator of many of the poems, Aedh, who represented "fire burning by itself"—"Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit."

The culmination of the thematic patterns in *The Wind among the Reeds* is reached in the poem "The Secret Rose," and in the prose work of the same name which it prefaces. In the poem, the rose retains its earlier symbolic import, but has become more explicitly the occult, the "secret" Rose of the Order of the Golden Dawn. The poet is again awaiting apocalypse, when the Rose's "great wind of love and hate," the amor-death conjunction embodied in the Sidhe, will effect doom. Yeats' prose work *The Secret Rose*, and its companion piece *Rosa Alchemica*, revolve upon the Order of the Alchemical Rose; in the first, the Order's initiates suffer for a base, ingrateful world since the Rose participates in and bears man's sorrow; in the second, Robartes introduces the poet into an Order dedicated to the alchemical change of the "common metals" of life into "some divine and imperishable substance." *Rosa Alchemica* is an aggregation of all the themes of *The Wind among the Reeds*: the poet styles his work "a cry of measureless desire for a world made wholly of essences," "where the weary heart will become a weariless spirit," though he acknowledges that it is an "indefinite world which fills [him] with terror." He sees the earth on the brink of
cataclysmic wars and oblivion, and prophecies his own passing into that "Death which is Beauty itself." Unlike "The Wanderings of Oisin," the poet desires an end of mortal life, which may be achieved through a terrible metamorphosis into beauty. The poetry and short stories of this period illustrate that Niamh, the white lady of inspiration and death, has succeeded in securing Oisin's affections:

The host is rushing 'twixt night and day,  
And where is there hope or deed as fair?  
Caoilte tossing his burning hair, 
And Niamh calling Away, come away.

The Wind among the Reeds is not to be dismissed in the banal phrasing of fin de siècle weariness; it is a robust, highly-wrought series of lyrics about man's elemental need for transcendence, regeneration, the ideal. Yeats' very use of Celtic mythology, of folk themes, indicates that he wishes to incorporate the emotions and aspirations of the people into his poetry, so that it is not the product of a morbid isolation and solipsism. In The Wind among the Reeds, there is a fusion of "the high disciplined or individual kingly mind" and the folk song, the "thoughts and emotions that were created by the community," and Yeats envisages in art a union of the two, which he designates "a marriage of the sun and moon" in "the bride-bed of poetry." 40

In The Wind among the Reeds, the poet aspires to re-create a world whose chaos "wrongs" the Muse's image, which "blossoms a rose in the deeps of [his] heart" ("The Lover Tells of the Rose in his Heart"). In Yeats' early work, it is impossible to elicit doctrinal conclusions,
as Lentricchia ably illustrates. What is the Yeatsian vision? Is Yeats affirming a really-existent realm of essences accessible to the poet through the Muse's inspiration? Fairyland is the abode of the dead and could therefore be seen as the spirit world; Niamh brings death. Fairyland seems also to represent the Anima Mundi, which unites the two previous interpretations, since it is the reservoir of human essences, the archetypes of all the living and the dead. Fairyland further involves traditional poetic vision, particularly for a Blakean disciple, and the poet figures as vates, the self-styled prophet of apocalypse. However vision is described, it is more than a poetic construct, though expressed in the medium of poetry. Dreaming, the poetic process, is heightened into the ecstasy of vision. In Rosa Alchemica, Yeats distinguishes between "the certainty of vision and the uncertainty of dream," and only the certain vision, not inadequate dream, enables him to become an initiate of the Order of the Alchemical Rose. Although vision is clothed in powerful, eloquent symbols in The Wind among the Reeds and is vividly experienced by the poet, its nature has an indefiniteness, what Leavis terms a "shifting cloudy unsizeableness," which expresses possession by a mystical revelation, which poetry can portray, but not circumscribe. In The Wind among the Reeds, Yeats is poet and prophet, the Delphic visionary who sees apocalypse. The artist's dream is intensified to convey the alchemical Rose of vision, which in its furnace will transfigure all common things into "immaterial ecstasy."

In "The Lover Tells of the Rose in his Heart," the Muse has
inspired him to re-create the world, not simply through the poet's dreams, for his dreams of the beloved blossom a rose, flower into vision. The Muse is the source and the image of his vision; she is the exalted "White-woman that passion has worn," to whom he dedicates his verse "with reverent hands" ("A Poet to his Beloved"). After The Wind among the Reeds, the poet is not a visionary, but a dreamer, an artificer, and the Muse is his artefact: he becomes a maker of songs, a singer, and the Muse--his song.
NOTES


4Rajan, p. 27.


7Wentz, pp. 333-40.

8The versions of the Oisin legend known to Yeats are examined by Russell K. Alspach in "Some Sources of Yeats's The Wanderings of Oisin," PMLA LVI (1943), pp. 849-66.


10Essays and Introductions, p. 80.


12Wentz, p. 339.

13Letters, p. 106. Yeats comments in a letter to Katherine Tynan that the Howth thicket and its shadows gave him his first thought of what a long poem should be. Critics usually cite the remark to illustrate that his early work is preoccupied with retreat and escape.

15. John Unterecker in A Reader's Guide to W. B. Yeats (1959; rpt. New York: Noonday Press, 1964), briefly suggests a similar interpretation, but does not develop it, viz. "the three islands are aspects of one life: youth, middle age, and old age" (p. 65).

16. Lentricchia, p. 50.

17. Essays and Introductions, p. 146.


22. See Yeats' notes in the Variorum: "The Rose is a favourite symbol with the Irish poets. It has given a name to more than one poem, both Gaelic and English, and is used, not merely in love poems, but in addresses to Ireland, as in De Vere's line, 'The little black rose shall be red at last,' and in Mangan's 'Dark Rosaleen.'"


27. Rajan, p. 29.

28. Unterecker, p. 86.

29. Variorum, p. 800.


31. Variorum, p. 800.

32. Variorum, p. 806.

34. Variorum, p. 806.

35. Variorum, p. 809.

36. Variorum, p. 809.


38. Red Hanrahan etc., p. 190.


40. Red Hanrahan etc., p. 204.


42. Lentricchia, pp. 39-43 et passim.

43. Red Hanrahan etc., p. 209.


45. Red Hanrahan etc., p. 194.
CHAPTER III

THE MORTAL AND HEROIC MUSE

At the conclusion of *Rosa Alchemica*, the poet is lured into dance with "an immortal august woman" who seems "laden with a wisdom more profound than the darkness that is between star and star, and with a love like the love that breathed upon the waters."¹ The attributes of wisdom and creative love suggest that she is the first principle, the inspirational breath of the world's origin. Suddenly, the poet realizes that she is "drinking up [his] soul as an ox drinks up a wayside pool," and the striking, discordant analogy points to the sheer strength and power with which the Muse drains the poet's life, his existence in the dissatisfying, phenomenal world. The poet recoils from ultimate commitment to her, and immediately the splendid temple with its mystical Order dissolves to leave a tawdry house and a furious mob. Niamh cannot seduce Oisin into the land of vision; Yeats could not make the final surrender of human experience to his white lady of inspiration and death, or, in Hoffman's phrasing, of doom and ecstasy.² Yeats withdraws from Shelley's uncompromising, exultant injunction: "Die /If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!" And thus Yeats' vision disappears. In *The Wind among the Reeds*, there is no hint of reservations about the Sidhe's all-consuming appeal, nor a hint of the wasteland that follows the demise of vision, but the poetry of the next two volumes is poet-visionary and post-lapsarian, and Yeats reveals a distraught awareness that paradise is lost.
"Adam's Curse" is redolent with this new tragic awareness, for all the beauty in life is seen as the result of gross effort and unrelenting industry. His poetry is not the expression of unchartered vision, but of the poet's laborious craft. Both volumes concentrate more emphatically than any other Yeatsian verse upon the patient and difficult application which poetry requires. In "Adam's Curse," poetry is considered to present a more strenuous task than scrubbing a pavement or breaking stones, and is also compared with the domestic tedium of needlework, a meticulous process demanding continual revision, "stitching and unstitching." The female figure again provides the only source for his poetic thoughts or exertions: "I had a thought for no one but your ears: /That you were beautiful, and that I strove /To love you in the old high way of love." Yet like a poem's beauty, her beauty is the fruit of industry: "'To be born woman is to know— /Although they do not talk of it at school— /That we must labour to be beautiful.'" "No fine thing" possesses excellence in its own inherent nature; in a postlapsarian world, it can only be achieved through an inordinate effort comparable with common labouring. The poet recognizes original sin, or rather the natural imperfection predestined for all men, which transforms love into an "idle trade," so that human ideals are reduced to a commonplace occupation, to the level of commercial barter. The poet had been solely dedicated to his beloved, like those impassioned devotees of the courtly ethos, who considered love to be "compounded of high courtesy." Despite, or because of his absolute devotion, their relationship has become "As weary-hearted as that hollow moon." The poet's unqualified love
is at variance with a fallen world subject to continual flux. The moon, mistress of change, is a dominant image and fittingly she is the old waning moon, described as "hollow" and "worn" as "a shell /Washed by time's waters." Their relationship is like a shell: although still beautiful, it is the empty, dead remainder of the vital life it contained and is worn by the inexorable tides of change. References to the seasonal and diurnal revolution reinforce Yeats' representation of the realm of temporal vicissitude.

Clearly, the beloved whose relationship to the poet has waned is a creature of mortality, not one of the immortal, unflawed Sidhe. Hence, Yeats carefully portrays the physical concrete details of a specific situation, the time of the year and the time of the day. It is the end of the summer and of day, and a group of three are immersed in earnest conversation about poetry and love. The mention of the word "love" silences discussion, leaving them to their private thoughts. Without comment, they watch the smouldering sunset and the wan moon in the blue-green sky. Although certain details bear symbolic significance, Yeats has evidently been concerned to describe an actual event occurring at a particular time and not a richly-tapestried, immortal realm. Yeats can now affirm with Shakespeare: "My mistress when she walks treads on the ground." The beloved is the mortal Muse, the inspirational figure in Yeats' post-visionary, human experience.

I should perhaps at last make some reference to the redoubtable Miss Gonne, the alleged inspirer of all Yeats' verse. In "Adam's Curse," Yeats is relating an actual conversation between himself, Miss Gonne and
her sister, Kathleen Pilcher. Yeats' poetry in these two volumes seems to concern most closely his personal experience and its inspirational figure. None of Yeats' poetry can be read as an autobiographical confession for "all that is personal soon rots; it must be packed in ice or salt";—nevertheless, these books stem to some degree from Yeats' private anguish over his intensely dissatisfying relationship with Maud Gonne. This period of Yeats' writing witnessed Maud Gonne's final rejection of Yeats and her marriage to John Macbride; Yeats' work concentrates significantly upon the loss of the Muse, her fickleness and cruelty. The latter quality is at times associated with incendiary political activities as in "No Second Troy," which would confirm reference to Miss Gonne and her interminable political machinations. This mortal Muse is characterized particularly by two aspects of change: the first is obviously the physical change exacted by time, her aging, and the second is the change in her affections and allegiances, her fickleness. It is therefore natural that the poetry in these two books is often placed in a more substantial physical context, suggestive of the finite world. Critics have usually observed some alteration in Yeats' style or in his characteristic themes during this period. Bowra points out: "In The Seven Woods (1904) such poems as Adam's Curse show that he had begun to get closer to fact," and Ellmann, also commenting on "Adam's Curse," thinks the poem illustrates Yeats' growing concern with "verisimilitude."

The theme of the mortal Muse is prominent in a number of poems. In "The Arrow," the poet's thoughts have been concerned with the beauty
of his beloved, which is symbolized as an arrow that has wounded him. This sounds again the motif of the destructive beloved, and the arrow may connote the courtly ethos, which Yeats mentions in other poems of these two sections. The courtly idiom would suggest the exaggerated, limitless dedication of the poet to his mistress, the "old high way of love" in "Adam's Curse," which is as outmoded and ineffectual as "the hollow moon." The poem previous to "The Arrow," "In the Seven Woods," uses the comparable image of the Great Archer with his "cloudy quiver" poised over Pairc-na-lee. Possibly he represents a kind of Gaelicized Cupid, and Yeats intends to evoke with the bow and arrow images all the destructiveness which typifies the courtly idiom and its sublime devotions, for example, the high ineffable tragedy expressed in "the woful vers" of Troilus' "double sorwe." In "The Arrow," this destructive Muse is not the changeless Niamh luring the poet from humanity, but embodies the inspiration of the mortal woman, for her incomparable beauty which wrought destruction has faded in a world beleaguered by change. Although this aging Muse is kinder because her beauty can no longer levy its fatal toll, the poet still regrets the change: "This beauty's kinder, yet for a reason /I could weep that the old is out of season." The poet would reaffirm his allegiance to that unattainable, peerless beauty who inflicted his wound—the source and the subject of his song, his laments.

"The Folly of Being Comforted" treats the theme of the "well-beloved's" aging, and again Yeats suggests the characters involved in an actual situation. A friend reflects that the poet's love will become
tempered by wisdom because of his beloved's diminishing attraction. The considerate friend counsels a little patience for "Time can but make it easier to be wise"—a piece of homespun philosophy with a proverbial ring, which illustrates the conversational tenor typical of this selection of poems. Yeats' response has a dramatic verve, for his heart exclaims in horror against this intolerable comfort. The poet absolutely denies time's ravages with a rhetorical assertion and grandiose gesturing similar to Shakespeare's sonnet: "No Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change." Yeats challenges tempus edax rerum, and transforms time into a creative process, the Greek Kairos: "Time can but make her beauty over again." He intimates the unchanging heroic nature of her beauty, for its essential nobility makes "The fire that stirs about her, when she stirs," burn "but more clearly." The metaphor presumably refers to her capacity for fiery action and her passionate regal lineaments, which manifest her innate nobility. The sonnet concludes with an impassioned outburst that stressfully reinforces his defiance of time: "O heart! O heart! if she'd but turn her head, /You'd know the folly of being comforted."

Yeats dramatizes himself in a series of finely-controlled postures assumed towards the mortal Muse; these are comparable but subtly varied, conveying a sustained emotional vitality and a sustained richness of invention and dramatic gesture. In "Old Memory," she is the mortal individual after whom all the great queens of myth, the immortal Muses, were patterned. The poet says that her strength calls to mind "The queens that were imagined long ago." She is a part both of his own memories
and the ancient memory of man, the collective unconscious or Anima Mundi. In "Under the Moon," these lofty queens of Celticdom are approached from a contrary viewpoint to that usually adopted by Yeats, and it is a viewpoint provoked by his concern with the human world of change and flux. The poet relates a whole cluster of famous Celtic legends with their *femme fatale* figures. He includes Nimue (or Vivien) who seduced into a living death the most eminent magician and artificer of that age; Deirdre whose beauty effected great tragedy and many deaths; Guinevere whose illicit passion finally caused the disintegration of the most renowned Order of Knighthood in the world; and Niamh and Fand of the Sidhe, the one the seducer of the poet, Oisin, and the other of the greatest hero of Celtic antiquity, Cuchulain. The poet can discover "no happiness in dreaming," in writing verse about these unparalleleddestructive beauties, and the reader assumes that Yeats is censuring the outrageous ruin effected by these queens. This impression is strengthened in the first section of the poem, because Yeats mentions the recipients of the destructivity and the important places associated with them, rather than the queens' names. He begins: "I have no happiness in dreaming of Brycelinde," and the reader's primary association is with Merlin's deception by the malicious Nimue and his resulting entombment. The concluding stanza is a contrived surprise, because Yeats is not bewailing the destructiveness of beauty, but the ruin which that beauty itself suffers: "To Dream of women whose beauty was folded in dismay, /Even in an old story, is a burden not to be borne." Yeats does not amplify this terse statement with any detail, but presumably he wishes to evoke the
sorrow, tragic change, even the death, which beset these queens in their individual stories. He can think only of the sadness of Niamh, the loss that Fand suffers. Change and mortality comprise a major theme of the volume, and thus the poet's dreaming now dwells upon a view of the femme fatale consonant with this subject. The "burden not to be borne" clearly works as a pun, indicating both the wearisome weight of, and the song or poem about, beauty in dismay. Poetry on this subject is not tolerable to the poet; but even unmitigated, changeless joy in the Land of the Living had its own, though lesser insufficiency. Whether the poet is "Under the Moon" or beyond the moon's vicissitude, he cannot know final satisfaction.

Other poems in The Seven Woods concentrate upon change in the beloved, but not change resulting from destructive time or destructive circumstance, rather from the beloved's own volition, her deliberate fickleness. Again she is the mortal woman, and her imperfection is not caused through the process of aging, but through her shallow, inconsiderate character. She compares with some of those fickle, unattainable, cruel beauties of the courtly ethos, who were worshipped with boundless adoration and sacrifice. In "Never Give All the Heart," the poet says cryptically that a passionate woman's very criteria for love are transiency and theatricality and that a permanent, real, serious devotion to her must lead to disaster. The women have "given their hearts up to the play" and ironically the poet, whose occupation is artifice, playing rather than actual participation, has been unable to "play it well enough." Biographers may certainly be correct in relating the poem to
Yeats' dejection over Maud Gonne, for the poem seems to have a more personally splenetic tone than much of Yeats' work: "He that made this knows all the cost, /For he gave all his heart and lost." The artificer could fashion the poem, but could not fashion the play, the artificial game of love. He succeeded in his art with the skill of the artificer, but was tragically unable to translate that skill into his actual experience. "O Do Not Love Too Long" treats the same theme: the poet through his sustained love has grown "out of fashion," the phrase indicating the triviality of the woman's attachment to him.

The Green Helmet and Other Poems describes the two aspects of change in the beloved, which were central to the previous volume. Here, she is more frequently associated with Helen as the destructive and heroic beauty of Greek myth, celebrated by Yeats' prototype, Homer. In "Peace," his beloved is the mortal, individual Helen, the sublime archetype of ruinous loveliness. However, the White Goddess has here softened and mellowed with age, and finally succumbed to peace. Yet her personal qualities have aged her as much as the depredations of time: if her entire life had not been a "storm," had not been dedicated to strife, she would have that heroic nobility of bearing and expression, a painter's fitting subject. Again, the figure possesses individual and archetypal features; the particular combination of these in any given poem varies, so that the Muse is never a formulaic expression and "can escape—into the abundance and depth of nature." In "Peace" and the other poems of the selection, Yeats again intends some reference to Maud Gonne as the mortal Muse, and she is particularly associated with an heroic society,
its dignified, fierce action. The Muse seems also to be the Morrigu. Yeats eulogizes heroic beauty in a story of a peasant woman's vision of Queen Maeve: "This old woman who can neither read nor write, has come face to face with heroic beauty, that 'highest beauty,' which Blake says, 'changes least from youth to age,' a beauty that has been fading out of the arts, since that decadence, we call progress, set voluptuous beauty in its place." After relating various appearances of Maeve and her company of beautiful warriors, he concludes with a tale about Maeve's fleeting love of a mortal poet, who, deserted, can only recite lamentations for his lost paramour. This is no sensual, fleshly Muse, and in *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* Yeats associates her with the heroines of antiquity, particularly with the Greek heroic era but also implicitly with Celtic pagandom, for both societies cherished the same values and the same virtues. "No Second Troy" illustrates this reference to the Greek heroic age with its implied comparison to the glorious Celtic heritage. The poem's heroine is akin to the Greek spirit as the Trojan allusion evidences, but she also exemplifies the traits of the typical Celtic hero. In his study of Celtic heroism, Zwerdling states that these qualities are primarily leadership and courage of an exaggerated, reckless nature, such as Cuchulain's defence of Ulster single-handed against an entire army. Zwerdling continues by pointing out that the mass slaughter, which is the hallmark of such exploits, testifies to "a basic savagery at the root of the hero's valor, which gives him much of his passion and fierceness." He is stubborn, fearless and often rashly careless of life. Similarly, Yeats' Muse is a leader of
men, their incendiary advocate, for she would teach them "violent ways—
Had they but courage equal to desire." The Muse herself possesses the
gift of unflinching courage and that innate ferocity and passion of the
epic code; thus, her beauty is most fittingly compared with a tightened
bow. This brilliant image conveys the heroic dimensions of her attraction
and its ready, taut destructivity. The courtly, decorous images of
arrow and quiver have been superseded by a powerful weapon, tightened
and poised for shooting by one of those vigorous Homeric warriors. The
similes of bow and fire—weapons and the evocation of burning citadels
—aptly convey the beloved as the Morrigu or the passionate, war-hungry
Maeve of Cruachan. Thus, her beauty speaks of a former era and is
"not natural in an age like this, /Being high and solitary and most
stern." "Natural" could be a pun, indicating her unkindness, because
this Amazonian beauty has scarcely been considerate of the poet's feel-
ings. He tries to excuse her infliction of continual misery upon him by
asserting that her imperial, war-like character is a sufficient exoner-
ation in itself: "Why, what could she have done, being what she is? /Was
there another Troy for her to burn?" This is a somewhat cryptic exoner-
ation, for the poet accepts that her dazzling, intrepid character can
only bring destruction: being what she is, what else can she do but des-
troy? She has the epic savagery and recklessness, and they inform her
lonely superiority.

Clearly, this heroic beauty is also the mortal Muse, for Yeats
invests the poem with tangible circumstances and relates it explicitly
to his own experience: she has filled his days with sorrow and taught
violent measures to the "ignorant." On a personal level, she is the incendiary Maud Gonne who squandered the poet's love and her own loftiness, espousing violence and the philistine mob. Although she is herself mortal, she is the human original for the heroic archetype; on the universal level, she is the epic heroine indifferent to her own life and to personal relationships, pitching everything into the hyperbolic glory of battle and conflict which alone can satisfy her needs. Yeats has dextrously built in the conflicting angles of vision adopted towards this destructive, yet superb Muse.

In "A Woman Homer Sung," the poet again celebrates the mortal and heroic Muse. Yeats establishes a temporal context for the poem by relating his youthful experiences in life to his mature achievements in art. The romantic pre-possession of the poet's youth stimulated a lifetime's writing, devoted to the expression of his Muse's beauty. Now, "being grey," he claims to have realized his aesthetic desire and posterity will confirm that "he shadowd in a glass /What thing her body was." The beloved will have changed or perished, being a creature of flux, but her reflection in his poetry will remain. He vouchsafes that poetic immortality traditionally offered to the ephemeral mistress of unchanging song. The archetype for his individual beloved is the inspirational figure of Homeric verse, presumably Helen—beauty with "fiery blood" belonging to an heroic culture. However, the mortal beloved seems to be the living embodiment of this archetype: her transient, yet inhumanly heroic beauty seems to deny all human imperfection. One of Yeats' cherished ideals in the nineties was the transformation of life into art, of
brute fact into vision, and here the mortal Muse seems in herself no lesser thing than a work of art, but a work which can only be permanent through its poetic reflection. She seems a masterwork of labouring thought, making life and art expressive of the heroic artifice, so "That life and letters seem /But an heroic dream." She is the living exemplar of Helen's excellence, and the poet aligns himself with Homer as the commemorator of heroic, destructive beauty. It is the first of many poems in which Yeats assumes the Homeric role. Yeats saw himself as the singer of eminent epic traditions and of majestic epic beauty and this self-styled role persists in much of his work—for example, "The Tower" associates the poet with "beauty's blind rambling celebrant." During a discussion of the manifold significances of the swan image, Hoffman points out the serious importance of the Homeric stance for Yeats: "Nor is it inappropriate to remember that it was as a swan that Jove covered Leda, and from their union was born Helen of Troy whose beauty brought into being all of Homer's song. And Yeats's song, like Homer's, is epic by design. The parallel may seem inexact, but we shall see that in a very literal sense Yeats considered his themes analogous to those of the blind poet, finding the ancient religion and heroic tales of Ireland identical with those of Greece, and hoping to express the character of his country as Homer had done for his. Yeats did desire to ride in that empty saddle where Homer rode."

Certainly, the comparison of Greek and Celtic myth is a recurrent feature of Yeats' prose writing, for he felt profoundly the similarity of the two mythical world-pictures, their similar "wild beauty" and their similar potentiality for shaping and
inspiring a prestigious culture and a prestigious nation. He also felt that the importance of a mythical revival would not be a simply parochial one, but would provide a necessary efflorescence of imaginative power in European tradition, "a new intoxication for the imagination of the world."

Initially, the poet had journeyed with ethereal Niamh into the tableaux of Celtic mythological designs; he next invoked the Muse as Alchemical Rose for his death into vision. The Rose's sovereignty was then usurped by the Homeric ideal of sturdy womanhood, particularly Helen, and Yeats superimposes upon this the fierce qualities of the warrior queens of Celticdom. The archetype of heroic beauty is related to the individual living goddess—Maud Gonne. All these diverse faces belong essentially to the Gaelic Muse, and the staunch Gaelic Muse and her lofty Homeric devotee are, as in Yeats' previous expression of the figures, treated with characteristic variousness and depth. The relation of biography to myth elicits particularly striking effects in the poems of this period varying from poignancy to comedy. In "No Second Troy," I have discussed the poet's personal anguish at Miss Gonne's political rabble-rousing and his bitter acceptance of this activity through understanding of her indomitable character. I have also mentioned the various emotions and attitudes the poet's mixed response infuses into the poem. His appreciation of her heroic beauty leads to censure and eulogy, love and bitterness, which he tries to accommodate into a stoical, yet despairing wisdom. Depth of personal emotion and involvement are related to the impersonal Homeric role, and the intensely individual devotion is also a detached epic celebration of destructive love.
In "A Woman Homer Sung," the relation of the individual situation to the epic role has a comic incongruity. The poet describes his youthful response to Miss Gonne who directly inspired his creativity: "Whereon I wrote and wrought" (my italics). The elated, puppy-dog enthusiasm of the boy scarcely accords with Homeric stature. If any man approached his beloved, the poet quivered with hate and fear because he assigned romantic intentions to the intruder. Yet, if the man passed her by with indifference, the poet saw this indignantly as a "bitter wrong" perpetrated against his beloved. The picture of a highly-wrought, sensitive, "beardless" youth is absurdly at variance with his magnificent Homeric stance. The continuing changes in the description of poet and Muse add great versatility and significant detail to the poems, so that Yeats never limits these recurrent personae to mere formulas. Interestingly, "A Woman Homer Sung" also indicates that Yeats was thoroughly aware of that individual idiosyncrasy which Auden ascribes to him: "You were silly like us; your gift survived it all." It also indicates Yeats' equal awareness that his gift would survive it all.

A similar heroi-comic or tragi-comic vein is evident in "Reconciliation"; the poet again expresses his individual perplexity with relation to the Muse in terms of the contrast between the lofty and the absurd. The poem refers to the mortal Muse who has deprived the poet of all joy. He recalls the memorable day when she deserted him and it seemed that his sense perceptions were vitiated, as if from the impact of lightning. Yeats claims that her departure meant the loss of his most poignantly communicative poetry, because she "took away /The verses
that could move them" (his readers), and subsequently he laments: "I could find /Nothing to make a song about but kings, /Helmets, and swords, and half-forgotten things /That were like memories of you." Ellmann comments that Yeats turned to dramas on Irish heroic themes after the loss of Maud Gonne, presumably because drama involves a less personal revelation than poetry, and Yeats was able to absorb himself in the distracting practicalities of theatre business and stage production. The splendid heroic trappings of these plays were all mere memories of her, his heroic Muse; and they were intensely dissatisfying memories for his poetic "thoughts" since her departure have been unproductive and frigid, "barren" and "have chilled [him] to the bone." The poet tries somewhat laconically in "No Second Troy" to excuse his beloved, and here he appears to go further in proposing this "Reconciliation" with her. To effect this, the poet portrays himself as an actor in a "laughing, weeping fit," experiencing the simultaneous interaction of joy and sorrow, which possibly suggests the mixed blend of emotions in the tragi-comic. Whilst undergoing this tearful elation, the poet avers that he will "Hurl helmets, crowns, and swords into the pit"; having accomplished reconciliation, he dispenses with the heroic stage-properties which he substituted for his Muse. However, the reconciliation seems a theatrical one—an actor's rehearsed, flamboyant gesture. The use of the word "fit" invests the gesture with a sense of both absurdity and impermanence, since the term automatically suggests a passing outburst of enthusiastic hysteria. Thus, there seems to be no question of complete reconciliation with his early Muse figures, whether Niamh or Helen, and after The
Green Helmet and Other Poems he considerably reduces the emphasis given to them. In no subsequent volume, does the Muse serve as the major, structuring theme. This change may point to the intensification of Yeats' concern with the finished work of art rather than the inspiration for that work, with the complete, polished artefact rather than the aesthetic process from gestation to final accomplishment. This is not to suggest that Yeats was ever less than preoccupied with the achieved poetic form, but that the form assumed an added, distinctive importance.

Lentricchia has discussed the fluctuations of the Yeatsian aesthetic, though he is reluctant to chart a definite line of development, feeling that Yeats' views change from poem to poem and even within the boundaries of a single work. However, he does illustrate a general pattern in the progress of Yeats' concept of art. Lentricchia states that "Romantic theory, spiritualism and the magical strain in the symbolist aesthetic tended to lift him out of time and beyond the pressures of an alien world," yet "his skeptical mind tended to make him shy from a view of the poet and reality which ignored the mire of empirical experience."¹⁵ Yeats' earliest poetry is clearly concerned with the poet's transcendence of the phenomenal world, although Oisin cannot forget that world's attraction, even the attraction of its flaws and weaknesses. The intractable vagaries of the empirical world assume much greater importance about 1902, as Lentricchia suggests, and the shift of emphasis in content is accompanied by appropriate stylistic changes. Gradually, Yeats' principal concern emerged as the verbal medium itself, which could predominate over transcendence and fact. Visionary
transcendence had initially deceived the poet, and had finally dissolved, leaving him in a hostile, incalculable world where all fine things needed "much labouring." Yeats emphasizes the poet's making, his "finite shaping will," which provides a new freedom from chaotic, fallen experience, without necessitating the rejection of that experience.  

Lentricchia explains this last significant change in his section, "Towards a Yeatsian Poetic of Will," commenting that "The carving will became the instrument that transformed experience by abstracting it in language. . . . the free imagination working within a deterministic universe." Thus, the poet creates his Muse, she does not create him; the Muse is an artefact.

In the two volumes of poetry studied, the Muse retained her independent existence, and the poet is seen in a series of dramatic postures attempting to accommodate her infidelity, her reckless heroism, his separation from her and an ambiguous reunion. She still serves as the sole motivation for his verse, and Yeats comments that if he had ever managed to communicate with her "[He] might have thrown poor words away /And been content to live." Concomitant with this, Yeats increasingly stresses the poet's shaping craft, which indicates a growing concern with his art rather than his Muse. Manifold images are used to convey the poet's verbal manipulation or his sheer physical labour, as in "Adam's Curse." Since spontaneous natural beauty is pre-lapsarian, the poet must hammer the shape of beauty, and metaphors express the manual or tediously domestic labour involved, such as "stitching and unstitching" in "Adam's Curse," or Pegasus transformed to a cart-horse dragging
load-metal in "The Fascination of What's Difficult." In this latter poem, Pegasus no longer leaps in sprightly fashion from Olympian cloud to cloud, but must "Shiver under the lash, strain, sweat and jolt," which all suggest the physical anguish of making a poem.

In one of the later works of The Green Helmet and Other Poems, the Muse is described in terms of the artefact. In "The Mask," she is symbolized as an exuberantly fashioned mask of burning gold with emerald eyes, an exquisite stage property, which represents all the poet can ever know about his perplexing Muse. Life is compounded of illusions and the poet can never discern whether love or deceit underlies his beloved's performance:

'I would but find what's there to find,
Love or deceit.'
'It was the mask engaged your mind,
And after set your heart to beat,
Not what's behind.'

'But lest you are my enemy,
I must enquire.'
'O no, my dear, let all that be;
What matter, so there is but fire
In you, in me?'

Man's perception is inadequate because it is fraught with his own illusions and confused by the deceit of others. The beloved assures him that it was essentially this jewelled theatrical mask which inspired his affections and thoughts; he had not perceived that she was a performer, nor can he now discover what her performance concealed. She refuses to discard the mask, so that the poet can never apprehend the truth of the human drama, of women engaged in the artful "play" of love; life becomes
a series of glittering surfaces and obscurely perceived realtionships. Conversely, in his own work the poet can be sure of the mask, the artefact, because he creates it. The illusion of art fashioned by the artist is truthful in that it does not profess to be real, it is an acknowledged artifice that the poet controls and designs. The poet cannot manipulate the artifices adopted by his mortal and histrionic Muse, but he is a Prospero mage with the artifices of his craft. Thus, the development of the Muse illustrates Yeats’ shifting focus upon transcendence and mortality, and finally upon the toil of the artificer, his hammered gold and gold enamelling.
NOTES


6. Richard Ellmann, Yeats: The Man and the Masks (1948; rpt. New York: Dutton, n.d.), p. 152. One of the major influences upon this stylistic revision is considered to be Yeats' increasing interest in drama. See for example, Peter Ure, Yeats (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1963): "Yet it seems certain that it was the playwright's readiness to submit to the obligation to dramatise personalities that changed the character of Yeats' lyric verse, and made that dramatic, too... It is the establishment of contact with the personae and their speech that makes "Adam's Curse," the most significant, if not the most flawless, poem in the 1904 collection In the Seven Woods" (pp. 51-52).


8. Essays and Introductions, p. 87.


12. Essays and Introductions, p. 205.


16 Lentricchia, p. 60.

17 Lentricchia, p. 70.
CHAPTER IV

SELF CREATION IN OLD AGE: THE MUSE

AS ARTEFACT

The volume following The Green Helmet, with its rather sober title Responsibilities, illustrates the considerable increase in the number of themes used by Yeats in his later poetry. Yeats has laid the ghost of his early preoccupations: the longing for death into fulfilment or the sorrow effected by his mortal, heroic Muse were never again to serve as crucial emotional impulses for writing poetry. It is probable that the poet's personal life with its shifting relationships contributed largely to the reduction in emphasis upon the Muse; Maude Gonne was unrelenting, Iseult's courtship was not desperately serious and Yeats was shortly to settle into the comfortable harmony of married life. The unattainable and warrior Muse was no longer a harsh reality, but became a controllable image in a whole network of carefully wrought images. Fragments of the earlier Muse figures do remain, but are transformed in the richer texture and broader scope of the later works. However, I would not agree with the prevalent critical view that the pre-1917 poems are remarkable but minor, for they have the powerful, urgent simplicity of the finest lyrics.

The first poem in Responsibilities (excluding the prefatory invocation) is dedicated to the deceased membership of the "Cheshire Cheese," with whom Yeats had "learned [his] trade." This introductory address to
the Rhymers' Club indicates his change from the fin de siècle ethos, for he disavows that death-oriented passion manifested in The Wind among the Reeds. Passion and fulfilment are not the prerogatives of death or a kind of ghostly transcendence, although he says to his former associates: "You may think I waste my breath /Pretending that there can be passion /That has more life in it than death." The other poems in the volume treat a great variety of themes, such as the Magi, the awry wisdom of beggar and hermit, the inequity of government appointment and a lament for romantic Ireland as exemplified in its dead heroes, O'Leary, Fitzgerald, Emmet and Tone. Also, a group of poems revolve upon the three significant public controversies on the Irish scene which had most impressed Yeats in thirty years—the Parnell fiasco, Hugh Lane's donation of paintings and the furor aroused by The Playboy. In the midst of all this political and social agitation, Yeats counsels an utterly private joy: "Be secret and exult /Because of all things known /That is most difficult." This advice to Lady Gregory in "To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing" strikes a characteristic note in Yeats' later work, which testifies to a confidence and assurance in the individual's unique ability to fashion his own solitary satisfaction. Both public acclaim and external inspiration are unimportant to the artificer who forges his own private exultation. Later, in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," Yeats is able to confront the destruction engulfing Ireland and the bitter knowledge of universal destruction because again he rejects the commonplace notion of public social victory: "all triumph would /But break upon his ghostly solitude." Aligning himself with "Some Platonist,"
he goes so far as to reverse the traditional aspiration for immortality which most men hold and which most poetry boasts:

... if our works could
But vanish with our breath
That were a lucky death,
For triumph can but mar our solitude.

He unites his views of the banality of public triumph and the banality of triumph over time, asserting that he is satisfied with the transient, lonely exultation of his art:

I am satisfied with that,
Satisfied if a troubled mirror show it,
Before that brief gleam of its life be gone,
An image of its state.

The artificer is content with the fashioning of his exclusive world, however brief. In Lentricchia's phrasing, Yeats insists upon his "carving will" as a free autonomous craftsman to fashion his own world and his own ethos. Thus, Yeats sees triumph as a mere intruder upon the individual's "secret meditation," if not its spoilator. Like an ascetic, he seeks only the most difficult goal to achieve: "Be secret and exult." Art allows the poet control over the finite and transcendent worlds because he can make them, and although poet and poem may be fleeting, Yeats can feign eternity, creating the "artifice of eternity," as in "Sailing to Byzantium." Eternity can become the polished artefact of the goldsmith, or of any of those unmatched Byzantine craftsmen, the mosaicist, book illuminator, and forger of precious metals. I shall not trespass any further into the later works, since it is clear that the
artificer replaces the Muse as the dominant theme, although it is integrated into an extremely diverse pattern with many other significant motifs. With the princely dignity of the aged Prospero, the poet manipulated the images and themes of his later poetry, the feignedly immortal puppets of his "finite shaping will." The Muse, if she were not the poet's artefact, would be an impertinent intruder upon artistic solitude.

In *Responsibilities*, only three poems refer to the Muse—"Fallen Majesty," "Friends," and "That the Night Come." These could be considered transitional poems, recalling earlier facets of the Muse, but placing them in the perspective of Yeats' mature attitudes and emotions. In "Friends," the title itself indicates the distinctive change in the poet towards his Muse, Maud Gonne. She is included in a eulogy with two other friends, Lady Gregory and Diana Vernon, which implies a reduction of her importance and of Yeats' impassioned service. The poet is now an old man, and this becomes his most characteristic stance in the later period; the persona of the aged poet is closely linked with the Muse's portrayal as artefact, an association which is fully crystallized in "The Tower." In "Friends," Yeats wonders how he can possibly celebrate that destructive, pitiless beloved of his youth:

```
And what of her that took
All till my youth was gone
With scarce a pitying look?
How could I praise that one?
```

The poet's emotional response to his own question illustrates that he has finally accomplished reconciliation with her because an abundant
"sweetness" flows from his "heart's root"; the core of his emotional life registers infinitely pleasurable sensations of her. Yeats uses to maximum effect what Ellmann terms "the reconciling image," for the problematic question is not answered but transcended by metaphor: "The emotion that flows from his heart's root like sap in a tree is a resolution that transcends argument." The Muse is now a friend, and Yeats has pleasant memories of her past beauty. In "Fallen Majesty," the title is again important: it indicates that she is no longer the heroic Muse for her majestic beauty has perished. In a fallen world, even the heroic Muse must endure the "Fall," the imperfection of aging; she could not at last defy time and the poet can only sing of what she once was; "I record what's gone." "That the Night Come" is the most incisive and directly urgent of the three poems. Yeats connotes the heroic Muse by a dazzling analogy with kingship, which makes clear his mature attitude towards her ardent heroism. She has "lived in storm and strife," in continual discord, because she yearned "For what proud death may bring," intolerant of the "common good of life." In this single-minded obsession, she compares with a king who would fill his marriage day with the terrible discord of trumpet, kettledrum and cannon, in order "To bundle time away/That the night come." The king is eager for the night of love and the heroine for the night of death. The everyday life of the heroic Muse has been a mere irritation, for she was recklessly absorbed in the pursuit of epic glory. "That the Night Come" with its cryptic double reference is one of the simplest and most powerful lines in the Yeatsian canon, though many of Yeats' lines would serve as Arnoldian touchstones
for poetry. Yeats continual revision, his "stitching and unstitching," seems to have eliminated weak phrasing; his artefact remains stubbornly unflawed.

The *Wild Swans at Coole* emphasizes strongly the theme of the aging poet. The title poem itself stresses the poet's age, and Yeats mentions the great number of years since he first counted those beautiful creatures. The poem is fittingly set in an autumnal twilight, and the solitary poet meditates upon how everything has changed for him in contrast with the changeless and passionate swans:

```
Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.
```

The pattern represented by the swans survives unchanged, but the individual changes. Bloom regards "The Wild Swans at Coole" as the first poem in which "Yeats swerves crucially away from the Shelleyan quest for the daimonic beloved." He concurs with Jeffares' view that the poem laments the demise of Yeats' passion rather than frustrated desire, and continues to describe the actual circumstances surrounding the poem's inception:

```
A man of fifty-one looks upon the same scene he saw at thirty-two. He comes to the scene again after having proposed marriage again to the same woman as nineteen years before, and after being refused, yet again. But his primary awareness is not of a dismal, almost ridiculous continuity, between an earlier and a later self. Discontinuity dominates, for the depression of nineteen years before was at the refusal, but the depression of 1916 is for not feeling
depression at the continued refusal. His heart has grown old, and its soreness is that it should have aged.

Thus, the poem's melancholy is to be attributed to Yeats' debilitating sense of old age, which subsumes all other sources of melancholy, particularly his unattainable Muse. Similarly, he feels the impropriety, if not the impossibility, of passionate devotion in "The Living Beauty":

... O heart, we are old;  
The living beauty is for younger men;  
We cannot pay its tribute of wild tears.

Here, the onus for his concern with sculptured, wrought forms rests entirely with his age, which necessitates the surrender of the living to the marmoreal beauty:

I bade, because the wick and oil are spent  
And frozen are the channels of the blood,  
My discontented heart to draw content  
From beauty that is cast but of a mould  
In bronze, or that in dazzling marble appears.

Although a whole spectrum of aesthetic and personal motivations effected the transformation of the Muse into an artefact, the major personal one is the poet's age.

A number of poems in the three volumes, Responsibilities, The Wild Swans at Coole, and Michael Robartes and the Dancer, touch upon some aspect of the aged poet and the Muse, such as "Lines Written in Dejection" with its "Banished heroic mother moon," "Men Improve with the Years," "A Song," "His Phoenix," and "Broken Dreams." Often these works also discuss the poet's art, whilst other poems focus almost exclusively upon the
theme of the artificer, for example, "The Dolls" or the radically dis-similar "Ego Dominus Tuus." In "The Dolls," the most venerable doll shrieks in indignation at that "noisy, filthy thing," a human baby, and the culpable doll-maker's wife excuses herself by saying that the baby was an accident. The dolls are the result of the doll-maker's purposed design, the surety of the aesthetic shaping process, whereas the human baby is an accidental occurrence, dependent upon the uncertainty and shapelessness of human processes. However, rather than assembling the minutiae of these poems, I shall concentrate upon the prominent title poem of the volume following Michael Robartes and the Dancer, "The Tower," which dextrously brings together many pertinent factors relating to the aged poet and his "self-begotten" Muse.

"The Tower" is certainly the principal poem which explores the aging poet's readjustment to the Muse as a verbal construct. The first section of the poem registers the poet's bafflement about the sheer "absurdity" of his age, which is fittingly expressed in comic fashion as a can tied to a dog's tail. The image carries the full weight of Yeats' sense of absurdity. The poet's ludicrous age means that he should "bid the Muse go pack" and requires the abnegation of imaginative and sensory experience ("imagination, ear and eye"). Yeats should now pursue Platonic abstract philosophy, which represented these experiential realms as a mere shadow. The poet's age seems to deny him an impassioned dedication to the female figure, and the accompanying delighted senses and delighted imagination. His quandary is heightened because precisely those faculties which should be diminished are in fact intensified:
Never had I more
Excited, passionate, fantastical
Imagination, nor an ear and eye
That more expected the impossible.

Yeats proceeds to elaborate upon this problem in the diverse, motleyed
texture of the second section. He places himself in the specific locale
of Thoor Ballylee at a specific time of the day, twilight, and thus
establishes a concrete setting, which is a characteristic Yeatsian
feature after *The Wind Among the Reeds*. He paces upon the darkening
battlements of Thoor Ballylee, and conjures up "Images and memories"
associated with the immediate vicinity. He gives the details of various
stories with a boisterous humour, and initially the exact relation of
these tales to his problem seems vague.

The first tale about Mrs. French and her loyal butler illustrates
Yeats' manner of narration. He points to the particular location of Mrs.
French's house, gesturing with that recurrent, stressful, Yeatsian
demonstrative: "Beyond that ridge lived Mrs. French." Mrs. French's
serving man had brought her the clipped ears of an insolent farmer and,
with fine consideration and delicacy, he placed them in "a little covered
dish." The incongruity between the elegance and horror of the butler's
action is skilfully elicited. However, the gay, rather truculent rhyme,
the quick, light movement of the verse and the comedy inherent in the
barbarously delicate, deny any suggestion of the farmer's tragedy and
all serve simply to highlight the sprightly vigour of the tale. Al-
though the story was enacted in the environs of Thoor Ballylee, it
otherwise seems remote from the poet's problem.
This old story is immediately juxtaposed with a tale about Mary Hynes, who was actually remembered by "some few" in the poet's youth. Thus because of his age, Yeats feels closely associated with the fabulous stories of the Irish tradition; later in the poem, he comments that he has himself become "fabulous," a term which is often applied to legendary material and the Otherworld, the Realm of Faerie. The tragi-comic exaggeration of his age makes him old enough to be a part of Ireland's heritage, of its momentous stock of legends.

Mary Hynes was celebrated by the blind ballad poet, Raftery, and he has clearly created Mary's beauty in verse for her praise; her commendation resides essentially in song: "Some few remembered still when I was young /A peasant girl commended by a song." It seems initially that her beauty was the boast of the countryside and her presence caused heated confusion and bustle: ". . . if walked she there /Farmers jostled at the fair." However, the last line undercuts the efficacy of her actual, living presence at the fair, attributing the farmer's excitement to the fame of the song, not to the fame of her beauty: "So great a glory did the song confer." The following stanza continues the story by describing a rowdy drinking session, where the revellers finally set out for Ballylee to see the beautiful Mary Hynes. In a drunken stupor, one of them stumbles into the great bog of Cloone and is drowned. In telling the old weaver's story already recorded in "'Dust hath closed Helen's Eye," Yeats makes a significant addition by attributing to the drinkers the desire of testing "their fancy by their sight." Art is to be compared with its living inspiration; the Muse as artefact is to be compared
with the mortal Muse. Such a foolhardy quest can only lead to destruction and one man suffers an undignified demise in Cloone bog. Art is art because it is not life, and Yeats continues by elaborating upon the distinction between the two:

Strange, but the man who made the song was blind;
Yet, now I have considered it, I find
That nothing strange; the tragedy began
With Homer that was a blind man,
And Helen has all living hearts betrayed.

Raftery must have fashioned Mary's beauty through his imaginative faculty, for his blindness meant that the Muse could only be an invented image. In "A Woman Homer Sung," Yeats postulated an aesthetic of imitation: "He shadowed in a glass /What thing her body was"; now, his work is not imitative but purely creative, "self-begotten." Yeats has strengthened the impression of the previous stanzas that the roles of poet and Muse are reversed, for the blind poet is his own source of creativity and fashions the Muse's image. The poet is no longer a quivering, anguish-ridden boy subject to the destructive whims of his Muse, but the lordly artificer who confers excellence and fame upon his subject. Paradoxically, in this excellence lies both the worth and the tragedy of the artistic process. Since art, unlike its creator, is not limited by the deterministic processes of nature, it can create or feign a superior and permanent beauty. Life is necessarily betrayed in the attempted comparison with art, the ideal realm. Helen is an image, an artefact in the blind Homer's poetry, and she has betrayed "all living hearts," all earthly lovers, who are flawed by the imperfections of their human nature and by
the aging processes of universal nature. The imagined Muse is one of those "self-born mockers of man's enterprise" in "Among School Children": the images projected by nuns, mothers and artists mock their creator for they are superior to all man can experience in the activities, the enterprise of his actual life. This tragedy, however, must remain the poet's intention. The tragi-comic drowning of the reveller who mistook the moon's light for the sun's is the poet's avowed purpose:

O may the moon and sunlight seem
One inextricable beam,
For if I triumph I must make men mad.

Tragic death is now caused by the poet's artefact, rather than by the living Muse.

The allusions to Raftery and Homer are thus directly related to the problem of the aged poet. Despite or even because of sensory limitations, Raftery and Homer have created ideally beautiful Muses. The physical or sensory limitations of age do not affect the imaginative faculty, and thus the self-created Muse is a congenial concept to the aging poet. There are numerous references to the sense perceptions or sense organs in "The Tower," which coalesce into a pattern. The blindness presumably relates to the debility of the slipped ears, which is an absurd leit-motif upon the theme of sensory limitations. In the first section, the full absurdity of his age imaged as a can tied to a dog's tail sets the tragi-comic feeling for the poem and introduces one of its effective techniques—the poignantly absurd image. Later in the poem, Yeats mentions again the clipped ear and also that Mrs. French was
"gifted with so fine an ear," which provides a brilliantly comic double entendre. The serio-comic variety of physical and sensory limitations explored thus far in "The Tower" may be transcended by the imagination, which allows man to create what he has not perceived through the senses. Clearly, in "The Tower," the "matter of Ireland" serves as an expressive vehicle for Yeats' views about art and about his Muse. It is true that Yeats focuses upon Irish tale rather than the more remote Irish myth, but where the one fades into the other is incalculable. For the most part, they shared the same origin in the memory of the Irish peasantry; he had escorted Lady Gregory from cottage to cottage, collecting material for Gods and Fighting Men and Cuchulain of Muirthemne, and the tales about Mary Hynes were related to him by the Irish countryfolk, as he makes clear in "'Dust hath closed Helen's Eye.'" Yeats reworks these tales into fine vignettes, giving those narrative details and those narrative additions which relate meaningfully to his theme. The alignment of Rafttery and Homer accords with Yeats' insistent association of Greek and Irish culture and with his own assumption as an Irish bard of the Homeric role, the celebrator of Helen's destructive beauty.

Yeats gives a list of other cognate stories which are associated with the environs of Thoor Ballylee, but it would be tedious to explicate them all. The story of Red Owen Hanrahan predominates over the remainder of the local tales. Hanrahan is yet another poet figure who bears a central relation to Yeats' problem. He is styled after the Gaelic bard, Owen O'Sullivan the Red, and Yeats had invented a whole series of tales about O'Sullivan's activities in The Stories of Red...
Hanrahan: "And I myself created Hanrahan." Yeats begins to recollect these earlier narratives. Like the revellers of the previous verses, Hanrahan had set out to find the actual living woman, in this case, his sweetheart, Mary Lavelle, and he had been unsuccessful in his quest. He was enticed into a magical game of cards, when suddenly the pack of cards changed into a pack of hounds and a hare. Hanrahan follows the chase until he encounters Slieve Echtge, the Queen of the Sidhe. The poet finally refuses her bountiful gifts and is returned to the mortal world after a year has elapsed. It is then too late for Hanrahan to claim his mortal beloved, who is irretrievably lost. The story rephrases the dichotomy experienced by Oisin who was attracted by the dual worlds of art and life, and Hanrahan could be considered representative of the poet persona which occurs in Yeats' early verse. Yeats is invoking his youthful self or the artist as a young man. However, The Stories of Red Hanrahan continue by describing Hanrahan's lustful old age, and, in "The Tower," Yeats emphasizes Hanrahan's sexual energy in the absurdity of his physical decay:

Caught by an old man's juggleries  
He stumbled, tumbled, fumbled to and fro  
And had but broken knees for hire  
And horrible slendour of desire.

Here, the artist as an old man is recalling the old poet he imagined in his youth, and Yeats looks to his past imaginative creation for an answer. He asks Hanrahan and the assembled phantoms about all men's rancour at old age:
Did all old men and women, rich and poor,  
Who trod upon these rocks or passed this door,  
Whether in public or in secret rage  
As I do now against old age.

Then the host is dispersed excepting Hanrahan, for Yeats needs all "his mighty memories." Hanrahan is asked a second question about what in retrospect a man's imagination will most emphasize, the "woman won or woman lost." If his imagination dwells upon the woman lost, Hanrahan must admit that he

turned aside
From a great labyrinth out of pride,
Cowardice, some silly over-subtle thought
Or anything called conscience once.

This last stanza in the second section is perhaps the most difficult verse to clarify. The woman lost is universally acknowledged to be Maud Gonne, and presumably she would be Mary Lavelle for Red Hanrahan. In addition to the biographical relevance, the two terms of the equation have been interpreted as accomplishment and frustration. Further than this it seems probably that the attained woman symbolizes actual experience and fulfilment, which should serve as the poet's meditative subject for imaginative re-creation. It is not tragic to live within the imagination, to be a blind poet, providing your imagination contemplates actual experience. In the imagination or the memory, the actual must become a mental image, and Yeats is clearly embodying mental images in "The Tower," for at the beginning of the second section he proposes to invoke "images and memories." The blind poet must create the woman won, the
experiential realm, in his verse, but paradoxically his verse will not mirror her beauty: the poet fashions another woman, the changeless arte­fact. Yeats does not intend some imaginary expression divorced from life, and if the imagination dwells upon the woman lost, he would be severed from living experience. Any experience of the woman lost, particularly a sexual relationship, must be imagined, so that the poet would become "over-subtle," meditating upon a mental image to create a mental image. It is true that the woman lost existed as surely as the woman won, but Yeats' criterion is experience, not existence in judging what the poet should most consider in old age. His Muse is no unwooed Beatrice, and thus Yeats stresses Hanrahan's tangible physical involve­ment:

For it is certain that you have
Reckoned up every unforeknown, unseeing
Plunge, lured by a softening eye,
Or by a touch or a sigh,
Into the labyrinth of another's being.

The Muse is self-begotten; she is generated imaginatively from the poet's own self, which has in turn been meditating upon images and mem­ories from the experiential realm. The Muse in verse becomes the arti­ficer's unchanging handiwork, yet the poet dwells upon images cast up by the imagination or the memory without denying the physical world of process and change. Yeats has reaffirmed his essential allegiance to both art and life, and in some respects the dual attraction of the two realms echoes the pattern established in "The Wanderings of Oisin."

The last section of "The Tower" takes up the themes of experience
and imagination, life and art, and vigorously celebrates both. Experience, action, and fulfilment are embodied in the figure of the fisherman climbing the mountain streams "under bursting dawn." Bloom regards this "pre-dawn fishing expedition inappropriate if not silly," but the fisherman is a sturdy figure of the active life absorbed in the realm of nature. He is associated with radiant light both in the concrete dawn-setting and in metaphor, for the fisherman's pride is like the "headlong light" of the morning. High mountain streams and turbulent light are effectively associated with this figure, and Yeats again reveals that brilliant sureness in the use of metaphor and apposite setting which characterizes his work. The fishermen engaged in vigorous activity also represent the indomitable Irishry with whom the aged poet approaching death asserts his essential community:

I leave both faith and pride
To young upstanding men
Climbing the mountain-side,
That under bursting dawn
They may drop a fly;
Being of that metal made
Till it was broken by
This sedentary trade.

In his will, he leaves them that Celtic pride which is free ("Bound neither to Cause nor to State), generous ("... gave, though free to refuse), and abundant ("... that of the fabulous horn"). He also declares his faith which will become their heritage:

And I declare my faith:
'I mock Plotinus' thought
And cry in Plato's teeth,
Death and life were not
Till man made up the whole,
Made lock, stock-and barrel
Out of his bitter soul.

He will not "Choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend," though that had seemed the sensible solution in the opening section. Abstract philosophy is a feeble consolation, and he certainly does not accept Platonic doctrine as some critics have suggested; although old age has its absurd restraints, life is not a shadowy delusion. Yeats continues by celebrating the creativity of man as an artificer. Yeats does assert a transcendentalist view, but one which emanates solely from man; there is no mystical emanation from a divine creator, no breath of divine inspiration. Yeats declares that he has now prepared his peace with those dissatisfying "memories of love"; certainly that long line of Gaelic poets from Oisin to the present no longer belong to the Gaelic Muse, for she belongs to them. The aged Yeats, having made his will and his peace, is free to make his spiritual existence, which will be "self-begotten": "Now shall I make my soul." Finally, attention focuses upon the poet isolated in the gathering darkness, which recalls the twilight musings of the beginning. In the stillled, meditative close, Yeats broods upon age, decay and death; however, these limitations may be transcended because man can make them "Out of his bitter soul."

Yeats' long poems in the later period are a subject for study entirely in themselves. Their structure is based upon a complex interaction of image and discourse which is not reducible to neat critical categories. In 1963, Sarah Youngblood commented that despite the
acknowledged greatness of these poems, they remained largely unexamined by criticism, attributing this neglect to the peculiar difficulty of Yeats' use of the imagistic and discursive modes:

The discursive mode in poetry depends upon the structural principle of syntax, a deploying of thought in logical, rational structures of statement; the imagistic mode depends upon the structural principle of the image, which replaces logical syntax with what Hart Crane called the "logic of metaphor." . . . When we turn to Yeats' long poems, the special problem posed by them is that each one by virtue of being made up of poems, interrelated units in a series, can alternate these two dissimilar modes, letting a direct succeed an oblique one in the series.14

She points out that frequently verses which masquerade as discursive clarification, in fact communicate through imagery rather than syntax. It is this intensively-wrought sequence of verses working in the two media which makes "The Tower" and comparable poems difficult to analyze with any confidence about defining the final logical meaning. Although the rational process is evident, it is opened out by the use of imagery and legendary allusion to encompass breadths of significance. This synopsis is only a tentative approximation to the meaning of "The Tower," and yet key Yeatsian issues are discussed and apparently resolved. Earlier, those Yeatsian antinomies did not seem to lead to that currently unpopular phenomenon, a solution, but, despite the dissonance of tragi-comedy and the absurd image, Yeats' later poems do articulate a harmonious resolution to such dichotomies as art and life or body and soul.15 "Among School Children" is a poem which centres upon this resolution and which shares a similar structure of image and discourse and a similar patterning of themes to "The Tower."
"Among School Children" compares with "The Tower" in that again the aged poet meditates upon Ledaean beauty and self-born images, and he relates these to the works of philosophy which should afford solace in old age. Characteristically, Yeats begins with a concrete physical situation: he is inspecting a school where the children stare in amazement at this aged public figure. Again, the mood is tragi-comic: age is a tragic inevitability which later in the poem breaks the mother's heart by destroying her more grandiose image of her son's destiny; yet there is comedy in Yeats' description of himself as an alien prodigy scrutinized by several pairs of eyes. The actual situation prompts a sequence of related mental images. The schoolchildren, the common "paddlers" in a realm of process, bring to mind a Ledaean daughter of the swan, who is presumably the flawless Helen in the realm of art. Nature's paddlers cannot compare with the beauty of the divinely-procreated swan's children. Yeats envisages that procreation as the origin of antinomies in "Leda and the Swan." Conceived in the conjunction of love and war, an amorous attack, Helen effects these contraries in the historical gyre, bringing both love and destruction. Love and war, art and life, creation and destruction are pivotal opposites in The Tower and are frequently associated with the swan image, as for example in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen." Yeats' treatment of the themes of love and war, particularly in relation to Helen, again accords with his Homeric role. Whereas many poems in The Tower describe the cataclysmic war which is engulfing the present historical gyre; the title poem and "Among School Children" concentrate more upon the converse antinomy of love, as embodied in Helen,
Mary Hynes or Maud Gonne. Most critics agree that Helen is aligned with Maud Gonne in "Among School Children." Yeats recalls some trivial childish event she once related and the resulting youthful sympathy established between them. He thinks of her youth in association with the schoolchildren: "For even daughters of the swan can share /Something of every paddler's heritage." Anticipating the reconciliation of art and life in the final stanza, illusion and reality merge, for the mental image is fused with the living child before him: "And thereupon my heart is driven wild: /She stands before me as a living child." Despite the physical decay of age, the poet imagines a Ledaean beauty so vividly that the mental and actual become integrated into a reality. However, the transcendent union is momentary, and the poet must return to the concrete situation in the schoolroom. After remembering Maud's youth, he touches briefly upon his own: "And I though never of Ledaean kind /Had pretty plumage once—enough of that." He abruptly breaks off this reminiscence because he must accept the actuality of the tragi-comic scene, where the celebrity in perceptible decline and with fixed smile parades among the astonished children: "Better to smile on all that smile, and show /There is a comfortable kind of old scarecrow." The scarecrow shares the absurd pathos of the image for old age in "The Tower," the can tied to a dog's tail. Its visual aspect is both ridiculous and pathetic, and suggests that his appearance is comprised of an assortment of clothes rather than a living body. The scarecrow's function is also important because the young are symbolized as birds, whether paddlers or swans or Yeats' own "pretty plumage." In grim old
age, he can only frighten away birds: the paddlers are amazed by this awesome figure, whilst the swan's child, his early Ledaean Muse, is lost to him. Stanza five discusses in general terms the poet's personal quandary, and Yeats refers to the entire life-cycle, which was represented in the classroom by the children and their visitor, the "grey eminence." After treating the poetic image, Yeats now considers the mother's image-making tendency. The mother's image is belied by the deterministic processes of nature, since the splendid dreams of her child's future do not take account of the dire certainty of age:

What youthful mother, a shape upon her lap
Honey of generation had betrayed,
And that must sleep, shriek, struggle to escape
As recollection or the drug decide,
Would think her son, did she but see that shape
With sixty or more winters on its head,
A compensation for the pang of his birth,
Or the uncertainty of his setting forth?

Birth conceived as a betrayal is of course a Platonic doctrine and, in the following stanza, Yeats queries Plato's view and that of other Greek philosophers. Since birth betrays man into the deterministic cycle, nature must be considered an illusion, a "spume," and the reality, a changeless absolute. Solider Aristotle attempted to impose philosophical learning through grossly physical means upon the schoolchild, Alexander. Pythagoras rejected physical existence, believing himself to be a god and thence "golden-thighed." In that the philosophers deny the claims of physical reality, regarding the body as an illusion, they compare with the aged poet who has been forced by the natural processes they
ignore to discount the flesh. Physical process and the old age it
exacts become insignificant if existence is regarded as a shadowy delu-
sion; Platonic doctrine appears to provide the logical answer to the
perplexities induced by old age. However, the last line of the stanza
makes clear that Yeats and the philosophers are all scarecrows, and their
venerable position and knowledge serve to intimidate children as surely
as Aristotle's flogging: "Old clothes upon old sticks to scare a bird."
Yeats returns to the educators in that particular situation—the nuns;
they subscribe to mental images as surely as mothers or philosophers:

Both nuns and mothers worship images,
But those the candles light are not as those
That animate a mother's reveries,
But keep a marble or a bronze repose.

Yeats correlates the images invented by the lover-poet, the nun and the
mother: "O Presences /That passion, piety or affection knows." Although
they imagine essentially different kinds of artifice, each kind manifests
the paradoxical quality of symbolizing "all heavenly glory," whilst
breaking hearts. Images embody that coveted perfection, which can never
be located in a world of flux. Thus, images break hearts because they
excel the physical experience of their creator; similarly, Helen betrays
all living hearts in "The Tower." The images are personified as scorn-
ful for they seem to mock the poverty of the human situation, which
their creator can transcend only through them: "O self-born mockers of
man's enterprise." However, as in "The Tower," the poem finally resolves
the dichotomies it asserts. In the last stanza, Yeats rejoices in the
consonance of the heartbreaking antinomies. The labour of artist and mother can be joyous if the claims of body and soul are equally recognized: "Labour is blossoming or dancing where /The body is not bruised to pleasure soul." Yeats uses two fine images to discount the artificial dichotomies cherished by philosophers: leaf, blossom and bole are all part of the luxuriant chestnut and the dancer is inextricable from the dance. The dancer is integrated into the movement of the dance, as the individual poet is absorbed into the design of his poem during the process of its creation. Body and soul, life and art, artist and artifice, may be unified; although perhaps, as earlier in the poem, the synthesis may only be momentary for the dancer is only the dance when he is actually dancing.

"Among School Children" and the title poem are the most celebratory and affirmative works in The Tower. The volume is more usually known for its bitterness, which, according to Yeats, provides its distinctive emotion. Assuredly, though life and art are "commended" in these two poems, the remainder present life as a savage spectacle; the enchantment of art is contrasted with the disenchantment of the actual surrounding scene. It is well-known that Yeats discusses here the atrocities committed by the Auxiliaries and the Black and Tans in Ireland, seeing them as tokens or presages of the impending destruction of that historical gyre. Grotesqueries, images of destruction abound and are often drawn from witchcraft or demonism. In section VI of "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," the Sidhe linked with the Herodiade return once again to ride the confused tumult of the "labyrinth of the
wind." However, they do not herald a cataclysm which brings fulfilment or illumination; it is not the demise of unsatisfying life into satis-
fying vision. The cataclysm is an all-obliterating horror, best expressed by that loathsome thing for Yeats—the mob. The conclusion of "Meditations in Time of Civil War" gives a stark description of a mob of troopers, who are motivated by an insane wrath which tortures them and which they continually seek:

The rage-driven, rage-tormented, and rage-hungry troop,
Trooper belabouring trooper, biting at arm or at face,
Plunges towards nothing, arms and fingers spreading wide
For the embrace of nothing.

In their desperate struggle for "the embrace of nothing," they are life-
destroyers and image-breakers. As I mentioned previously in my analysis of "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," even seemingly immortal art is short-lived:

He who can read the signs nor sink unmanned
Into the half-deceit of some intoxicant
From shallow wits; who knows no work can stand,
Whether health, wealth or peace of mind were spent
On master-work of intellect or hand,
No honour leave its mighty monument,
Has but one comfort left: all triumph would
But break upon his ghostly solitude.

Much of The Tower revolves upon the antithesis of the image-makers and the image-breakers. In solitary "self-delight," the artificer fashions ceremonious order which is threatened by the multitudinous agents of destruction. Strangely, Yeats is affirmative: the mob cannot destroy artistic solitude, but only the inferior goal of triumph.
It is perhaps arbitrary to sever the development of the Yeatsian Muse at *The Tower*, but I feel that there is no further significant development of the figure, unless Crazy Jane could be considered a radically unconventional Muse. This may be so but then Crazy Jane cannot be readily associated with the original terms of my thesis, the White Goddess as Muse. Of course, Yeats does mention Oisin and the youthful quest again; "The Wanderings of Oisin" seems a seminal poem and, with his fitting sense of due priorities, Yeats finally placed it at the beginning of his collected works. Oisin is the progenitor of a princely dynasty of poet figures, and his conflicts appear to foreshadow those of the later poet *persona* in varying degrees. Whether the poet is inspired by his Muse to quest into the Sidhe's realm or whether he fashions his own quest to the self-begotten Byzantium, Yeats continues to re-evaluate "the profit and the loss" involved upon the journey. At the meaningful destination of "The Tower" and "Among School Children," the artificer can reconcile antinomies into his design; but years later he has quested no further, and the only important development is perhaps that there is none. In "The Circus Animals' Desertion," Yeats sees these questors as tamed and practised animals, circus animals, lacking that essential Yeatsian "wildness." Oisin seems a tame animal whose mistress leads him ignominiously by the nose. The performance remains, but the bitterness and longing have passed away; yet all art is a deception and perhaps the poet's self-deception has been his art. There may never have been anything more than the mask and "Those stilted boys, that burnished chariot, /Lion and woman and the Lord knows what." Perhaps,
in old age, he should set out anew to satisfy the needs of the man and not of the poet:

What can I but enumerate old themes?
First that sea-rider Oisin led by the nose
Through three enchanted islands, allegorical dreams,
Vain gaiety, vain battle, vain repose,
Themes of the embittered heart, or so it seems,
That might adorn old songs or courtly shows;
But what cared I that set him on to ride,
I, starved for the bosom of his faery bride?
NOTES


4. Lentricchia, p. 60.

5. Ellmann, p. 203.


9. See Yeats' comment in "Dust hath closed Helen's Eye," *Mythologies*: "I asked a man I met one day, when I was looking for a pool na mna Sidhe where woman of Faerie have been seen, how Raftery could have admired Mary Hynes so much if he had been altogether blind. He said, 'I think Raftery was altogether blind, but those that are blind have a way of seeing things, and have the power to know more, and feel more, and to do more, and to guess more than those that have their sight, and a certain wisdom is given to them.'" (pp. 28-29).


Jeffares, p. 304.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


Walcutt, Charles C. "Yeats' 'Among School Children,'" Explicator, 26: Item 72, 1969.


