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The Significance of Phantasmagoria in the Love Lyrics of W. B. Yeats's the Wild Swans at Coole

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Abstract

This study studies the significance of phantasmagoria in the personal love lyrics included in *The Wild Swans at Coole*. Yeats's phantasmagoria is extensive and has multiple facets, for it can be traced in various forms in different poems. Its vivid presence can well be noticed in the elegies, personal love lyrics, and philosophical poems of *The Wild Swans at Coole*. Yeats speaks of the significant role of phantasmagoria in the preface to *The Wild Swans at Coole* and introduces it a means through which he can express his convictions of the world. The poet, according to Yeats, never speaks directly; there is always a phantasmagoria involved. The term phantasmagoria can be regarded as a key concept in Yeats's *The Wild Swans at Coole.* A deep interpretation of the personal love lyrics of this collection necessitates a close study of the images and symbols constructing the related phantasmagoria.

Keywords: *Phantasmagoria: W.B. Yeats: Love Lyrics: The Wild Swans at Coole*

Introduction

In one of his letters, Yeats declares that all of his poetry is in some sense love poetry: "We are at our Tower and I am writing poetry as I always do here, and as always happens, no matter how I begin, it becomes love poetry before I am finished with it" (qtd. in Ramazani 67). There is, however, a difference between Yeats's early love poems and those composed in his mature years of life. Most Yeats scholars have agreed that between 1915 and 1919, i.e, the time during which the poems of *The Wild Swans at Coole* were composed, Yeats transformed himself to a different poet. Poems collected in the collection of *The Wild Swans at Coole*, in fact, introduce a less self-obsessed and more human Yeats than any other time in his career. In particular, his obsession with his love of Maud Gonne seems to have assumed a different color in the love lyrics of this collection. Interestingly enough, not all the love lyrics are about his love of Maud Gonne, for there are also poems whose subjects are Yeats's affection for Iseult Gonne, Maud's daughter. There are also some other poems about the mutual love between him and his wife, Georgie Hyde Lees.

The personal love lyrics to which Yeats turned in 1915 do possess a largeness of view, a special dignity. They can be regarded as a return to the subject of the poet's old love, with no obscure idealism

and no "cold light of anger and hate" (Jeffares 1984, p.183). The personal love lyrics included in the collection *The Wild Swans at Coole*, as Norman A. Jeffares states, "are among the great poems of his love and they have a delicate mixture of gentleness and excitement, the refinement of a troubled passion" (Jeffares 1984, p.183). These poems, however, owe their greatness to the truly expressive phantasmagoric images and symbols constructing them.

In the preface to *The Wild Swans at Coole,* W.B.Yeats speaks of the significant role of phantasmagoria in his poetry by introducing "the phantasmagoria through which alone I can express my convictions about the world" (qtd. in Murry 1920, p.39). His statement is direct and clear. Right at the beginning, the essential plan and the constructive basis of the whole collection are given. Yeats's statement is suggestive of his angle of vision which can even include the direct transcription of common reality whether found in the sensible world or in the emotion and picture of the mind. According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word "phantasmagoria" is a "shifting series of phantasms, illusions, or deceptive appearances, as in a dream or as created by the imagination". It is derived from the word "phantasm which is a fleeting moment, a phantom, and apparition. Phantasmagoria is said to be a multiplicity of phantasms; it introduces the realm of magical vision and heightened perception, of fantasy and dream imagery, of hallucination. Most psychiatrists believe that all human perception is, in fact, hallucinatory in nature and that we synthesize all we hallucinate and call it life. According to Carl Jung, phantasmagoria are archetypal forms, patterns, images and symbols which "codify our perceptual experience and, as art, render it permanent, since the mind2 organizes impressions into archetypal forms that recur in human societies worldwide as they develop over centuries" (qtd. in Coleman 2006).

Objective and Scope of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze some personal love lyrics included in W.B. Yeats's *The Wild Swans at Coole,* on the basis of the phantasmagoric images and symbols constructing them, for as Catherine Cook Smith states, "the idea of the symbol is central in understanding Yeats's poetry" (Smith 1930, p.58). Therefore, the significant symbols of the selected poems of this collection will be studied. This paper attempts to illustrate how Yeats endeavors to express his ideas and emotions in the phantasmagoric personal love lyrics of *The Wild Swans at Coole*.

Significance of the Study

The personal love lyrics included in Yeats's *The Wild Swans at Coole* has not yet discussed in the light of phantasmagoria in detail by critics before. Yeats himself believes that a poet always talks about his personal life and that there is always a phantasmagoria involved. A study of Yeats's phantasmagoria and the elements that have constructed it, i.e. images, icons and symbols are indispensable in order to get insight into his poetry.

Review of Literature

Yeats's collection *The Wild Swans at Coole,* published in 1919, marks a turning point in the trajectory of his poetic career. At the time of its publication, Yeats was already well-known and, as C.K. Stead states, was "widely regarded as the most important living poet writing in English" (Stead 1986, p.13). Richard Ellmann, a great critic of Yeats's poetry and plays, in his prominent book *The Identity of Yeats* discusses the phantasmagoric and symbolic structures found in his works. As he states, phantasmagoria designated for Yeats that structure of related images through which he expressed himself and through which as he himself once said, "the dream and the reality face one another in visible array" (62). He also goes on to trace two symbolic and phantasmagoric structures in his works: the first built up from his boyhood and is retained until after 1900, the other appearing mainly from 1915 to 1929. As

Ellmann believes, a clearly articulated structure is missing in the poems composed from about 1903 to about1914. The power of the second symbolic structure is noticeably abated from about 1935 to his death in 1939.

The years before and during the composition of the poems of *The Wild Swans at Coole* were hard times for Yeats; a series of catastrophic personal, national and international events took place, all of which had a role in forming the framework of the poems ultimately arranged in this collection. The first world war, the death of Hugh Lane, the violent outbreak of Easter 1916, the dismemberment of Lady Gregory's estate, the death of Maud Gonne's husband, Maud Gonne's and her daughter's rejection of him, his marriage and the death of Robert Gregory left a great impact on Yeats's life and poetry. He started to view the real world as a complicated drama in which he was assigned no prominent role, for recourse he turned to his imaginative world of images and symbols, i.e., phantasmagoria. As John Unterecker, another great critic of Yeats's poetry, in his *A Reader's Guide to William Butler Yeats* observes, the design of the poems of *The Wild swans at Coole* is "Death, life, and the patterns of Life and Death" (131). Yeats's masks transferred from his phantasmagoria into the poems of this collection are also introduced as "survivor, Defeated Lover, and Scholar. The progression is from uncomplicated personal statement to an elaborate presentation of the intricate image on which *A Vision* is founded" (131).

Graham Martin's criticism of Murry's understatement of Yeats's poetry in his *Countries of the Mind* is also noticeable. In his essay "The Wild Swans at Coole", he proves it being mere misjudgments by referring to some quite helpful facts from both Yeats's life and his poetry. He focuses primarily on Murry's description of Yeats's state of mind while composing the poems of the collection, i.e. on the statement that he "has the apparatus, but no potency in his soul" (qtd. in Martin 54). Martin believes that though it is generally admitted that some of the poems of *The Wild swans at Coole* express exhaustion or defeat, and one or two others complain of the sacrifices which the artist had to demand of the man, "Murry's sweeping diagnosis rests on more than these poems" (54); he considers the whole collection. He goes on to comment on Murry's statement that "He is empty now" (Murry 1920, p.45) by claiming that "in the case of *The Wild swans* [*at Coole*] it quickly becomes evident that the poems Murry reviewed are much too various to express anything simple or definite about Yeats in1918-19 without, at least, certain preliminaries" (54).

In defense of *The Wild Swans at Coole'*s structure, Martin first distinguishes between two editions of the poems: a Cuala edition of twenty-nine poems and the play "At the Hawk's Well", published in1917; and a Macmillan edition of forty-six poems, published in 1919. He states that the omission of "Easter 1916" from both volumes and the intentional delay in publishing some personal poems written before 1917 bespeaks of the fact that "Yeats's book-making was no casual affair" (Martin 1966, p.55). Pursuing this approach, John Unterecker's commentary on the volume also assumes that "the order of the poems expresses a meaningful design--'Death, Life, and the patterns of Life and Death' " (qtd. in Martin 1966, p. 55). Graham Martin also observes that the forty-six poems of the Macmillan volumes are written over seven years from January 1912 to January-February 1919. Not only is this the longest span covered by a single collection, but also it comes from a period when Yeats's poetry was blossoming amidst its most radical developments. Taking all the afore-mentioned preliminaries into consideration, Murry's statement, i.e., "He is empty now" (45) seems to flicker away.

A. Norman Jeffares, a truly eminent critic of Yeats's poetry, in his comprehensive *A New Commentary on the Poems of W.B.Yeats,* states that the main intellectual interest of *The Wild Swans at Coole* lies in the poems it includes which occasionally deal with the system of *A Vision*. As he believes, Yeats, in part, "regained his poetic energy (whose loss he had lamented in *The Green Helmet*) by using poetry as a vehicle for his strange thoughts [i.e., his personal phantasmagoria] and for his own personal life" (Jeffares 1984, p.129). He goes on to give a description of some of the features of the poems in *The Wild Swans at Coole.* He believes that beside the innovations in subject matter, they reveal Yeats's

developing use of ancestors and friends as subjects for poetry: "he is now more prepared to delineate details of personality just as he is to use personal names" (130).

Balachandra Rajan's opinion of *The Wild Swans at Cool,* which is expressed in his *W.B. Yeats: A Critical Introduction*, is no less significant than others'. As he believes, the collection stands judiciously balanced between the sense of withering away and its growing knowledge of the truth. *The Wild Swans at Coole* begins with"the muted melancholy of the title poem and ends with the bleak ambivalences of the "Double Vision of Michael Robartes. . .it moves through the deaths of friends and the persistence of love to a harsher world which the light of the vision dominates" (Rajan 1965, p.107).

According to Jahan Ramazani, death was W. B. Yeats's muse, and his best poems are his meditations on loss and decay. In his immensely learned book, *Yeats and the Poetry of Death: Elegy, Selfelegy, and the Sublime*, Ramazani reviews Yeats's elegies, self-elegies in the sublime mode. He also analyses Yeats's love lyrics with close revisionist readings of his individual poems, and traces interrelations between the lyrics and the traditions that inspired them.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Phantasmagoria, originating from the poet's visionary imagination, is a key concept in Yeats's *The Wild swans at Coole*, therefore, a study of this concept and the related images and symbols as its components can lead to a deeper interpretation of the personal love lyrics of this collection. The analysis of the phantasmagoric images and symbols of the poems, reveals both the poet's mind and its development. The personal love lyrics that will be analyzed in this chapter in the light of the phantasmagoric images are "Solomon to Sheba", "On Woman", "The Living Beauty", "To a Young Girl", "Her Praise", "The People", "His Phoenix", "Broken Dreams", "Presences" and "A Thought from Propertius". Applying eclectic approach to this study is quite helpful, since it makes room for analyzing the poems from different angles and scopes.

Discussion

Phantasmagoria

As Yeats believes, the poet has always his phantasmagoria, his personal imaginative world of ideas and emotions; it is not important whether the elements of this phantasmagoria are the mythologies of a Homer or Dante, the characters chosen from romance and history of a Shakespeare or even the moods and emotions of Yeats himself. The message Yeats tries to bring home is that the poet's personal phantasmagoria and that of his poems will be the same and that the object it creates will be identical, in the same as the "golden bird" of" Sailing to Byzantium" is both poet and his works. What Yeats, as a critic, emphasizes in his idea of phantasmagoria is the objects, the images and the icons which can give pattern and meaning to experience. As he himself believes, his phantasmagoria absorbs the mass of sensations produced by the writer and his work; it reproduces them in its own iconography and patterns, "its own phenomenology on the written page, creating a verbal structure analogous to the phantasmagoric process, the argumentation of the5 critical statement paralleling the mental process of the critic" (Fallis 1976, p. 72).

Yeats states that the memory is evoked through consciousness, moments of trance, contemplation or "the moment when we are both asleep and awake." He adds that, "in making and understanding of a work of art, and the more easily if it is full of patterns and symbols and music, we are lured to the threshold of sleep" (32). Yeats proclaims that poets in moments of contemplation, receive the "creative impulse from the lowest of the nine Hierchies, and so make and unmake mankind . . .for does not 'the eye altering alter all?'" (31) As Wilson states, "Yeats believed in a collective unconscious which would

operate to suggest his archetypal meaning to all readers" (13). Yeats's use of private symbols in his personal phantasmagoria and poetry is rooted in his growing interest in mysticism, magic and occult theologies of the Hermetic and Kabalistic tradition. Images and symbols play an important role in the composition of Yeats's poems. It is the fact of which the poet is quite aware, for in "Ego Dominus Tuus", he hints at that when he says, "I seek an image, not a book/ Those men that in their writings are most wise/ Own nothing but their blind, stupefied hearts" (Yeats 1994, p.134). He explains it best in "Upon a dying Lady": "I have no speech but symbol, the pagan speech I made/ Amid the dreams of youth" (133). It should be noted that though insistence on mystery has its own haunting beauty about it, more often than not, it results in the obscurity in language, especially with the system of symbols in which the correspondence between a concrete term and its associations seems private to the artist.

In his "The Symbolism of Poetry", Yeats talks about two types of symbols, i.e., emotional and intellectual symbols. Emotional symbols stimulate the reader's emotion, that is, they can make the reader feel either attracted or disgusted through the images evoked by the symbol. Under the spell of such symbols, the reader is so peculiarly moved that even he himself cannot tell. Intellectual symbols, on the other hand, evoke ideas alone or ideas blended with emotions. They are primarily there to invade the mind of the reader with the idea that the poet has in mind. As Yeats believes, "if the symbols are merely emotional, the reader gazes from amid the accidents and destinies of the world, but if the symbols are intellectual too, he becomes himself a part of pure intellect, and he is himself mingled with the procession" (33). He apparently prefers symbols that are both intellectual and emotional. Intellectual symbols convey wisdom and such symbols never become old, the more they are used, the richer they become. For his symbols, Yeats rarely gives direct references. He makes use of Greek, Roman and Christian mythology in his poems to signify his symbols. He also has his "personal mythology and a related symbolism, partly in the manner of Blake" (Henn 1965, p.123).

The Phantasmagoric Personal Love Lyrics

Upon buying his new home, the secluded drafty tower, he started looking for a wife to domesticate it and eventually found it in Georgie Hyde Lees. Yeats met his young bride and quite mystical wife in the summer 1917 and by October they were married. The newly-wed Yeats was suffering from severe melancholia and psychosomatic ailments due to his feeling being betrayed by Maud and Iseult. Georgie, in a shrewd move, began to perform automatic writing that resulted in successfully erasing the troublesome memory from his mind.

Phantasmagoria in "Solomon to Sheba"

In "Solomon to Sheba", which can be regarded as one of Yeats's personal love lyrics, all passions seem to be guided by wisdom. In his phantasmagoria, Yeats imagines himself as Solomon and his wife as Sheba, i.e., Solomon's wife. According to Samuel Hynes, it is Sheba, rather than Helen of Troy, who is Yeats's ideal woman, for "being sexually powerful, she is a witch, but she is a positive one; and her union with Solomon, which is both intellectual and sexual, is an ideal relationship" (570). Solomon stands for judicious mind and the poet's comparing himself to him hints at his attainting a glimpse of wisdom in his mature years of life. The "shadowless" (Yeats 1994, p.113) noon implies the steadfastness of the light of wisdom in his mind. The "going round and round in the narrow theme of love" (113) is reminiscent of the spiral movement in a gyre. Attributing "narrow" to the "theme of love" hints at the difficulties and complexities of a true love that they have been able to penetrate into after diligent attempts, i.e., "going round and round" (113). They are no longer young and naïve, since they have got experienced enough to pass through restrictions and difficulties "like an old horse in a pound" (113). The "horse", according to Cirlot, is "an ancient symbol of cyclic movement of the world of phenomena" (Cirlot 1962, p.144). It can also symbolize the cosmic forces. The "pound" stands for the barriers that hinder the lovers' movement in the "narrow theme of love" (113) to attain union. When Solomon says:

There is not a man or woman

Born under the skies

Dare match in learning with us two, (Yeats 1994, p.114)

He, in fact, assigns a significant role to the wisdom in the realm of their mutual love. When claims that "There's not a thing but love can make/The world a narrow pound", (114) he actually concludes that "for all their learning love is the principle which orders the world" (Unterecker 1967, p.136). The "sun" and the "shadows" used in the second stanza of "Solomon to Sheba" are highly suggestive symbols:

You had before the sun had thrown

Our shadows on the ground

Discovered that my thoughts, not it,

Are but a narrow pound. (Yeats 1994, p.113)

The "sun", signifies the light of the spirit and the illuminating power of their attained wisdom which has the ability to throw their "shadows" on the ground. The "shadows" stands for "the negative 'double' of the body, the image of its evil and base side" (Cirlot 1962, p.271) or, as Jung notes, it is a term given to the "primitive and instinctive side of the individual" (qtd. in Cirlot 277). In the final stanza of "Solomon to Sheba", the poet skillfully balances all the "narraow" things in each stanza and puts the "theme", "thoughts" and "thing" against the horse-pound of the world in order to introduce the learning love of the couple as "the principle which orders the world" (Unterecker 1967, p.136). Solomon, together with Sheba planted on his knees, believe that passionate love can act as wisdom's finest fruit.

Phantasmagoria in "On Woman"

The poem "On Woman" is categorized as one of Yeats's personal love lyrics addressed to Georgie Hyde Lees. This poem leads Yeats once more to the thought of Solomon and Sheba, but "Sheba is now the active partner and Solomon is hard pressed to praise her" (Unterecker 1967, p. 139). The phrases "Harshness of their desire" and "Pleasure that comes with sleep, / Shudder that makes them one" in the poem "On Woman" are, in fact, an explicit illustration of

When she the iron wrought, or

When from the smithy fire

It shuddered in the water". (Yeats 1994, p.122)

In "Solomon to Sheba"; both can be regarded as phantasmagoric images defining orgasm. In this poem, as in "Solomon to Sheba", Yeats associates Sheba with wisdom: "That Solomon grew wise/. . . When Sheba was his lass" (122). A description of Sheba's wisdom is given through phantasmagoric images:

That Solomon grew wise

. . . . . .

When she the iron wrought, or

When from the smithy fire

It shuddered in the water

Harshness of that desire

That made them stretch and yawn. (122)

It is Sheba's wisdom that manages to calm down the violent passions and set things right in their relationship. The image given of the "smithy fire" stands for the intense sexually passion whereas "water" symbolizes Sheba's soothing words and manner that stabilizes his mentality. The element "fire" possesses dual nature: it can be representative of a mediator between forms which vanish and forms that are recreated. On the other hand, it can also be suggestive of a high level of animal passion. Solomon's sexual satisfaction with his wife is implied in

Harshness of their desire

That made them stretch and yawn,

Pleasure that comes with sleep,

Shudder that made them one. (122)

The image of "shuddering" as a machinery of sex, can be regarded as an ingenious accomplishment made in the light of frankness. It is the friendship offered by the woman that "Covers all he has brought/As with her flesh and bone" (Yeats 1994, p.122).

The thought of his getting old once again takes the poet away from seeking pleasure even from his personal phantasmagoria:

. . . no, not here,

For I am not so bold

To hope a thing so dear

Now I am growing old (122). Yeats's ardent interest in the idea of rebirth and recreation, however, grants him a wish:

But if the tale's true,

The pestle of the moon

That pounds up all anew

Brings me to Butt again (122).

The productive female figure of the moon that has been included in "Lines Written in Dejection" appears here as well to breathe new life into the "old" and withered poet when absorbed in his phantasmagoria. The moon's being likened to a "pestle" is suggestive of its imposing new elements of life and order into his mentality. "To find what Once I had/And know what once I have known" (122) explicitly bespeaks of the poet's yearning for his lost youth. As Graham Martin states, he "welcomes gently reincarnation" (62). The speaker will keep on trying to get back what is lost until he is "driven mad" (Yeats 1994, p.123). The last lines of the poem are allotted to a prayer made by the poet that in his next life he be allowed to "live like Solomon/That Sheba led a dance" (123).

Phantasmagoria in "The Living Beauty" and "A Song"

The two short poems "The Living Beauty" and "A Song" which are addressed to Iseult Gonne, carry sparkles of reality with them which are rooted in the poet's phantasmagoria. In the poem "The Living Beauty", the speaker is quite cognizant of the ravages of his age and their influence on his feelings for Iseult Gonne. The beautiful image he perceives of her is described as a "beauty that is cast out of mold/In bronze, or that in dazzling marble appears" (114). Both "Bronze" and "marble" are suggestive of value, beauty and youth. They are also put against the spent "wick and oil" (114) and the frozen "channel of the blood" (114) in himself. By contrasting the two utterly different types of images, he strongly highlights the vast chasm between his old and exhausted self and the living beauty's new-blossomed youth. If in "The Living Beauty" Yeats says that he loves "bronze" and "marble" statues, it is not because of the living woman's inadequacy, but rather because of his own; hence, "O heart, we are old" (114). As Jahan Ramazani believes, "just as the poet passes his self-love in a detour through the women in his poetry, so too he sometimes passes through their blankness the libidal energy of self-mourning" (Ramazani 1990, p.65) In most of Yeats's love poems, however, the figure of the absent woman stands for the poet's lost youth and coming death.

When absorbed in his phantasmagoria, his "discomforted heart" (Yeats 1994, p.114) may delight in the glamorous beauty that her image offers, but before long he comes to realize that even such a fabulous image is elusive, for "when we have gone is gone again" (114). The phantasmagoric beautiful image disappears the moment the speaker is reminded of his heart's being incapable of embracing the young girl's love: "O heart, we are old;/The living beauty is for younger men" (114). The incongruity of this love affair and its being transient are strongly suggested in the young girl's "Being more indifferent to our solitude/Than 'twere an apparition" (114). In the poet's phantasmagoria, the living beauty does not linger much, for it comes like a phantasmagoric image of dazzling beauty and before long it flickers away like "an apparition".

The poems addressed to Iseult which are composed by Yeats before 1917 are more about praising her mother, for Iseult was mentally a child with no sign of her mother's perfect womanhood. She acts as a means of celebrating the glory of her mother's youth and beauty in Yeats's personal love lyrics. In "To a Child Dancing in the Wind", "Two Years Later" and "Presences", as Richard Ellmann believes, Yeats "contrasts her youthful innocence with the past the poet knows" (Ellman 1954, p.190).

We find the poet giving up his intense infatuation with the young beauty, in the poem "A Song", for as he believes "O who could have foretold that the heart grows old?" (Yeats 114). All the images prevailing the poet's phantasmagoria in this poem bespeak of aging and losing the grip of love:

I have not lost desire

But the heart that I had;

I thought 't would

Laid on the death-bed. (Yeats 1994, p.115)

The phantasmagoric images given are void of the burning power of love and passion; instead, they are suggestive of death and decay.

Although Iseult decided not to let Yeats give her his love, she still could not stop the poet from offering advice. In "To a Young Beauty", Iseult is warned against the Dublin Bohemians who had taken advantages of her. Here, Yeats assumes a different role in his phantasmagoria; he sets himself up as a model of the man who-picking his friends as carefully as his flowing neckties-by careful cultivation of a

select circle will prepare himself for a poet's immortality in which he will have as companions Landor, whom he had long admired, and Donne, whose works he had recently read. (Unterecker 1967, p.136)

It was in the summer of 1916, when after his marriage proposal's being cordially rejected by Maud Gonne, that Yeats turned his romantic and patriarchal affections to her strikingly beautiful daughter Iseult. Taking after her mother, the much younger Iseult enjoyed a coyly flirtations relationship with the old admirer of her mother. The thematic outgrowth of Yeats's semi-infatuous fascination with these stubborn beauties did have its specific impact on the mood and aesthetic composition of *The Wild swans at Coole*'s personal love lyrics. The essential psychological and emotional demand of that summer was massive and required from Yeats a kind of self-mastery. It also demanded that he should actively and willfully purge Maud from his poetic thought, for Yeats had eventually come to realize that his traditional source of inspiration had fossilized over time.

Although Iseult Gonne with her mythic beauty, brooding intellect and enticing charms had driven Yeats wild with desire as a young man, she had made an equally alarming but more subtle demand on the old poet. Yeats sought a rather passive and mature love affair with the young girl that was in fact rooted in his need for an inspiring muse. All his passions and affections, however, turned out to be an unrequited love, but he managed to disentangle himself from the lure of an impetuous love and assumed the clarified viewpoint of a rational observer.

In the poem "To a Young Girl", the poet's attention seems to be focused on the young beauty's mother again. Although the poem is addressed to Iseult turns, from the fourth line on, the poem turns to be directed to Maud Gonne's very self. Yeats, in this poem, is not the ardent lover in "The Living Beauty" or the "Dear Fellow-artist"'s wise friend, for he is transformed to a father figure. In his phantasmagoria, Yeats is placed close to Iseult's heart and when he insists that he knows about what's there in her heart more than her mother does, he bitterly implies her mother's cruel treatment of his love. The "wild thought" (Yeats 115) stands for Maud Gonne's once-passionate love for the poet. The description given of Maud's love for him in a way bespeaks of his own feelings:

When the wild thought,

That she denies

And has forgot,

Set all her blood astir

And glittered in her eyes. (Yeats 1994, p.116)

The poem "To a Young Girl" is more of a lament for a betrayal made by a beloved than a love lyric. No mention of the beloved's beauty can be found in this poem, for as it is implied in the poem, it was his love alone that "Set all her blood astir/And glittered in her eyes" (116).

Phantasmagoria in the Poems Directed to Maud Gonne

A few poems in *The Wild Swans at Coole* collection, are either directly or indirectly related to Maud Gonne and Yeats's hopeless love for her. Yeats's meeting Maud Gonne in 1889 made a turning point in forming the rest of his life. He fell in love with her at first sight, for Maud, as Henn says, "had beauty, with high birth and vigor of bone; a royal bearing and eccentrics of behavior which marked her out" (55). Yeats's woman-made symbol, i.e., Maud Gonne, stands as the poet's favorite symbol used in different forms in different poems. In some of Yeats's personal love lyrics, a symbolic and mythologized figure of Maud Gonne can be traced as a symbol of female sexual energy. According to Peter Ure, Yeats's role "as her courtly and platonic lover was played out in pain and despair, and the poems that

enact this role depend on the tension between proose of the sacred object and a relentless conviction about its nature" (Ure 1948, p. 8).

Phantasmagoria in "Her Praise"

In *The Wild Swans at Coole* collection of poems, six poems beginning with the poem "Her Praise" focus on her magnificent symbolic role in Yeats's life, poetry and phantasmagoria, for "she is foremost of those that I would hear praised" (Yeats 1994, p.125). During the Nineties, Maud Gonne was the dominating figure in Yeats's life. Fascinated by her beauty, charms and passion, he could also find in her a mystical belief quite akin to his own. Although Yeats could never attain to Maud Gonne's one-mindedness, it was, however, the special facet of her mentality to which he was strongly attracted. As Louis Mac Niece believes, "The mere fact that she was unattainable put her on a place with old masters" (Mac Niece 1967, p.80).

Although in his mature love poems Yeats allows the image of the middle-aged Maud Gonne sink in her age, he can still appreciate that brilliant flash of beauty that had haunted him some years ago. The images used for praising her in "Her Praise" are more about the poet's idea of how to praise someone who "is foremost of all that I would hear praised" (Yeats 1994, p.125). The poem "Her Praise" is that of the wearied, dejected and desperate lover who tries his best to rescue long-dead memories from the trash with his relentless love. In the course of this poem, a movement from dream reverie into egress can be noticed. The first line of the poem, i.e., "She is foremost of all that I would hear praised" (126), which is quite somber and ceremonial, is spoken in a voice too exhausted to do the praise. The speaker is, however, prepared to listen to an echoed sentiment. The mature Yeats is far different from the young Yeats who would put Maud Gonne alone on the pedestal, for he, in this poem, leaves her scrambling among a number of beauties as the foremost of them all. Still, Yeats's manner of praising is a species of phantasmagoria, since it assumes the form of the great love ballads of *The Rose* and *The Wind Among the Reeds*. The speaker's wandering "about the house" not only signals his sense of displacement, but also locates him within the archetypal symbol of the tower. The restless dramatic tower of Yeats's declaration of love and praise abruptly falls flat, since the trivialities of social gatherings, the gossip and the slumberous muttering of the drunk try to separate him from his impassioned memories. The poet finds himself somewhat forced to "walk by the dry thorn" (125) until he discovers some "beggar sheltering from the wind" (125). Although the "beggar" steps in the poet's phantasmagoria as an apparition, he holds the position of a pure listener rather than a real participant in the poem. Both the poet and the beggar seem to be caught in silence, but remembering her name amid the filth pleases them enough,

for in the old days,

Though she had young men's blame,

Among the poor both old and young gave her praise (125).

In "Her Praise", Yeats does not go to mythology or the other- worldly images, he instead, chooses the images from among the ordinary and this-worldly ones in order to make the idea more tangible. This idea of praising her is hanging intense and strong in his phantasmagoria. He compares his relentless yearnings for praising her to several different things:

I have gone about the house, gone up and down,

As a man does who has published a new book,

Or a young girl dressed out in her new gown (125).

The fact that nothing can divert him from praising her is implied in "A woman spoke of some new tale she had read,/A man confusedly in a half dream" (125). The poet himself "will talk no more of

books or the long war", (125) for praising his beloved is of prime importance to him. The line "Among the poor both old and young gave her praise" hints at Maud Gonne's fame among the Dublin poor for her charity. According to A. Norman Jeffares, "Her Praise" is a poem about "Maud Gonne, who withdraws from public life after her marriage. Yeats sees society as forgetting her but the poor as remembering her" (Jeffares 1984, p.154). Though Yeats could hardly figure out what he admired in her from what he deplored, he still could not help praising her power over crowds as a political agitator holding views contrary to his:

Her power over crowds was at its height, and some portion of the power came because she could still, even when pushing an abstract principle to what seemed to me an absurdity, keep her own mind free, and so when men and women did her bidding they did it not only because she was beautiful, but because that beauty suggested joy and freedom. (qtd. in MacNiece 79)

Phantasmagoria in "The People"

"The people" is a poem about a conversation recorded with Maud Gonne, who is symbolized as the "phoenix" both in this poem and in "His Phoenix". In his phantasmagoria, Yeats first recollects "all that I have done" (Yeats 1994, p.125) which refers to Yeats's literary and political activities. The "unmannerly town, /Where who has served the most is most defamed" (125) stands for Dublin which apparently did not appreciate the eager work of Synge, Yeats and the like. In this poem, Yeats's unfruitful attempts for the people are juxtaposed with what he could have done instead. The images chosen for describing the events and actions all bespeak of a pleasant and worthwhile activities he would have experienced "In the green shadow of Farrara wall; /Or climbed among the images of the past" (126). "Shadow" connotes comfort and solace. The color "green", is "(the color pertaining to Venus and Nature) betoken the fertility of the fields" (Cirlot 1962, p.52). It also, as Jolen Jacobi believes, "represents the function of sensation" (qtd. in Cirlot 52).

In "Her Praise" the poet fixes the memory of Maud Gonne's name in "the poor both old and young" (Yeats 125) and not in the literary educated classes. In "The People", Yeats once more returns to her favorite theme, i.e. the people. In fact, Yeats could hardly ever reconcile his growing aristocratic sentiments with Maud Gonne's passionate democratic spirit, for even in the poem titled "The People", he is "drawing once more an imagery from Castiglone The Courtier" (Unterecker 1967, p.141). The aristocratic atmosphere required for his phantasmagoria is attained through "The unperturbed courtly images" (Yeats 126) brought by "The Duchess and her people", "stately midnight", and "great window" (Yeats 126). Yeats concludes the aristocratic air with

'I might have used the one substantial right

My trade allows: chosen my company,

And what scenery had pleased me best'. (Yeats 1994, p.126).

His "phoenix", which stands for Maud Gonne, regardless of all Yeats has to say about aristocracy and wisdom, takes pleasure in her own defeat: "'Yet never have I, now nor any time, /Complained of the people'" (Y126). Yeats's identifying Maud Gonne with the phoenix is rooted in the bird's being the symbol of periodic destruction and re-creation; it also signifies the triumph of the eternal life over death which hints at Maud Gonne's delight in her defeat. To Yeats the "phoenix" seems to signify what Wirth also suggests. According to Wirth, there is "a psychological interpretation of the fabulous bird as the symbol of the 'phoenix' which we all keep within ourselves, enabling us to live out every moment and to overcome each and every partial death which we all call a 'dream' or 'change'" (qtd. in Cirlot 242). Although the memories of her separation from her husband, her being unpopular with the public and being hissed on the Abbey stage are painful enough, Maud Gonne can still reprove Yeats's criticism of the people and by doing so, she dies and is reborn as a phoenix in the poet's phantasmagoria.

In the poem "The People", Yeats secures a position for his dialogue back and forth between real life and his phantasmagoria. "The People", which is actually an argument between Maud Gonne and Yeats recollected in his phantasmagoria, begins with the impassioned voice of the poet who denounces "This unmannerly town", i.e., Dublin. After allotting a couple of lines to belittling the public, he enthusiastically segues into a phantasmagoria of where "he might have lived" (Yeats 125). He imagines himself in the Florentine Renaissance, climbing "the steep street of Urbino/To where the Duchess and her people talked" (125). "When the wicks grows yellow in the dawn" (Yeats 1994, p.125), the reader steps into Yeats's Maud-centered phantasmagoria. Having assumed the form of Maud Gonne, another aspect of life has its own bitter retort to offer the poet:

When my luck changed and they dared meet my face,

Crawled from obscurity, and sat upon me

Those I had served and some that I had fed;

Yet never have I, now nor any time,

Complained of the people. (126)

As Norman A. Jeffares believes, there is "a contrast between the ideal court of Urbino and Maud's love of the people, which never wavered even though she had been attacked when her luck was out" (Jeffares 1984, p.184). In reply to her wise retort, Yeats manages to display a paltry defense; he declares that it is "thought" that trumps deed and all the rest of it. But even he himself is quite cognizant of the utter feebleness of his argument:

And yet, because my heart leaped at her words,

I was abashed, and now they come to mind

After nine years, I sink my head abashed. (Yeats 1994, p.125)

In the course of the phantasmagoria governing "The People", the objective life, hinted at through "His Phoenix", i.e., Maud Gonne's retort, successfully rebukes and defeats the vibrant subjective reverie excluding life. A subjective withdrawal from both argument and reverie concludes the phantasmagoria. The same basic pattern of struggle and defeat is implied, with a sequential difference, in "Broken Dreams". As Graham Martin believes, in the poem "Broken Dreams" it is suggested that "memory is inadequate to the task of recalling her perfect beauty, but then that this matters less than the imperfect actuality of the 'hands' (that were not beautiful/. . . .)" (Martin 1966, p.65).

Phantasmagoria in "Broken Dreams"

The lengthy opening stanza of the poem "Broken Dreams" introduces another Maud Gonne to Yeatsian phantasmagoria, for now Maud Gonne, Yeats's minor by a few months, has become an old woman: "There is grey in your hair./Young men no longer suddenly catch their breath" (Yeats 1994, p.128). Although the rest of the stanza is about how Maud Gonne's charity will return her youth, the whole stanza is defined by its opening image of frailty. The next stanza of the poem bespeaks of a shared melancholy: "Your beauty can but leave among us/Vague memories, nothing but memories" (128). Some "old man" appears from Yeats's bank of images, engages the poet in a dialog, and asks him to rhyme out the love of Maud as he had done in his youth. The opening of this dialog acts, in fact, as another Yeatsian phantasmagoria, i.e., the advent of a lunar drama which includes the vague memories of life which are given a new birth after death. The feminine image of Maud Gonne strides "in the first loveliness of womanhood" (128) and is reborn in memory.

In the fourth stanza of the poem, the energy with which the newly-vital Maud is infused, is conveyed to a soft dream of eternal perfection in the poet's phantasmagoria symbolized by "that mysterious, always brimming lake/For old sake's sake" (128). An affinity can be felt between the swan image in this poem, i.e. "paddle to the wrist" (129), and that of "The Wild Swans at Coole". As Herbert J. Levine believes, the latter begins to "Take on a richer meaning, as the reader discerns that the link between Yeats, Maud and swans is not arbitrary, but crucial, in fact, to an understanding of Yeats's greatest poems" (428). The phantasmagoric temple that Yeats had built around the vital image of Maud Gonne turns to a house of cards: "All day in one chair" (129). The final suggested image in the poem seems to be that of an old man whose visionary power has grown unstable:

From dream to dream I have ranged

In rambling talk with an image of air:

Vague memories, nothing but memories. (129).

In the poem, "His Phoenix", Maud Gonne is once more elevated to the symbolic status of a "phoenix". Here, Yeats praises his beloved by first constructing a long catalog of "most beautiful women": a Chinese or a Spanish queen, "that sprightly girl trodden by a bird" (127) which refers to Leda who was "trodden" by Zeus disguised as a swan and

eventually gave birth to another of Yeats's heroines Helen, tour;

and incidentally to one of his greatest poems; Gaby Desley;

Ruth St. Denis; Pavolva; Julia Marlow, whose childlike Juliet

had thrilled Yeats when he had been in America on his 1903

lecture tour; and all the others: Margaret, Marjorie, Dorothy,

Nan, Daphne, and Mary, some at least half-identifiable.

(Unterecker 1967, p.142)

All the afore-mentioned beauties of the catalog are to Yeats nothing but "that barbarous crowd" (Yeats 1994, p.129), that, as he believes, will just come and go, for although they can even be "my beauty's equal" (129), they will never be "the exact likeness" (129).

Phantasmagoria in "His Phoenix"

In the last stanza of "His Phoenix", the phantasmagoria that has been launched by the catalogue of beauties, takes its final form with its focus on Maud Gonne entirely: "Some young bell may walk and talk men wild/Who is my beauty's equal, though that my heart denies" (127). Of all the beauties she alone, has got "the simplicity of a child", (127) "that proud look as though she had gazed into the burning sun", (127) which has frequently been likened to that of a hawk by Yeats, and "all the shapely body no title gone astray" (127). If Yeats mourns for her in this poem as a dead body, as the "most comely thing", it is partly because of Maud Gonne's 1990 assertion that they must in the future be apart. It has also been referred to in some sections of Yeats's unpublished journal quoted by Virginia Moore in her study *The Unicorn*:

She is my innocence and I her wisdom, of old she was a Phoenix and I feared her, but now she is my child more than my sweetheart. . . .Always since I was a boy I have questioned dreams for her sake--and she herself always a dream and deceiving hope . . . the phoenix nesting [?] when she is reborn in all

her power to torture and delight, to waste and ennoble. She would be cruel if she were not a child who can always say, 'you will not suffer because I will pray'. (qtd. in Unterecker 142)

These attributed images to Maud Gonne appear quite frequently in Yeats's writing. She is symbolized as the "phoenix", for "the phoenix is the emperor of birds and a sun-symbol" (Cirlot 1962, p. 242). "In 'The People' she is a phoenix (i.e. of, yet beyond nature), with the 'purity of a natural force', with semi-political authority over both the poet's mind and the lover's heart" (Martin 1966, p.65).

Phantasmagoria in"A Thought from Propertius"

"A Thought from Propertius" is also a poem about Maud Gonne's special position in Yeats's phantasmagoria and poetry. This poem, as Graham Martin believes, advances "her deification on traditional lines of literary and classical myth" (65). The images ascribed to Maud Gonne in this poem all bespeak of grace and nobility:

She might, so noble from head

To great shapely knees

The long flowing line

Have walked to the altar

Through the holy images

At Pallas Athena's side,

Or been fit spoil for a centaur

Drunk with the unmixed wine. (Yeats 1994, p.128)

Apparently, Yeats, as Norman A. Jeffares believes, has selected the images of this poem from the second book of Propertius, a Roman love poet whose name is mentioned in the title of the poem. The phrase "been fit spoil for a centaur" (128) can easily be noticed in Propertius's words: "the Centaur's welcome spoil in the revel's midst" (qtd. in Jeffares 158). The image of "the altar" and "walking through the holy images" (Yeats 1994, p. 128) are strongly suggestive of the glorification of a goddess and is implied in her being placed "At Pallas Athena's side" (128). In the poem "A Thought from Propertius" Yeats, in fact, "celebrates Maud Gonne's noble and statuesque beauty by showing her as a companion to Pallas Athena, virgin goddess of war and wisdom and patroness of independent and learned women" (Khan 2002, p.142).

Phantasmagoria in "Presences"

Unlike "A Deep-sworn Vow" that reaffirms Maud Gonne's dominion over Yeats's phantasmagoria, "Presences" hints at Yeats's having affairs with other women as well. "This night" which appears right at the beginning of the poem, is very suggestive, for it is related to the feminine, the unconscious and the passive principle. Greeks, according to Cirlot, "believed that night and darkness preceded the creation of all things" (Cirlot 1962, p.218). They stood in the door and stood between/My great wood lectern and the fire" (Yeats 1994, p.130) suggests those women's affecting some significant aspects of Yeats's life; "great wood lectern" signifies his being a senator while "fire" stands for his passions and feelings related to love and sexuality. Here, "From going-down of the sun" (128), i.e., the eve-time, when the poet's phantasmagoria steps in. The phantasmagoric images he encounters belong to three women, two of which have been of paramount significance to him. The "child" who is "timid" refers to the youngest of them, i.e. Iseult Gonne who "never looked upon men with desire" (130) and for

whom Yeats had mixed affections. The woman who is laughing and is referred to as "a harlot" in this poem, is most probably "Mabel Dickinson" (Jeffares 1984, p.159) who had tried to trap Yeats into marriage by pretending to be with child. The "wild" one that is referred to as "a queen" stands for Maud Gonne who even though had more than once rejected his marriage proposals, had eventually "returned" (Yeats 1994, p.129) "his love in spite of all her assertions of purity that, returning it, she had also in 'monstrous' fashion refused to requite it" (Jeffares 1984, p. 143).

Conclusion

This study has endeavored to demonstrate the significance of phantasmagoria as a key concept in W. B. Yeats's personal love lyrics included in *The Wild Swans at Coole*. The reason why he should introduce his personal phantasmagoria in the preface to this collection of poems, and begin the collection with weighing heavily on his phantasmagoric images and symbols have been discussed. The theme of love and yearning that finds expression in his personal love lyrics, in particular those included in *The Wild Swans at Coole* have been discussed in this study. The deployment of phantasmagoric images and symbols have also been analyzed in this paper.

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