Jolanta Dudek has made interpreting complex twentieth-century poetry into something of a speciality. Her approach to interpretative criticism is basically phenomenological. After completing a doctoral thesis on the post-war poetry of K. Wierzyński at the Jagellonian University in Cracow (where she graduated), Jolanta Dudek was a Rawnsley Student at St. Hugh's College, Oxford, where she wrote a second doctoral thesis comparing the mature poetry of Wierzyński and Yeats. Her recent habilitation thesis at the Jagellonian University — where she teaches — seeks to reveal the extent to which the poetry of Czesław Miłosz has been inspired by English poetry (W. Blake and T. S. Eliot in particular) as well as by the writings of European philosophers and religious thinkers. Other poets whose work has been explored by Jolanta Dudek include: T. Gajcy, J. Przyboś, M. Jastrun, S. Grochowiak and Z. Herbert.

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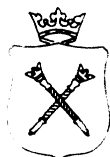

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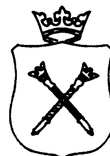
JOLANTA DUDEK

THE POETICS OF W.B. YEATS AND K. WIERZYŃSKI: A PARALLEL



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Introduction

In the present study, the author's aim has been to draw a parallel between two artistic phenomena 'situated' (so to speak) in two recognizably distinct – albeit European – cultural traditions. These two phenomena are two poems – Yeats's *The Tower* and Wierzyński's *Piąta pora roku*. The author hopes that such a parallel will not only contribute to a better understanding of the poetry of Yeats and Wierzyński, but that – indirectly – it will also serve to shed some new light on the work of other European poets writing in the twentieth century.

The two poems chosen for analysis and comparison are – in the present author's opinion – poems which are 'representative' (so to speak) of the poetry of their authors, but which so far have defied complete and satisfactory analysis. Both were written at periods during which their authors – Yeats and Wierzyński – are now generally considered[1] to have been at the height of their 'creative powers'. It so happens that both poets were 'then' in their sixties[2].

The method of analysis is based largely on the work of Roman Ingarden (*O dziele literackim / Das literarische Kunstwerk*), Erich Auerbach (*Mimesis*) and – to a lesser extent – that of Kazimierz Wyka and Georges Poulet. The analysis of both poems has been carried out with particular reference to:

1. The function of the following themes – the poet; nature; creation; imagination; poetry; "unity of Being".
2. The concept of a speaker (or 'protagonist').
3. The structure of a lyrical monologue.
4. The use of poetic myths, symbols and images.

The fact that Yeats and Wierzyński 'inherited' or 'were born into' two recognizably distinct and independent literary (and cultural) traditions would seem to rule out the possibility that one poet may have 'influenced' the other to any significant extent[3]. If, then, there are – as the author of the present study hopes to demonstrate – significant similarities between the work of the two poets, these are to be explained rather by the existence of a 'deeper' – European – literary tradition (Romanticism) which links the

[1] By serious scholars.

[2] When Wierzyński (1894 – 1969) made his *début* as a poet, Yeats (1865 – 1939) was well into his fifties.

[3] Cf. R. Wellek. *The crisis of comparative literature* [in:] R. Wellek, *Concepts of criticism*, Yale U.P., New Haven/London 1971.

two apparently unrelated literary (and cultural) traditions in which the poems of Yeats and Wierzyński are firmly 'embedded'. The hypothesis that there is just such a greater, European Romantic tradition has been vigorously and convincingly[4] defended by René Wellek.

The author of the present study shares the opinion of a number of English – speaking[5] and Polish[6] scholars who believe that Romanticism as a literary tradition is still very much alive in the twentieth century. As a 'way of thinking' about man, art and the world, Romanticism – the author believes – is still present in the 'living memory'[7] of many twentieth–century poets – including those who have ostensibly 'cut themselves off' from the Romantic tradition. This, however, can only be demonstrated by making comparative analyses of individual poems. Comparisons such as these[8] must be carried out at three levels:

1. Within the context of the work of the individual poet.

2. Within the context of the (national) literary and cultural tradition into which the poet was 'born' and which he 'inherited', so to speak.

3. Within the (as yet somewhat hypothetical) context of a broader, European literary and cultural tradition.

The author believes that such 'international' comparative analyses – if properly carried out – can serve only to further our understanding – at a 'national' level – of the work of the poets chosen for comparison. The author hopes that the 'beneficiary' of the present study will be Kazimierz Wierzyński, whose poetry – in the author's opinion – has been misunderstood (and consequently 'undervalued') by many of his fellow countrymen to an incomparably greater extent than was ever the case with Yeats.

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[4] In the author's opinion.

Cf. R. Wellek, *The Concept of Romanticism in Literary History* and *Romanticism re–examined* [in:] R. Wellek, op.cit.

[5] Cf. F. Kermode, *Romantic image*, London 1971.

Cf. N. Frye, *A Study of English Romanticism*, New York 1968.

Cf. *Romanticism. Vistas, instances, continuities*, Ed. D. Thorburn and G. Hartman, Cornell U.P. 1973.

[6] Cf. M. Dłuska, *Studia i rozprawy*, Kraków 1972, vol. III.

Cf. M. Janion, *Gorączka romantyczna*, Warsaw 1975.

Cf. M. Tatara, *Dziedzictwo Słowackiego w poezji polskiej ostatniego półwiecza: 1918 – 1968*, Wrocław 1973.

Cf. T. Weiss, *Romantyczna genealogia polskiego modernizmu. Rekonesans*, Warsaw 1974.

Cf. C. Zgorzelski, *Od Oświecenia ku romantyzmowi i współczesności*, Kraków 1978.

[7] To use Ingarden's term (*żywa pamięć*). Cf. *O poznawaniu dzieła literackiego* [in:] R. Ingarden, *Studia z estetyki*, vol. I, Warsaw 1957, p. 65.

[8] Cf. R. Wellek and A. Warren, *Teoria literatury* (Theory of Literature), Ed. M. Żurowski (trans. M. Żurowski, I. Sieradzki, J. Krycki), Warsaw 1970, Part I: chapter V.

Cf. H. Markiewicz, *Zakres i podział literaturoznawstwa porównawczego* and *Badania porównawcze w literaturoznawstwie polskim* [in:] H. Markiewicz, *Przekroje i zbliżenia, dawne i nowe*, Warsaw 1976.

Part two of the present study was first published in *Antemurale* (XXVI: 1982 – 83). The parallel English translations of quotations from Polish texts which were then added in by the editors of *Antemurale* are here reproduced by permission.

The author would like to express her gratitude to the Oxford D. Phil. supervisors of the present thesis – Dr. Gerald Stone and the late Prof. Robert Auty – for their constant help and encouragement. Thanks are also due to Dr. György Gömöri, Dr. John Kelly and Prof. Tadeusz Sławek for much valuable advice. A special word of thanks is due to St. Hugh's College, Oxford, where – as a Rawnsley Student – the author was able to spend three years exploring the riches of English poetry.

Part One

W.B. YEATS: The Tower (poem)

I

In 1928, at the age of sixty–three, Yeats published a collection of poems entitled *The Tower*[1]. Many critics consider *The Tower* to be Yeats's central poetical achievement[2] – the meeting–point, as it were, of the lines of development of the poetry he had written until then, and of the new lines of development of the poetry he wrote afterwards.

The themes which preoccupied Yeats in the period of his maturity as a poet are: imagination and its relation to nature, the nation and spiritual values; the poet and poetry (art); love; death; history; eternity; freedom; necessity; the unity of being. The Romantic genealogy of this array of themes is self–evident[3].

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1 According to the chronology of A.N. Jeffares (*A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, Macmillan, London 1977) the manuscript of *The Tower* dates from the same year as that of *A Vision*, i.e. 1925.

2 Reviewing *The Tower* in 1928, J.G. Fletcher wrote: "Here we have not a collection of anthology specimens, good or bad, but what is essentially a Weltanschauung worked out at high tension in poetic form" (in: *Critics on Yeats*, Ed. R.C. Cowell, London 1971, p. 12).

A.G. Stock (1961): "By clarity of conviction and mastery of technique Yeats had come to the height of his power in *The Tower* and *The Winding Stair* and both style and thought had a strange, not always easy lucidity" (A.G. Stock, W.B. Yeats, *his poetry and thought*, Cambridge 1961, p. 191).

P. Ure (1963): works in which "Yeats achieves magniloquence, final authority and self–possession" and whose poems "constitute Yeats's central achievement" include *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), *The Tower* (1928) and *The Winding Stair* (1933); (P. Ure, *Yeats*, Edinburgh 1963, p. 61).

T. Parkinson (1964): "The end of the title poem *The Tower* and the closing stanza of *Among School Children* were both written late in the great productive period of which *The Tower* is the key book" (T. Parkinson, *W.B. Yeats: the later poetry*, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley 1964, p. 111).

A.N. Jeffares (1968): "Yeats's change of style and his maturity were probably not generally recognized until the publication of *The Tower* in 1928" (A.N. Jeffares, op.cit., p. 251).

3 Cf. M. Janion, *Zamknięcie. Badania literackie nad XIX w.* [in:] *Gorączka romantyczna*, Warsaw 1975, p. 548.

For the Romantic theme of the Unity of Being see also: H. Bloom, *Yeats*, Oxford 1970, p. 51: "Unity of Being, which Yeats never ceased to seek, was the goal of the Paterian quest, and perhaps of all questing in the Romantic tradition".

The collection opens with a poem entitled *Sailing to Byzantium*, in which Yeats evokes a vision of the City of Art (and, indirectly, of eternity) similar to the Xanadu of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, the Arcadia of Shelley's *Epipsychidion* and *Alastor*, or Blake's Golgonooza[4].

Sailing to Byzantium is followed by a poem which bears the same title as the collection itself, viz. *The Tower*, and which develops the problems of art, nature and eternity even further[5]. This poem would seem to be central to the entire collection – here, it would seem, is the "focal point" of Yeats's mature poetry, for here its essential features are concentrated[6]. It is firmly set in the poet's previous creative development as well as in the High Romantic tradition of English poetry, which Yeats chose to inherit[7].

Cf. also the entry 'Unity' [in:] R. Wellek, *Index of topics and terms* [in:] *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750 – 1950, vol. 2: The Romantic Age*, London 1955.

[4] Cf. G. Melchiori; *The Dome of Many Coloured Glass* [in:] *The Whole Mystery of Art. Patterns into poetry in the work of W.B. Yeats*, London 1960.

[5] T. Parkinson draws attention to the structure of the volume *The Tower*: "The solidity of *The Tower* has often been noted, and the reading of individual poems in it is frequently altered by their relation to the remainder of the book. In this respect *Sailing to Byzantium* is revealing, for if the poem resolves the problem of old age and art there is something rather odd in Yeats's following it with a poem (*The Tower*) which offers a significantly different treatment of the subject and a continued examination of images dominant in *Sailing to Byzantium*. Seen in the context of the book *Sailing to Byzantium* is a definition or sketch of a problem rather than a denial of it, and the very existence of *Byzantium* illustrates that it did not exhaust the problem in any sense. (...) In Yeats's 'construction' of *The Tower*, he was interested in making a design, so that he could comprehend what he took to be the major drift of his poetry" (op.cit., pp. 56 – 57).

[6] *The Tower* is considered to be one of Yeats's 'great' poems:

J. Spencer (1928): "... and many of these poems – *The Tower, Nineteen Nineteen, Among School Children* will remain a permanent part of English poetry" (in: *W.B. Yeats, A Critical Anthology*, Ed. W.H. Pritchard, Penguin Books 1972, p. 94).

R. Ellmann (1949): "... he drew his strength for the three mighty poems of 1925 and 1926: *The Tower* (October 7, 1925), *Among School Children* (June 14, 1926) and *Sailing to Byzantium* (September 26, 1926). These poems seem to have his full life behind them" (R. Ellmann, *Yeats. The Man and the Masks*, London 1973, p. 254).

T. Parkinson, loc.cit., 1964.

D. Davie (1964): „His greatest poems – *Sailing to Byzantium, The Tower, Among School Children* – these poems, which come later than those I've been talking about, have tended to lead later poetry astray" (in: *W.B. Yeats. A Critical Anthology*, Ed. W.H. Pritchard, Penguin Books 1972, p. 308).

[7] Many critics have written about Yeats's Romantic 'heritage'. To mention only a few:

G. Hough in *The Last Romantics* (1947) traces the development of the English Romantic tradition from the middle of the 19th century to Yeats.

F. Kermode in *Romantic Image* (1957) draws attention to the continual presence of a 'central Romantic tradition' (notions of Image and isolation) in 19th and 20th century European poetry and criticism. In French literature the heirs of this tradition are the symbolists. As far as English poetry is concerned, Kermode considers the heirs of the 'central Romantic tradition' to be Yeats (first and foremost), T.S. Eliot and E. Pound. In Kermode's opinion A. Symons can be seen as a link between the French Symbolists and Yeats. The 'links' between the generation of the 'Great Romantics' and the 'tragic generation' of Yeats are – in Kermode's view – M. Arnold and W. Pater:

"... these notions of image and isolation developed independently in England, from native Romantic roots. The Symbol of the French is, as we shall see, the Romantic Image writ large and given more elaborate metaphysical and magical support; and if we go back far enough, we can see that English poets – using the same ultimate sources, Boehme and Swedenborg, the Germans of the late eighteenth century – developed

Linked to Romantic images of a "happy prison"[8] (specifically to Shelley's tower) is the leading motif–symbol of the poem and collection, viz. the tower, which is the tangible nucleus of all the poem's meanings. The first words of the poem may be interpreted not only as an allusion to Blake's famous letter on the power of imagination – which grows as the body declines[9] – but also as a covert dispute with Shelley, who in his essay *On a Future State* expresses an opinion contrary to that of Blake[10]. Whereas Yeats's tower represents the protagonist's mind "looking outward upon men and things"[11] (more specifically, the protagonist's imagination) – in accordance with

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their own way of 'recalling us to the truth of the image'. This native tradition is in some ways more significant for modern poetry than imported Symbolism; Blake and Pater stand behind Yeats at his most magnificent, and in the thought of Arthur Symons, crucial for the historian, they are at least as important as the French poets" (F. Kermode, *Romantic Image*, London 1971, pp. 17–18).

"The free self–delighting intellect which knows that pain is the cost of joy, the licence to look inward and paint, as Blake and Palmer painted, a symbolic world; to make a magical explanation of a divine order – all this represents the victory of Coleridge, of Blake and the French; it is the heritage, delightful and tragic, to which Yeats was born". (F. Kermode, op.cit., p. 39).

"He is the poet in whose work Romantic isolation achieves its full quality as a theme for poetry, being no longer a pose, a complaint, or a programme; and his treatment of it is very closely related to his belief in what Pater called 'vision' and the French called Symbol" (F. Kermode, op.cit., p. 42).

In the same book Kermode defines the concept of Romanticism and puts forward the hypothesis that the Romantic era is still with us:

"I here use 'Romantic' in a restricted sense as applicable to the literature of one epoch, beginning in the late years of the eighteenth century and not yet finished, and as referring to the high valuation placed during this period upon the image–making powers of the mind at the expense of its rational powers, and to the substitution of organicist for mechanistic modes of thinking about works of art" (F. Kermode, op.cit., p. 56).

The same conception of human imagination, of nature as an organic whole – the same poetic style which employs myths and symbols as the chief sources of artistic expression were – according to R. Wellek (1963) – the essential issues of the Romantic movement, those which laid the foundation for its European unity (cf. R. Wellek, *The concept of Romanticism in literary scholarschip* and *Romanticism re–examined* [in:] *Concepts of Literary Criticism*, Yale University Press 1971).

In a book devoted to Yeats's iconography (*The Whole Mystery of Art*, ed.cit.) G. Melchiori makes a fine analysis of the links between the symbolism of Yeats and that of the great Romantics (Blake, Shelley, Coleridge, Keats).

H. Bloom has written a book devoted almost entirely to the relationship between Yeats's work and that of Blake, Shelley, Pater and other Romantics (H. Bloom, *Yeats*, Oxford 1970).

According to Bloom: "Blake, Shelley, Morris, Pater, Balzac and Nietzsche count for more in *A Vision*, and in Yeats's poetry, than do Blavatsky, Mathers, Swedenborg, Thomas Tylor, Agrippa and the secrets of the Golden Dawn" (H. Bloom, op.cit., p. 212).

N. Frye, who sees the work of many well known 20th century poets and writers (e.g. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, E. Pound, Beckett, D.H. Lawrence, Proust) as a continuation of the most important Romantic issues, takes a stand similar to that of Kermode (N. Frye, *A Study of English Romanticism*, New York 1968).

[8] Cf. V. Brombert, *The Happy Prison: A Recurring Romantic Metaphor* [in:] *Romanticism. Vistas, Instances, Continuities*, Ed. D. Thorburn and G. Hartman, Cornell U.P. 1973.

[9] Cf. A.N. Jeffares, op.cit., p. 258.

[10] "In old age the mind gradually withers; and as it grew and was strengthened with the body, so does it together with the body sink into decrepitude" (Shelley, *On a future state* [in:] *Shelley, Selected Poetry, Prose and Letters*, Ed. A.S.B. Glover, London 1951, p. 979).

[11] "The tower, important in Maeterlinck, as in Shelley, is, like the sea, and rivers, and caves with fountains, a very ancient symbol, and would perhaps, as years went by, have grown more important in his poetry.

Yeats's interpretation of Shelley's symbol – the Romantic faith in the power of imagination which is expressed in the poem approaches Blake's maximalism.

In an interior monologue, the poem's protagonist (or "speaker") attempts to understand the meaning of his own life as seen through the prism of nature, art, national tradition and eternity. This monologue is reminiscent of dialectic meditation, which attempts to reconcile conflicting emotional and intellectual attitudes. The poem's enveloping structure contains symbolic representations (parts I and III), mythical narration (part II) and an *envoi* to posterity (part III). Vision, meditation and rhetoric coexist in the poem.

The protagonist's interior monologue begins *in medias res* and introduces the poem's (Romantic) main theme – imagination[12]:

The contrast between it and the cave in *Laon and Cythna* suggests a contrast between the mind looking outward upon men and things and the mind looking inward upon itself" (W.B. Yeats, *The philosophy of Shelley's Poetry* [in:] *Essays and Introductions*, Macmillan, London 1974, p. 87).

"... that shadow is the tower,
And the light proves that he is reading still.
He has found, after the manner of this kind,
Mere images; chosen this place to live in
Because, it may be, of the candle–light
From the far tower where Milton's Platonist
Sat late, or Shelley's visionary prince:
The lonely light that Samuel Palmer engraved,
An image of mysterious wisdom won by toil;
And now he seeks in book or manuscript
What he shall never find.

(W.B. Yeats, *The Phases of the Moon* [in:] *Collected Poems*, Macmillan, London 1971, p. 184).

The following critics have made detailed analyses of the symbolism of the tower in Yeats's poetry:

J.R. Henn, *The Lonely Tower. Studies in the poetry of W.B. Yeats*, London 1965, pp. 131 – 133.

G. Melchiori, op.cit., chapter III: *The Swan, Helen and the Tower*.

12 "Romantic poems tend to be about Romantic imagination" (W.K. Wimsatt Jr and C. Brookes, *Literary Criticism. A Short History*, vol. 3, London 1970, p. 404).

H. Bloom considers *The Tower's* basic theme to be 'excess of imagination' (H. Bloom, op.cit., p. 350). This critic has written a short but comprehensive interpretation of the poem (op.cit., pp. 349 – 352). This interpretation, however, is impressionistic and biographical in character, little use being made of Bloom's own comparative studies on the relationship between Yeats and the Romantics (H. Bloom, op.cit.).

Other critics – i.e. those whose works are cited in the present study – have made only fragmentary and incomplete analyses of *The Tower* (poem). The fragments upon which most attention has been focused are: part I, the last stanza of part II and two fragments of part III beginning with the words 'And I declare my faith...' and 'Now shall I make my soul...'.

It would seem that general agreement as to the main theme of the poem is lacking:

L. Lerner: "This theme of abstractions versus the fullness of living ties in very naturally with the great theme of the later Yeats, his hatred of old age. Here is the opening section of *The Tower* (...) The contrast here is between philosophy and fishing. Philosophy is done sitting at a desk; it is done with the intellect only, it is abstract. Fishing is a bodily activity, it is done by the whole man, it is done by young men, the young men of the third section of the poem..." (L. Lerner, *Yeats's poetic world* [in:] *Critics on Yeats*, Ed. R. Cowell, London 1971, p. 105).

W.H. Pritchard: "Part I of *The Tower* asks what to do with decrepit age, then part II takes thirteen winding stanzas to prepare for the closing affirmations of part III. The final stanza of part II is my interest,

What shall I do with this absurdity –
O heart, O troubled heart – this caricature,
Decrepit age that has been tied to me
As to a dog's tail?
Never had I more
Excited, passionate, fantastical
Imagination, nor an ear and eye
That more expected the impossible –
No, not in boyhood when with rod and fly
Or the humbler worm, I climbed Ben Bulben's back
And had the livelong summer day to spend.
It seems that I must bid the Muse go pack,
Choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend
Until imagination, ear and eye,
Can be content with argument and deal
In abstract things; or be derided by
A sort of battered kettle at the heel[13].

The poem's fictional space is determined by the Romantic opposition of centre (the tower) and circumference (the world outside the tower)[14]. The protagonist of *The Tower* is situated at the centre of the space and seeks to subordinate the circumference (the world outside) to that centre (the tower). With the aid of his imagination, he wishes to encompass all that is exterior to him: nature, the sphere of abstract ideas, national tradition, the living and the dead. Corresponding to the poem's fictional space – which blurs the dividing – line between the exterior and the interior – is its fictional time – construction. The spiritual (internal) time of imagination is opposed to the cyclical, biological time of nature which strictly delimits the youth and life of the protagonist. This internal time of imagination is infinite and seeks to dominate biological

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coming as it does after the poet has sent imagination forth to call up all sorts of people from history, legend, his own writings as aids and witnesses to his dilemma" (W.H. Pritchard, *The Uses of Yeats's Poetry* [in:] *W.B. Yeats. A Critical Anthology*, Ed. W.H. Pritchard, Penguin Books 1972, p. 365).

Y. Winters considers that the various parts of the poem are loosely linked: "What he is saying is almost as foolish as what he says in section III of *The Tower* (p. 195), especially the twelve lines beginning 'And I declare my faith'. These lines are uttered with a passion which is so obviously meant to be convincing, but who can be convinced? The second half of the second song is an excellent elegiac stanza, but it has only a loose connection with what has preceded" (Y. Winters, *Forms of Discovery* [in:] ibidem, p. 268).

A.G. Stock considers that the lonely meditation of the poem is devoted to a discussion or argument between "the contemplative soul and the passionate heart that lives through experience. The soul wins this round, but only just, and perhaps only in theory, for the whole poem is crowded with experience both actual and imaginary, but at any rate it ends facing towards eternity" (A.G. Stock, op.cit., p. 185).

[13] The text I am using is that of the *Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, Macmillan, London 1971, pp. 218 – 225.

[14] Cf. G. Poulet, *Romantyzm*, trans. P. Taranczewski [in:] G. Poulet, *Metamorfozy czasu*, Warsaw 1977.

time. Corresponding to the dual character of time and space is the division of the represented world into two spheres, viz. that of nature and that of imagination, as well as two contrasting self-representations (or autocreations) of the protagonist, viz. as a young man living in harmony with nature and as an old man living in accordance with spiritual as opposed to natural laws. It would seem that the symbolic tower has a unifying function, encompassing both the protagonist's past, which is anchored in the natural world, and the present, linked with the internal world.

In the tower, which is subordinated to the laws of both nature and imagination, light emotional tones compete with the dark tones introduced by the motifs of "the battered kettle at the heel", decrepit age tied to a dog's tail[15], withdrawal from life and the giving up of poetry and love (the Muse is to be replaced by Plato and Plotinus – lines 12 – 17) – all of which symbolize the protagonist's decline and defeat. In the context of these "dark" motifs, the tower – the poem's central symbol – takes on negative emotional meanings and becomes the "tower of mourning" of Shelley's *Epipsychidion*. The main reasons for the protagonist's bitterness are old age and the probable dismissal of poetry and love (the Muse). This bitterness, however, is tinged with triumph, for it transpires that the protagonist's imagination is able to resist the natural cycle of birth and death and that – paradoxically – its power grows as the body declines.

The protagonist examines the relationship of imagination to the world of nature, to the sphere of the protagonist's feelings and to the sphere of "abstract things" as represented by Plato and Plotinus. Imagination – which mediates between the ideal world and nature – would seem to be linked in an intimate and peculiar way to the feelings of the protagonist. The sphere of feelings and passions is introduced by the following motifs: "troubled heart", "excited, passionate imagination" and the Muse (which also introduces a fourth sphere – art). The motif of the Muse therefore unites the spheres of feeling, imagination and art.

Both the treatment of the poem's theme (ideas – nature – feelings – imagination – art) and the motifs of the symbolic climb and symbolic immersion in the sphere of "abstract things" point directly to an implied Platonic–Romantic context[16]. For the

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[15] In Christian iconography the dog is the symbol of defeat. Cf. F.E. Hulme, *The history, principles and practice of symbolism in Christian art*, London 1908, pp. 179 – 180.

[16] For a review of Platonic themes treated by European (and especially English) Romantics, see W.K. Wimsatt Jr and C. Brookes, *Literary Criticism. A Short History*, vol. 3, ed.cit. Pages 430 – 431 of this book also give useful information about the work of the late 18th century translator, editor and critic Thomas Taylor, who made the writings of Plato, Plotinus, Porphyry and other Neo–Platonists accessible to the English Romantics and Yeats.

For information on the links between the Romantics and Platonism see also: R. Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism 1750 – 1950*, vol. 2, London 1955.

The following works would seem to be representative of the English Romantics' "reading" of Plato:

Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*.

W. Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, New York 1899.

W. Pater, *The Renaissance*, London 1924 (first publ. 1873).

According to F. Kermode (op.cit.) and H. Bloom (op.cit., ch. 1 and 2), Pater is the link between the generation of the Great Romantics and the 'Tragic Generation' of Yeats. Cf. also: W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, London 1977, pp. 302 – 3).

present, the poem's protagonist treats the teachings of Plato and Plotinus as a single point of reference.

The motif of the young fisherman's symbolic climb to the top of Ben Bulben would seem to be a direct allusion to Walter Pater's[17] interpretation of Plato's theory of knowledge. It would also seem that the poem's protagonist has many qualities in common with the hero of Pater's essay *Plato and Platonism*. As understood by Pater – who was an "intermediary" between the High Romantics and the generation of Yeats – Platonism has much in common with the Plotinic and Romantic (Shelley) interpretations of Plato's works[18].

Pater's Plato is first and foremost the author of texts which were particularly dear to the Romantics (and to the protagonist of *The Tower*), being devoted to the questions of: love, beauty and poetry (*The Banquet, Phaedrus*); the perfect man, the perfect state and perfect knowledge (*The Republic*); the immortality of the soul (*Phaedo*); life after death (*The Republic*); the Soul of the World (*Timaeus*).

"He wrote of me in that extravagant style
He had learnt from Pater, and to round his tale
Said I was dead, and dead I choose to be".
(W.B. Yeats, *The Phases of the Moon* [in:] *Collected Poems*, ed.cit., p. 184).
Yeats's essays, like his poems, contain frequent allusions to Platonism. To give only a few examples:
The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry (1900) [in:] W.B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions*, ed.cit.
Bishop Berkeley (1931), ibidem.
My Friend's Book (1932), ibidem.
Per Amica Silentia Lunae (1917) [in:] W.B. Yeats, *Mythologies*, Macmillan, London 1977.
A Vision, Macmillan, London 1978.

Yeats's attitude to Platonism is, however, ambiguous – in his essays and in poems like *The Tower*. Yeats's essays and the commentaries of A.N. Jeffares tell us that Yeats knew: Plato's dialogues, the Enneads in MacKenna's translation, the works of the Cambridge Platonists, the works and editions of T. Taylor.

It is not enough, however, to speak of Yeats's Platonism. Few and far between are the critics who ask themselves what particular *tradition* of Platonism is being alluded to in any one poem and what the functions of these allusions are. One critic who recognizes the problem is R. Snukal:

"It is often assumed that because Yeats uses Platonic and neoplatonic images he must necessarily be a Platonist. What happens when this kind of evidence is used to show that Yeats is usually, or even sometimes a Platonist, can be found in almost every critical work on the poetry. Even the best of Yeats's critics continually fall into this trap (...) Yeats's usual strategy is not to write long discoursive poems, but to utilise certain traditional myths, images and metaphors; and by changing these myths, metaphors and images to suggest his own usually unorthodox view" (R. Snukal, *High Talk. The philosophical poetry of W.B. Yeats*, Cambridge 1973, pp. 23 – 27).

In an appendix (B), R. Snukal has reproduced Taylor's edition of Porphyry's famous essay (known to the Romantics and to Yeats) *On the cave of Nymphs*.

F.A.C. Wilson has written two books on Yeats's Platonism: *W.B. Yeats and Tradition*, London 1968 (first publ. 1958) and *Yeats's Iconography*, London 1969 (first published 1960).

G. Melchiori (op.cit.) has written an excellent analysis of Platonic–Romantic symbolism in Yeats's poetry.

[17] Cf. W. Pater, *The Doctrine of Plato* [in:] *Plato and Platonism*, ed.cit., p. 161. H. Bloom (op.cit., p. 34) also draws attention to the Renaissance–Romantic stylization of the hero of *Plato and Platonism*.

[18] Cf. also: *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* [in:] Shelley, *Selected Poetry, Prose and Letters*, Ed. A.S.B. Glover, London 1951, pp. 350 – 352.

Pater's hero – like a character in Plotinus's treatise on beauty[19] and the young fisherman of *The Tower* – climbs to the symbolic summit ("mountain–top") of the Perfect City of Beauty, Justice and Good. The journey of Pater's hero begins in nature and is supposed to end in the sphere of ideas. Human feelings would seem to constitute an intermediate sphere between nature and ideas. Pater's Plato is as much a lover of nature as an "enthusiast of ideas". His "enthusiasm of ideas" is "a kind of madness", "impassioned desire for true knowledge"[20]. Pater's Plato is nearer to Homer and "poetical thought" than to Aristotle and scholasticism[21]. He is both a sceptic and a visionary[22]. He conducts an unceasing dialogue with himself in order to approach truth through intellectual "query"[23]. He makes use of the free form of the essay, which allows him to combine meditation with mythical vision[24].

The difference between Pater's Plato and the protagonist of *The Tower* is that the latter is a Romantic to a much greater degree. For the protagonist of *The Tower*, the Platonic world of ideas means not only "the way of speaking about certain elements of the mind"[25], but in addition would seem to be synonymous with eternity and the autonomous world created by the imagination[26]. Endowed with an "excited, passionate, fan-

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[19] Cf. *First Ennead, Sixth Tractate, Beauty* [in:] Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, trans. S. MacKenna and B.S. Page, Encyclopaedia Britannica inc., Chicago 1952.

The motif of the climb frequently recurs in Plotinus (cf. Plotinus, op.cit., p. 221). This Platonic motif also appears in Yeats's essay *Blake's Illustrations to Dante* (1924):

"In the illustrations of Purgatory there is a serene beauty, and one finds his Dante and Virgil climbing among the rough rocks under a cloudy sun, and in their sleep upon the smooth steps towards the summit, a placid, marmoreal, tender, starry rapture" (in: W.B. Yeats, *Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 127).

It can thus be seen that the motif of the climb, symbolizing the journey to heaven, has its iconographical counterpart, like Yeats's other symbols. Cf. G. Melchiori, op.cit. and T.R. Henn, op.cit.

[20] Cf. W. Pater, op.cit., p. 154.

[21] Cf. W. Pater, op.cit., pp. 139 – 143.

For the Romantics Plato was above all a poet who had created myths:

"Plato was essentially a poet – the truth and splendour of his imagery and the melody of his language are the most intense that it is possible to conceive" (Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*).

This is also true of Yeats:

"All souls have vehicle or body, and when one has said that with More and the Platonists one has escaped from the abstract schools who seek always the power of some Church or institution, and found oneself with great poetry and superstition which is but a popular poetry, in a pleasant, dangerous world" (W.B. Yeats, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1917) [in:] *Mythologies*, ed.cit., p. 348.

[22] Walter Pater, op.cit., pp. 172 – 174.

[23] W. Pater, ibidem, p. 176.

[24] W. Pater, ibidem, p. 156.

[25] "The Platonic doctrine of 'Ideas', as was said, is not so much a doctrine, as a way of speaking or feeling about certain elements of the mind; and this temper, this peculiar way of feeling, of speaking, which for most of us will have many difficulties, is not uniformly noticeable in Plato's Dialogues, but is to be found more especially in the Phaedo, the Symposium, and in certain books of The Republic, above all in the Phaedrus" (W. Pater, ibidem, p. 147).

[26] "This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity; it is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body. This World of Imagination is Infinite & Eternal, whereas the world of Generation, or Vegetation, is Finite & Temporal ...The Human Imagination... appear'd to Me... throwing off the Temporal that the Eternal might be Establish'd... In Eternity one Thing never Changes into another

tastical imagination", he thinks of immersing himself in the sphere of "abstract things". Creative imagination is for him, as for the Romantics, the active counterpart of passive Platonic intellect[27]. This imagination is endowed with Romantic passionate feelings (passionate imagination, troubled heart) and Platonic inner senses (ear and eye). By virtue of these inner senses the protagonist's imagination is able to see the ideal world directly. The counterpart of Platonic "madness" and Romantic "enthusiasm"[28] or inspiration is the "excitement" mentioned by the protagonist in the first few words of his monologue.

In the protagonist's utterances, Platonic and Plotinic tradition is combined with Christian, biblical and mediaeval tradition, as in the case of the Romantics. The protagonist of *The Tower* attempts to solve the Platonic problem of the cognitive nature of art[29] – i.e. the relationship between art and nature and between art and the world of ideas – by invoking the Romantic mythical theme of the "quest"[30] (by means of art) for paradise or the "unfallen world", where harmony reigns between spiritual and material values and which in the poetry of Blake, Keats and Shelley appears in Arcadian visions reminiscent of pastorals[31]. This Romantic search for harmony between nature and the ideal world is also undertaken by Pater's Plato. The Yeatsian counterpart of the search for Arcadia, Paradise Lost, the Unfallen World or the Perfect City is the endeavour to achieve Unity of Being[32], understood as: the inner harmony of all man's faculties (will,

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Thing. Each Identity is Eternal" (W. Blake, quoted by F. Kermode, op.cit., p. 104 and also by Yeats in: *Symbolism in Painting* (1898) [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 151).

[27] Cf. W. Tatarkiewicz, 'Platon' [in:] W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, vol. I, Warsaw 1968.

[28] Cf. A. Gerard, *On the logic of Romanticism* [in:] *Romanticism, Points of View*, Ed. R. Gleckner and G.E. Enscoe, Prentice–Hall Inc., NJ 1962.

See also M. Bowra, *The Romantic Imagination*, Harvard Univ. Press 1957.

[29] Cf. W. Tatarkiewicz, *Estetyka Platona* [in:] W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia estetyki*, vol. I, Wrocław 1962.

[30] H. Bloom draws attention to the presence of the Romantic tradition of the 'quest romance' in Yeats's work (H. Bloom, *Yeats*, ed.cit., pp. 4 – 5). Pater's Plato also embodies this ideal of the 'quester' for unity of the material and spiritual worlds.

Cf. also W.B. Yeats, *The Celtic Element in Literature* (1898) [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 186.

[31] Cf. H. Bloom, op.cit., pp. 8 and 244. R. Przybylski, *Ogrody romantyków*, Kraków 1978.

[32] "I thought that in man and race alike there is something called "Unity of Being", using that term as Dante used it when he compared beauty in the Convito to a perfectly proportioned human body. My father, from whom I had learned the term, preferred a comparison to a musical instrument so strung that if we touch a string all the strings murmur faintly (...) When I began, however, to apply this thought to the State and to argue for a law – made balance among trades and occupations my father displayed at once the violent Free Trader and propagandist of liberty" (W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, ed.cit., p. 190).

"... whereas true Unity of Being, where all the nature murmurs in response if but a single note be touched, is found emotionally, instinctively, by the rejection of all experience not of the right quality, and by the limitation of its quantity. Of all this I knew nothing, for I saw the world by the light of what my father had said, speaking about some Frenchman who frequented the dissecting–rooms to overcome his dread in the interest of that Unity. My father had mocked, but had not explained why he had mocked, and I for my unhappiness had felt a shuddering fascination. Nor did I understand as yet how little that Unity, however wisely sought, is possible without a Unity of Culture in class or people, that is no longer possible at all" (W.B. Yeats, ibidem, p. 355).

imagination, body); harmony between man, nature and society; cosmic order. An image of Unity of Being in *The Tower* would seem to be the vision of the past, in which the protagonist's spiritual development (the climb) corresponds to youth, summer and friendly nature.

This Romantic myth, however, has a tragic pole, of which the protagonist of *The Tower* is fully conscious. The other, dark pole[33] of the myth of the Unity of Being is the recollection of the protagonist's downfall, the loss of his innocence and his consequent entanglement: in time and space; in old age, death and transition; the antinomy of spirit and matter – c.f. the image of the protagonist's physical decline.

At this juncture the conflict can be resolved only by imagination and art[34]. This Romantic antinomy was foreshadowed by Rousseau and employed by Schiller in his essay on "Naive and sentimental poetry"[35], in which he opposes nature and culture. According to Schiller, a sentimantal poet is one who has lost that primaeval union with nature possesed by the "naive" poet Homer[36], and which he must attempt to regain through art. While the natural environment of the "naive" poet is nature, that of the sentimental poet is culture. It would seem that Blake, in opposing the power of imagination to the weakness of the "foolish" or "vegetated" body[37], was of a similar opinion. It must be said, however, that Blake viewed the relation of nature to art and to the ideal world in the light of the Bible (as interpreted by Manicheans and Gnostics) and made the problem of the fall of man and the world and their redemption by imagination and "cultivated life" (creation) the central theme of his poetry[38].

It would seem that in *The Tower*, this Romantic theme of the quest for the Unity of Being (to which Yeats himself draws attention in an essay on Blake) appears in the

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Unity of Culture and Unity of Sensibility are two of the most important concepts of Romantic–Symbolist criticism, from the time of Shelley through that of Pater (*The Renaissance*, ed.cit., p. 28) down to Eliot and the "New Criticism". This question is dealt with by F. Kermode (*Dissociation of Sensibility* [in:] op.cit., ch. 8).

[33] Cf. H. Bloom's remarks on the Romantic 'dark tradition' (H. Bloom, op.cit., p. 18).

The best study of Romantic 'morbid themes' is by M. Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, transl. A. Davidson, Oxford 1954.

[34] Cf. Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry.*

[35] Cf. F. Schiller, *O Poezji naiwnej i sentymentalnej*, trans. I. Krońska [in:] F. Schiller, *Listy o estetycznym wychowaniu człowieka i inne rozprawy*, Warsaw 1972.

[36] Yeats, both in *The Tower* and in other poems, remains faithful to the English Romantic interpretation of the character of Homer. In this interpretation emphasis is laid on (among other things) the naivety, naturalness and simplicity of Homer's poetry (cf. Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry*). What is particularly stressed, however, is the passionateness (cf. Shelley's *A Defence...*), mysticism (Keats) and expressiveess (Shelley) of the blind poet, who fathomed the secrets of heaven, earth and hell (Keats). Cf. J. Keats, *To Homer* [in:] *The Oxford Book of English Romantic Verse*, Oxford 1958, p. 685.

In German Romantic criticism (Schlegel), Schiller's term 'sentimental' is synonymous with 'Romantic' and 'subjective'. Yeats, on the other hand, uses the terms 'sentimental', 'objective' and 'primary' as synonyms in opposition to the terms 'subjective', 'antithetical' and 'Romantic' (cf. H. Bloom, op.cit., pp. 223 – 224). Schiller notwithstanding, therefore, Yeats's Homer is a 'Romantic'.

[37] Cf. A.N. Jeffares, *A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, ed.cit., p. 258.

[38] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *William Blake and the Imagination* (1897) and *William Blake and his Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* (1924) [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit.

symbolism of the Celtic legend of the Holy Grail, which had been taken up by the Preraphaelites – W. Morris in particular – and which dominated Yeats's early work[39].

On the level of narration[40], the Legend (myth) of the Holy Grail tells of the hero's search for the Grail and of his ultimate failure or success. On the level of meaning, the Legend tells of an attempt to redeem the world through spiritual values. In the context of the story of the Grail, the youth climbing to the source of the stream at the top of Ben Bulben on a summer's day (c.f. *The Tower*, parts I and III) equipped with fishing-rod and bait (worm, fly) is reminiscent of: the young and energetic Fisher–King; Sir Gawain or Perceval[41]; the innocent knight living in perfect spiritual and physical union with nature. This spiritual union is additionally suggested by the motif of the worm, which is perhaps an allusion to Blake's *The Book of Thel* or Shelley's *Epipsychidion*:

The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
In love and worship blends itself with God[42].

– where "worm" is as it were humblest manifestation of the spirit[43] which pervades the world and which unites it with God. Alluded to here is the Romantic concept of "oracular nature" – a visible sign of the invisible and another manifestation of the same being[44].

In the legend of the Grail, the old Fisher–King awaits the arrival of the youthful knight who will bring him spiritual and physical renewal. In *The Tower*, the Youth and

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[39] "In our time Scandinavian tradition, because of the imagination of Richard Wagner and of William Morris and of the earlier and, as I think, greater Henrik Ibsen, has created a new romance, and, through the imagination of Richard Wagner, become all but the most passionate element in the arts of the modern world. There is indeed but one other element as passionate, the still unfaded legends of Arthur of the Holy Grail; and now a new fountain of legends, and, as I think, a more abundant fountain than any in Europe, is being opened, the fountain of Gaelic legends" (W.B. Yeats, *The Celtic Element in Literature* (1902) [in:] ibidem, p. 186).

F.A.C. Wilson has made a penetrating and thorough analysis of the influence of the legend of the Grail and its esoteric and Modernist (Morris's *The Well at the World's End*) interpretations on Yeats's work (F.A.C. Wilson, *Yeats's Iconography*, ed.cit., pp. 47 – 59). The same critic (ibidem) also points to the 'Grail' stylization of the character Hanrahan, hero of *Stories of Red Hanrahan*.

Cf. Yeats's essay on W. Morris and *The Well at the World's End* entitled *The Happiest of the Poets* (1902) [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit.

F.A.C. Wilson also makes a comparison of the use of the legend of the Grail by Yeats and by Eliot (*Yeats's Iconography*, ed.cit.).

[40] N. Frye in *The Archetypes of Literature* equates the archetype with myth and distinguishes between two aspects of myth – that of narration and that of meaning ('Archetypy Literatury', trans. A. Bejska [in:] *Współczesna teoria badań literackich za granicą. Antologia*, Ed. H. Markiewicz, vol. II, Cracow 1976).

[41] Cf. F.A.C. Wilson, *Yeats's Iconography*, loc.cit.

[42] Shelley, *Epipsychidion* [in:] Shelley, op.cit., p. 532.

[43] The function and meaning of the motif of the worm in Romantic literature has been analysed by Z. Stefanowska, *Świat owadzi w czwartej części Dziadów* [in:] *Studia romantyczne*, Ed. M. Żmigrodzka, Wrocław 1973.

H. Kenner interprets the motif of the 'humbler worm' as a parodic allusion to the creative 'decline' of Wordsworth's later poetry (H. Kenner, *The Sacred Book of the Arts* [in:] *Yeats. A collection of critical essays*, Ed. J. Unterecker, Prentice Hall Inc. NJ 1963, p. 20).

[44] Cf. *Imagination: Wordsworth and Coleridge* [in:] W.K. Wimsatt Jr and C. Brookes, op.cit., ch. 18.

the Old Man are one and the same person. Moreover, the Old Man (who corresponds to the Old King in the legend of the Grail) possesses in his inner self the life–giving source of eternal youth – imagination. Being conscious of and having experienced the superiority of the spiritual (as opposed to the material) world, he yearns not for youthful, "natural" union with the world, but for secondary, "spiritual" union, which is made possible only by imagination. It would seem that this spiritual source of the unity of all being is in the Old Man himself. If so, then the allusions to Plato and Plotinus, the withdrawal from life and the giving up of "passions" and art (the probable dimissal of the Muse) in favour of "abstract things" must be seen as ironic:

It seems that I must bid the Muse go pack,
Choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend
Until imagination, ear and eye,
Can be content with argument and deal
In abstract things; or be derided by
A sort of battered kettle at the heel.

Plato and Plotinus here would seem to appear in the dual role of masters of the spiritual life and creators of an extremely dualistic vision of the world which is hostile to passions and nature and is therefore opposed to the Romantic myth of the Unity of Being. In *The Tower*, therefore, two visions of reality dear to the Romantics (and known to Pater) – monistic and extremely dualistic (Manichean) – would seem to overlap. They would seem to result from the two opposing interpretations of Platonism dicsussed by Pater in his essay[45]. Corresponding to these two visions of reality are two

[45] "Plato is to be interpreted not merely by his antecedents, by the influence upon him of those who preceded him, but by his successors, by the temper, the intellectual alliances, of those who directly or indirectly have been sympathetic with him. Now it is noticeable that, at first sight somewhat incongruously, a certain number of Manicheans have always been of his company; people who held that matter was evil. Pointing significantly to an unmistakable vein of Manichean, or Puritan sentiment actually there in the Platonic Dialogues, these rude companions or successors of his, carry us back to his great predecessor, to Socrates, whose personal influence had so strongly enforced on Plato the severities, moral and intellectual alike of Parmenides and of the Pythagoreans. The cold breath of a harshly abstract, a too incorporeal philosophy, had blown, like an east wind, on that last depressing day in the prison–cell of Socrates; and the venerable commonplaces then put forth, in which an overstrained pagan sensuality seems to be reacting, to be taking vengeance on itself, turned now sick and suicidal, will lose none of their weight with Plato: – That 'all who rightly touch philosophy, study nothing else than to *die*, and to be *dead*' – that 'the soul reasons best, when, as much as possible, it comes to be alone with itself, bidding good–bye to the body, and to the utmost of its power, rejecting communion with it, with the very touch of it, aiming at what *is*'. It was, in short, as if for the soul to have come into a human body at all, had been the seed of disease in it, the beginning of its own proper death (...) He (i.e. Plato – J.D.) opens his door indeed to those austere monitors. They correct the sensuous richness of his genius, but could not suppress it. The sensuous lover becomes a lover of the invisible, but still a lover, after his earlier pattern, carrying into the world of intellectual vision, of *θεωρια*, all the associations of the actual world of sight. Some of its invisible realities he can all but see with the bodily eye: the absolute Temperance, in the person of the youthful Charmides; the absolute Righteousness, in the person of the dying Socrates. Yes, truly! all true konwledge will be like the knowledge of a person, of living persons, and truths, for Plato, in spite of his Socratic asceticism, to the last, something to *look* at. The

conceptions of man: on the one hand "natural man", who lives in a state of innocence (c.f. W. Blake's *Songs of Innocence*) and who is in perfect harmony with nature and the spiritual world (Pater's Plato); on the other hand "daimonic man", who has lost primaeval Unity of Being, who attempts to overcome the dualism of spirit and nature[46] and whose attitude to nature – in which he detects both imperfect (fallen) and perfect (unfallen) elements – is ambiguous (cf. W. Blake's *Songs of Experience*[47]).

Apart from the suggestion that the spiritual world appears to the protagonist to be uniform and subjective (imagination, inspired and endowed with inner senses, encompasses the natural world and immerses itself in abstractions), there is also the opposite suggestion, namely that the spiritual world appears to the protagonist to be differentiated into the spheres of passions and "abstract things". Which of these spheres comes higher in the spiritual order or whether this order is objective in character is not, however, made clear. What kind of abstractions the protagonist has in mind is also not made clear, though the kinds of "passions" (love and creation) are indirectly suggested (the Muse).

The ambiguity and complexity of the first part of *The Tower* is rooted in the note of self-irony and self-mockery which opens and closes this part of the poem (lines 1 - 4 and 12 - 17). This mockery and irony attenuates the dramatic tension of the interior monologue (victory – defeat; young man – old man; spirit – matter; unity – dualism; subjectivity – objectivity; nature – ideas – art), creates a distance between the reader and the protagonist and also warns the reader not to take the protagonist's probable dismissal of the Muse and his choice of Plato and Plotinus as spiritual guides too seriously.

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eyes which had noted physical things, so finely, vividly, continuously, would be still at work; and, Plato thus qualifying the Manichean or Puritan element in Socrates by his own capacity for the world of sense, Platonism has contributed largely, has been an immense encouragement towards, the redemption of matter, of the world of sense, by art, by all right education, by the creeds and worship of the Christian Church – towards the vindication of the dignity of the body" (W. Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, ed.cit., pp. 128 – 131).

On the Manichean interpretation of Plotinus, see also: B. Russel, *History of Western Philosophy*, London 1946, pp. 308 – 321.

Cf. W. Tatarkiewicz, *Platon* [in:] W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia Filozofii*, vol. I, ed.cit.

[46] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit., pp. 84 - 89; see also Phase Three and Phase Seventeen

[47] "Mere sympathy for living things is not enough, because we must learn to separate their 'infected' from their eternal, their satanic from their divine part; and this can only be done by desiring always beauty, the one mask through which can be seen the unveiled eyes of eternity" (W.B. Yeats; *William Blake and his illustrations to Dante* [in:] *Essays* ... ed.cit., p. 139)

II

Whereas part I of the protagonist's monologue takes place on the threshold – as it were – of the tower of imagination, in part II the protagonist is on the top of the tower. The symbolic climb, which in part I is associated with youth, is in part II taken up again by the Old Man. The ruined tower, the leafless tree of life[48] and dusk here correspond to the mountain, the stream and summer. The Old Man remains faithful to the youthful intuition of the unity of all being. The tower of his imagination is a Romantic tower, open to heaven and earth[49]. The decrepitude of the Old Man's surroundings is a reminder that the spiritual world order which the Old Man is in search of will be an order of the imagination, built "against" nature:

> I pace upon the battlements and stare
> On the foundations of a house, or where
> Tree, like a sooty finger, starts from the earth;
> And send imagination forth
> Under the day's declining beam, and call
> Images and memories
> From ruin or from ancient trees,
> For I would ask a question of them all.

As the narration proceeds, the monologue's symbolic background becomes richer in details and is gradually given depth. The protagonist stands between heaven and earth and, in the light of the dying day, encompasses with his mind's eye the foundations of the house, the ancient trees and the entire landscape: the "ridge", the lake, the neighbouring cottages, the "old bawn". This scenery is both realistic and symbolic. It can even be compared with the view from Thoor Ballylee[50]. The whole of this piece of land, together with the walls of the tower, is permeated with the experiences of the people who once lived there. These people and their affairs live on in local tales and legends[51]: the blind poet (Raftery); the local beauty (Mary Hynes); the cruel landowner (Mrs. French); the "bankrupt" aristocrat. The protagonist of The Tower is at one and the same time the chronicler (as it were) of the environs of Ballylee and a poet who created the character Hanrahan.

Part II of *The Tower*, divided into regular stanzas of eight lines each, with regular rhyme-schemes[52], is – with the exception of the first stanza – written in the style of a

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[48] This landscape is an allusion to the landscape of the 'dark' version of the myth of the Grail. Cf. F.A.C. Wilson, *Yeats's Iconography*, Loc.cit.

[49] Cf. V. Brombert, op.cit.

[50] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *Dust hath closed Helen's Eye* (1902) [in:] *Mythologies*, ed.cit.

[51] Cf. Yeat's footnotes to *The Tower*.

[52] "His stanzaic habits are also rather fixed (...) Some of his stanza forms were taken from minor earlier writers, as the form of 'In Memory of Major Robert Gregory' was taken from Cowley's 'Ode on the Death of

ballad-like, dramatized tale of ghosts and fantastic adventures. These take place during the (characteristic) time between sunset and the full moon. This ballad-like stylization accentuates *The Tower's* organic link with the local folk traditions of the environs of Ballylee still further. This link is also emphasized in the author's own notes to the poem. The ballad-like stylization of the second part of *The Tower* is in keeping with the poem's ballad-like problem – i.e. the strangeness of human existence[53]. By drawing up a spiritual chronicle of his native parts, the protagonist hopes to find an answer to the haunting problem of the meaning of life: old age, love, death and art.

The narration is conducted on three levels: authentic or "actual" (personal and local chronicle); fictional (the story of Hanrahan); mythical – Greek (Homer, the Iliad, Plato) and Celtic (the legend of the Grail). Whereas the first level corresponds to nature, the second and third levels correspond to art[54]. The characters form three groups: "authentic" (Mrs. French, the local beauty, the bankrupt knight, the blind poet, the protagonist-chronicler, woman won, woman lost); "mythical" (Helen, Homer); those characters created by the protagonist (Hanrahan). All these characters are as it were incarnations of two fundamental heroes, namely man and woman (or: the poet and his Muse).

In part II of *The Tower* the persons of part I are gradually made more concrete. The three levels of narration – "authentic", "fictional" and "mythical" – begin to overlap. The equivalents of the Muse are in turn: the cruel Mrs. French (from Galway); the local beauty Mary Hynes (from Balylee); Helen of Troy; Hanrahan's girl; the mysterious "woman won" and "woman lost", directly linked with the protagonist. Further "reappearances" in part II of the Old Man (of part I) are in turn: the blind poet Raftery (from Balylee) who sang the beauty of a local girl (Mary Hynes); Homer, who sang the beauty of Helen; the bankrupt aristocrat, who once owned the tower; the central character of Hanrahan, who is at one and the same time the Old Man and the Youth of part I.

Hanrahan is a character from Yeat's early stories. According to Yeat's own commentary to *The Tower*, the Hanrahan of *The Tower* and the Hanrahan of Yeat's stories are one and the same character. The dividing-line between the protagonist of *The Tower* and W.B. Yeats, author of the Red Hanrahan stories – like the dividing-line between the protagonist and Hanrahan – is gradually blurred. The poetical world of *The Tower* oscillates between near reality and pure fiction[55]:

Mr. William Hervey' and used again in 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul' and part II of 'The Tower' (T. Parkinson, op.cit., p. 199).

[53] Cf. D. Hoffman. *Yeat's use of the ballad form* [in:] *Critics on Yeats*, ed.cit.

Cf. J. Opacki: 'Ballada literacka – opis gatunku' [in:] J. Opacki and Cz. Zgorzelski, *Ballada*, Wrocław 1970.

[54] A.G. Stock considers that in *The Tower* Yeats has achieved the fusion (he had been seeking to achieve) of the actual and visionary planes of his poetry: "But in *The Tower*, when he looks out on the landscape, mind and place, the visionary and the actual, have become indistinguishably one" (A.G. Stock, op.cit., p. 86).

[55] Cf. Byron's *Don Juan*.

And I myself created Hanrahan
And drove him drunk or sober through the dawn
From somewhere in the neighbouring cottages (...)

For a proper comprehension of the significance of the main character of *The Tower*, i.e. Hanrahan, one must take the author-protagonist's advice and refer to Yeat's stories. The Hanrahan of Yeat's stories is a poet and a folk counterpart of the heroes of the legend of the Grail. The young Hanrahan of Yeat's stories loses his beloved while under the influence of a spell and begins the search for an ideal land of eternal youth, spring, love, beauty, wisdom and power[56]. The aging Hanrahan curses his old age[57] and continues the quest until the end of his life. The vision of an ideal world, which suddenly ("in one beat of a heart") haunts Hanrahan several times in the course of his life, becomes a reality only at the moment of his death. Hanrahan then realizes that ideal reality lies dormant in the reality of everyday life, which is its visible, though "imperfect" ("fallen") manifestation.

Such an "imperfect" symbol of the land of perfection sought by Hanrahan is the "country wench" (cf. the tenth stanza of part II of *The Tower*) Winny Byrne and her poor cottage on the top of the hill, where Hanrahan is eventually lured by the barking of bewitched dogs chasing a hare. The "wench" and her surroundings then become transformed. Winny Byrne becomes the most beautiful woman in the world – the embodiment of eternal womanhood – while her cottage becomes the wonderful palace of the legend of the Grail. The dying Hanrahan's conversation with the transformed Winny Byrne runs as follows:

"– You will go looking for me no more upon the breasts of women.

– Who are you? – he said then.

– I am one of the lasting people, of the lasting unwearied Voices, that make my dwelling in the broken and the dying, and those that have lost their wits; and I come looking for you, and you are mine until the whole world is burned like a candle that is spent. And look up now – she said – for the wisps that for our wedding are lighted"[58].

The end of the story *The Death of Hanrahan* illuminates the meaning of parts I and II of *The Tower*. It suggests that in the world of the spirit there is unity of opposites. Old age, death, ugliness and poverty are not so much opposites as necessary complements

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[56] Cf. *Red Hanrahan* and *The twisting of the Rope* [:in] *Stories of Red Hanrahan (1897). Rewritten in 1907 with Lady Gregory's Help* [in:] *Mythologies*, ed.cit.

F.A.C. Wilson draws attention to the stylization of the *Stories of Red Hanrahan* on the legend of the Grail (F.A.C. Wilson, Yeat's Iconograph, loc.cit.)

Cf. Shelley: "The functions of the poetical faculty are twofold; by one it creates new materials of knowledge, and power, and pleasure; by the other it engenders in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them according to certain rhythm and order, which may be called the beautiful and the good" (Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*).

[57] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *Red Hanrahan's Curse* [in:] *Mythologies*. ed.cit.

[58] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *The Death of Hanrahan* [in:] ibidem, p. 260.

to youth, beauty and happiness. Paraphrasing the remarks of F.A.C. Wilson[59] (taken from the end of his study of Yeats's drama *The King of the Great Clock Tower*) one can say that the Hanrahan stories "broaden out at its conclusion into a general statement of the Platonic theory of opposites. Every quality cries out to be combined with that which is most alien to it, and without such fusion cannot be called complete: 'without contraries is no progression'."

It is this very unity of opposites which is sought by the protagonist of *The Tower* – the Old Man – who is just barely distinguished from W.B. Yeats (the creator of Hanrahan) and from Hanrahan himself. The Hanrahan of *The Tower* therefore appears to be the protagonist's principal mask, uniting the present of the protagonist's interior monologue with the "mythological" past. In the second part of *The Tower* the briefly retold story of the protagonist's life serves to recapitulate the various levels of lyrical narration – i.e. the experiences of the protagonist; the inhabitants of Ballylee; Celtic and Greek mythological heroes. In addition, it symbolizes the successive stages of man's existence: from the youthful search for the unity of being – resulting in defeat – to rebellion against old age and the experience of eternity and death.

In the second part of *The Tower* all the successive episodes from the past – retold by the protagonist in stanzas 2 – 8 (the story of Mrs. French; the local beauty; allusions to the story of Helen of Troy) – have as their climax the scene in which Hanrahan chases the dogs which are themselves chasing a hare (stanzas 6 and 7). This scene, which ends in defeat (the meaning of which will be explained) is in opposition both to the symbolic climb of part I of *The Tower* and to the end of the story about Hanrahan (quoted above):

And I myself created Hanrahan
And drove him drunk or sober through the dawn
From somewhere in the neighbouring cottages.
Caught by an old man's juggleries
He stumbled, tumbled, fumbled to and fro
And had but broken knees for hire
And horrible splendour of desire;
I thought it all out twenty years ago;

Good fellows shuffled cards in an old bawn;
And when that ancient ruffian's turn was on
He so bewitched the cards under his thumb
That all but the one card became
A pack of hounds and not a pack of cards,

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[59] Cf. F.A.C. Wilson, *W.B. Yeats and Tradition*, ed.cit., p. 94. The idea of complementary opposites was also dear to Blake (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*) Yeats writes about this in his essay *W. Blake and his Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* [in:] *Essays*.... ed.cit.

And that he changed into a hare.
Hanrahan rose in frenzy there
And followed up those baying creatures towards –
O towards I have forgotten what – enough! (...)

This fragment, coming after the episodes of the local beauty and Helen of Troy, is a successive transformation of the central theme of *The Tower* – i.e. the search. In the Hanrahan episode, therefore, all the symbolic meanings of the second part of *The Tower* – woven around the theme of the search, the character of Helen of Troy and the motifs of the tower, the sun, the moon and the dogs chasing the hare – overlap.

The symbols assembled in the second part of *The Tower* – like the character of Hanrahan – derive from various earlier works and have their established meanings in the overall context of Yeats's works. This allows the poet not only to further illuminate, but also to enrich the poem's meaning. The interpretative centre of all the symbols quoted is the titular motif of the tower, which is indirectly invoked by them. Always linked with this, the poem's main symbol, is the character of Helen, who in turn unites the great conflicting forces of love and war[60]. Linked with love in the Hanrahan stories is the motif of the sun becoming one with the moon[61]. In Yeats's essays the sun and the moon represent the father and mother of "all living things"[62], the two mythical principles of being and – in later works – also two opposed spiritual attitudes (to be discussed below). In the poem *Under the Round Tower*, the linking together of three symbols – sun, moon and tower – suggests the alchemical transformation of twofold being (dual being) into unity. The symbol of the tower therefore has alchemical overtones. Bearing in mind that the dogs and the hare are also alchemical symbols endowed with sexual meaning, one can say that in the second part of *The Tower* – as in Yeats's earlier works – erotic and mystical symbolism concurs with alchemical symbolism[63].

Just as the characters of the second part of *The Tower* can, in the final analysis, be reduced to a couple (man and woman), so all the symbols introduced in the second part of the poem "revolve" around two opposed elements of being and suggest a search for

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60 Cf. G. Melchiori, *The Swan, Helen and the Tower* [in:] op.cit.

61 "The sun and the moon are the man and the girl, they are my life and your life, they are travelling and ever travelling through the skies as if under the one hood. It was God who made them for one another. He made your life and my life before the beginning of the world, He made them that they might go through the world, up and down, like the two best dancers that go on with the dance up and down the long floor of the barn, fresh and laughing, when all the rest are tired out and leaning against the wall" (W.B. Yeats, *The Twisting of the Rope* [in:] *Mythologies*, ed.cit., pp. 227 – 228).

62 "Did not the Egyptian carve it on emerald that all living things have the sun for father and the moon for mother, and has it not been said that a man of genius takes the most after his mother?" (1903 – W.B. Yeats, *Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 216.

63 The magic and alchemical aspect of Yeats's symbolism has been analysed by T. Henn (op.cit.), G. Melchiori (op.cit.) and F.A.C. Wilson (op.cit.) – who have linked it with Yeats's favourite book *Axel* (by Villiers de l'Isle Adam) and with Yeats's reading of works on the occult.

The magical and alchemical function of poetry is also stressed by Shelley: "... its secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life" (Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*).

the transformation and unity of opposites, the perfect expression of which is human love.

In *The Tower*, love is seen in a humanistic and cosmic context. Emphasis is laid on man's lack of self–sufficiency and his need for fulfilment. It would seem that the myth of Androgyne from Plato's *Banquet (Symposium)* belongs to the poem's implied context. Love is understood as the simplest possibility of self–realization and completeness – that unity of opposites on a human scale for which all the characters of *The Tower* yearn. The universal aspect of love is also revealed, there being the suggestion that this most human of passions might well be the principle of cosmic order (Unity of Being).

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

This fragment also directly illuminates the Platonic–Romantic implied context of the second part of the poem. The belief in the power of love (understood as a cosmic law) to unite opposites brings to mind the favourite text of the Romantics – Plato's *Banquet*[64].

The motif of the inspired poet, whose "divine madness" ("mania") is the key to real wisdom, brings to mind another Platonic source of the Romantics, namely *Phaedrus*, where four kinds of "divine" (as opposed to human or pathological) madness are discussed: – those of the prophet, the lover, the mystic and the poet[65].

In *Phaedrus* and in *The Banquet* love is also understood as a particular psychic disposition conditioning man's spiritual development, the goal of which is the "possession of immortal good"[66], identified with the idea of beauty.

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[64] Cf. *Platona Uczta*, trans. W. Witwicki, Lwów 1924 (part XII – Eryximachus).

Cf. Shelley, *The Banquet of Plato* [in:] Shelley, op.cit.

[65] Cf. *Platona Fajdros*, trans. W. Witwicki, Warsaw 1958, XLVII, p. 104.

[66] I. Dąmbska has drawn attention to the complex meaning of the concept of love in Plato's dialogues (I. Dąmbska, *Dwa studia o Platonie*, Wrocław 1972, pp. 37 – 38).

Cf. Shelley: "Love is the desire that good be for ever present to us. Of necessity Love must also be the desire of immortality" (Shelley, *The Banquet of Plato* [in:] Shelley, op.cit., p. 862).

Cf. Shelley: "When any one, ascending from a correct system of Love, begins to contemplate this supreme beauty, he already touches the consummation of his labour. For such as discipline themselves upon this system, or are conducted by another beginning to ascend through these transitory objects which are beautiful, towards that which is beauty itself, proceeding as on steps from the love of one form to that of two, and from that of two, to that of all forms which are beautiful; and from beautiful forms to beautiful habits and institutions, and from institutions to beautiful doctrines; until, from the meditation of many doctrines, they arrive at that which is nothing else than the doctrine of the supreme beauty itself, in the knowledge and contemplation of which at length they repose.

'Such a life as this my dear Socrates', exclaimed the stranger Prophetess, 'spent in the contemplation of the beautiful, is the life for men to live; which if you chance ever to experience, you will esteem far beyond gold and rich garments, and even those lovely persons whom you and many others now gaze on with astonishment, and are prepared neither to eat nor drink so that you may behold and live for ever with these objects of your love! What then shall we imagine to be the aspect of the supreme beauty itself, simple, pure,

For the Romantics, who held creative imagination[67] to be the chief intellectual faculty, love was the basis of imagination and the pre–condition for creation. Platonic love, being "enthusiasm for beauty"[68] (beauty in the final analysis being identified with Good), for the Romantics meant also "enthusiasm for art", i.e. for beauty created by man, who as a creator of beauty tends to become God's equal[69].

In *The Tower* this creative aspect of love is introduced by the motif of the inspired poet[70] – i.e. the poem's protagonist – who, in accordance with the Romantic interpretation of the role of the poet, combines in himself all four kinds of "divine madness". The protagonist of *The Tower* is as much a poet as he is a lover, prophet, mystic and teacher. He wishes to open the gates of his lonely tower and meet the spiritual needs of mankind. He is not passive but active, and – like the Romantic inspired poet – attempts to

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uncontaminated with the intermixture of human flesh and colours, and all other idle and unreal shapes attendant on mortality: the divine, the original, the supreme, the self consistent, the monoeidic beautiful itself? What must be the life of him who dwells with and gazes on that which it becomes us all to seek? Think you not that to him alone is accorded the prerogative of bringing forth, not images and shadows of virtue, for he is in contact not with a shadow but with reality: with virtue itself, in the production and nourishment of which he becomes dear to the Gods, and if such a privilege is conceded to any human being himself immortal" (Shelley, ibidem, p. 867).

[67] Cf. Shelley: "According to one mode of regarding those two classes of mental action, which are called reason and imagination, the former may be considered as mind contemplating the relations borne by one thought to another, however produced, and the latter, as mind acting upon those thoughts so as to colour them with its own light, and composing from them as from elements, other thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity. The one is the *το ποιειν*, or the principle of synthesis, and has for its object those forms which are common to universal nature and existence itself; the other is the *το λογιζειν*, or principle of analysis, and its action regards the relations of things, simply as relations; considering thoughts not in their integral unity, but as the algebraical representations which conduct to certain general results. Reason is the enumeration of quantities already known, imagination is the perception of the value of those quantities, both separately and as a whole. Reason respects the differences, and imagination the similitudes of things. Reason is to the imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance" (Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, ed.cit., p. 1023 – 1024).

Yeats's own interpretation of 'reason' and 'imagination' is similar to that of Shelley in the essay ***William Blake and his illustrations to the Divine Comedy*** (W.B. Yeats, *Essays...* ed.cit., p. 112).

According to W. Pater, Platonic *θεωρια* – understood as man's supreme intellectual faculty, uniting the sensual and rational spheres of the human psyche – is equivalent to 'imaginative reason', i.e. the imagination of the Romantics:

"For him (i.e. Plato – J.D.) all gifts of sense and intelligence converge in one supreme faculty of theoretic vision, *θεωρια*, the imaginative reason" (W. Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, ed.cit., p. 126).

The Yeatsian synonyms for imagination are 'intellect' and 'creative mind'.

It would therefore appear that the Romantics were not so much opposed to reason as to the idea that analytical reason is man's supreme intellectual faculty.

Cf. A.Gerard, *On the logic of Romanticism* [in:] *Romanticism. Points of View* ed.cit., pp. 232 – 234.

Cf. also C.M. Bowra (op.cit.), R. Wellek (op.cit.), W.K. Wimsatt Jr and C. Brookes (op.cit.), F. Kermode (op.cit.).

[68] The expression is Pater's (W. Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, ed.cit.).

[69] The concept of creation and its evolution has been studied by W. Tatarkiewicz (W. Tatarkiewicz, *Dzieje sześciu pojęć. Sztuka. Piękno. Forma. Twórczość. Odtwórczość. Przeżycie estetyczne*, Warsaw 1976

[70] The Yeatsian counterparts of 'inspiration' are 'folly', 'excitement' 'madness', 'frenzy' and 'histerical passio'.

transform people by revealing to them the secret of cosmic order, i.e. the Platonic order of light, beauty and love[71]. According to the Romantics, inspired poetry is above all a creative act of love and knowing and the expression of an inner vision of truth and beauty. This act can be repeated in the soul of the reader or hearer, where it brings about the deepest of reactions, i.e. inspired madness (cf. "I must make men mad").

Yeats grasped and developed the essential tenets of the Romantic theory of imagination and poetry (together with its Platonic implied context) to be found (chiefly) in the works of Blake, Shelley and Pater – also Coleridge and Wordsworth[72]. In an essay on Blake[73] he wrote: "Passions because most living are most holy". According to Yeats, Blake's conception of imagination, art and the cosmos is based on the "holy" passions of love and creation (i.e. the madness of the lover and the poet in *Phaedrus*).

In an essay on Shelley[74], Yeats draws a parallel between Blake's "Holy Spirit", which was supposed to be the "central power of the world", and Shelley's Plotinic conception of "intellectual beauty". In both cases the sources of lifegiving and creative spiritual energy are: love, beauty, truth, freedom and creation.

Bearing in mind the Romantic conception of poetical imagination, it is not difficult to understand why in *The Tower* – the theme of which is precisely imagination – such an important part is played by love.

It is to be noted, however, that a whole fragment of the second part of *The Tower* devoted to the Romantic ideal of inspired poetry is permeated with a consciousness of the enormous gulf that separates the protagonist from this ideal. A sign of this gulf is the use of the optative mood (O may the sun...) and also the protagonist's description of his alter ego as a "half–mounted man".

It is also to be noted that in *The Tower*, emotions other than love are mentioned – in particular rage and pride. These would hardly have been endowed with creative power by Shelley.

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[71] "The whole objection, however, of the immortality of poetry rests upon a misconception of the manner in which poetry acts to produce the moral improvement of man (...) But poetry acts in another and diviner manner. It awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar; it reproduces all that it represents, and the impersonations clothed in its Elysian lights stand thenceforward in the minds of those who have once contemplated them, as memorials of that gentle and exalted content which extends itself over all thoughts and actions with which it coexists. The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination (...)" (Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*. ed.cit., p. 1032).

This openness to the needs of mankind, which is characteristic of the Great Romantics, is foreign to the Decadents, shut up in their 'ivory towers'. Cf. R. Brombert, op.cit., p. 75.

[72] Much information concerning Yeats's attitude to the Romantics is to be found in: W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit. and in: W.B. Yeats, *Memoirs*. Transcribed and edited by D. Donoghue, Macmillan, London 1972.

[73] Cf. *William Blake and the Imagination* (1897) [in:] W.B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions*. ed.cit., p. 113.

[74] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry* [in:] ibidem, pp. 77 – 78.

It would therefore seem that the protagonist of *The Tower*, insofar as his views on the role of passion in man's inner life and creation are concerned, is closer to Blake than to Shelley. Yeats's essays confirm this. In his essays on Blake and Shelley, Yeats constructed his own version of the Romantic tradition[75] and it is to this that his own works "refer", so to speak. Interpreting Blake, Yeats quotes the following fragment:

"Men are admitted into Heaven not because they have curbed and governed their passions, but because they have cultivated their understandings. The treasures of Heaven are not negations of passion but realities of intellect, from which the passions emanate uncurbed in their eternal glory"[76]

This quotation of Blake's views on the emotional sphere of the human psyche would seem to be close to Yeats's own views on the matter. Yeats's understanding of the emotional sphere is in turn close to the Nietzschean concept of vital energy[77]

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[75] Yeats's interpretation of the poetry of Blake and Shelley is subjected to critical examination by H. Bloom, who describes it as 'creative misinterpretation'.

[76] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *William Blake and his Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit., pp 137 – 138.

The rest of the quote reads as follows: "The fool shall not enter into Heaven, let him be ever so holy. Holiness is not the price of entering into Heaven. Those who are cast out are all those who, having no passions of their own, because no intellect, have spent their lives in curbing and governing other people's by the various acts of poverty and cruelty of all kinds ... The modern Church crucifies Christ with the head downwards. Woe, woe, woe to you hypocrites". Cf. W. Blake, *A Vision of the Last Judgment* [in:] *Complete Writings*, Ed. G. Keynes, Oxford 1979, p. 615.

[77] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *The Second Coming* [in:] *Collected Poems*, p. 211 and *Whence had they come* [in:] ibidem, p. 332.

(Yeats:) "I have always come to this certainty: what moves natural men in the arts is what moves them in life, and that is, intensity of personal life (...) They must go out of the theatre with the strength they live by strenghtened from looking upon some passion that could, whatever its chosen way of life, strike down an enemy, fill a long stocking with money or move a girl's heart (...) An existing person, whether the hero of a play or the maker of poems, will display the greatest volume of personal energy, and this energy must seem to come out of the body as out of the mind" (W.B. Yeats, *Personality and the Intellectual Essences* (1906) [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit., pp. 265 – 266).

Cf. also Blake:

"1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discerned by the five senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.

2. Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.

3. Energy is Eternal Delight.

Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling.

And being restrained, it by degrees becomes passive, till it is only the shadow of desire". (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* [in:] W. Blake, *A Selection of Poems and Letters*, Ed. J. Bronowski, Penguin Books 1972, p. 94).

Cf. also Keats:

"I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination. What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth – whether it existed before or not – for I have the same idea of all our Passions as of Love: they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty" (J. Keats, *Letter to Benjamin Bailey, 22 November 1817* [in:] *English Critical Texts. 16th Century to 20th Century*, Ed. D.J. Enright and E. de Chickkera, London 1963, p. 256).

Cf. also R. Wellek's remarks on the meaning of the word 'passion' in the critical works of Coleridge (R. Wellek, op.cit., p. 168).

(cf. "passionate intensity"), which can find its expression not only in creation, but also in destruction.

On the basis of Yeats's essay on Blake, one can say that Yeats did not make the creative power of passions dependent on their moral qualification (according to criteria of good and evil) but endowed each passion with potentially creative power. In this he considered himself to be following in the footsteps of Blake, author of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.* Like Blake, he also believed that passions should be understood and not suppressed. The "understanding" of passions would seem to mean the revealing of their creative possibilities.

For Yeats, creative possibilities were to be found also in "negative" passions such as "rage", "pride"[78] (which permeate *The Tower*) and even "hate"[79]. The reverse is also possible: "positive" passions such as love, if improperly understood, can become forces of destruction.

In the second part of *The Tower*, the protagonist would seem to attempt to purify his own imagination through an understanding of its foundations, i.e. passions, and in particular that most powerful of passions – Platonic and Romantic love.

It is the sphere of "realization" and not that of "wishing" which is predominant in the second part of the poem. Opposed to the sphere of "realization" is the Romantic concept of creative love (which unites opposites) and the concomitant ideal of inspired poetry, i.e. the sphere of wishing.

Mrs. French (the cruel Salome), the local beauty, Helen of Troy, Hanrahan's girl, the protagonist's women – all these female characters bring to their male counterparts not the harmony they long for, but death, defeat and unease[80]. The most powerful of Platonic and Roamantic passions – love – is thus the object of comprehensive discussion. The questions which haunt the protagonist can be formulated as follows:

1. What exactly *is* love – a psychic disposition, feeling, desire, inspiration or mania?
2. What is the *object* of love – human bodies, human souls, ideas or art? Is the object of love possessed or contemplated?
3. Is love endowed with creative power?

Yeats's attitude to Nietzsche is one of the problems of Yeats criticism. That he knew Nietzsche's writings is borne out both by his poetical work (cf. The Phases of the Moon) and by his prose (cf. *A Vision*). It is also clear that Yeats's attitude to Nietzsche was complex. In *Blake's illustrations to Dante* Yeats draws attention to the Romantic genealogy of Nietzsche's thought, which 'flows always, though with an even more violent current in the bed Blake's thought has worn' (p. 130). H. Bloom sees Nietzsche and Yeats as belonging to a common, European Romantic tradition of culture. In the opinion of H. Bloom, the cult of energy (apocalyptic vitalism), together with the myth of eternal recurrence, the idea of the 'superman', 'antithetical wisdom', the motif of 'tragic joy' and the conception of life as tragedy are Romantic concepts which are present not only in the work of Nietzsche and Yeats, but also in that of Shelley, Blake and Pater.

[78] Yeats's understanding of the word 'pride' will be discussed below.

[79] Cf. *The Spur* [in:] W.B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, ed.cit. p. 359.

Cf. 'Ribh considers Christian Love insufficient' [in:] ibidem, p. 330.

[80] Cf. M. Praz, *La Belle Dame sans Merci* [in:] op.cit.

4. Is love a law only of the human heart, or is it a law of the universe? Can it be both, i.e. can it be a source of both spiritual and cosmic order (Unity of Being)?

The answers to these questions must be sought in the fate of the male characters of *The Tower*, in the Greek "level" of the poem and in the protagonist's conversation with Hanrahan. In other words – in the whole complex symbolism of motifs, events and characters, which – oscillating between the positive and negative poles of love – clearly favours the latter.

The reasons for the failure of the male characters of *The Tower* as far as love is concerned must first and foremost be sought in the deeper meanings of the motifs of the sun and moon, which are present both in the episode of the local beauty and in the stanza devoted to Helen of Troy. One of the local beauty's admirers loses his life because he and his companions "... mistook the brightness of the moon / For the prosaic light of day ..." –

Some few remembered still when I was young
A peasant girl commended by a song,
Who'd lived somewhere upon that rocky place,
And praised the colour of her face,
And had the greater joy in praising her,
Remembering that, if walked she there,
Farmers jostled at the fair
So great a glory did the song confer.

And certain men, being maddened by those rhymes,
Or else by toasting her a score of times,
Rose from the table and declared it right
To test their glory by their sight;
But they mistook the brightness of the moon
For the prosaic light of day –
Music had driven their wits astray –
And one was drowned in the great bog of Cloone.

Any attempt to fully explain the symbolism of the sun and the moon in the second part of *The Tower* must take into account the meaning given to these motifs in Yeats's earlier works, especially in the poem *The phases of the moon* (written in 1919) and in the essay *A Vision*[81] (published in 1926). In *A Vision* Yeats fully developed a cyclical

[81] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit.
H. Bloom gives an interpretation of *A Vision* (1) in the light of the two versions of the text, (2) in the light of the poetry of Blake and Shelley, and (3) in the light of the psychology of Freud and Jung (H. Bloom, op.cit., ch. 14, 15).
More concise studies of *A Vision* are to be found in:
R. Ellmann, op.cit., ch. XV.

vision (sketched out in *The phases of the moon*) of human life and history linked to the Platonic concepts of the "great year" and the wheel of reincarnation.

According to Yeats, each human life corresponds to one of twenty–six (out of a possible twenty–eight) phases of the moon – phase one (total darkness) and phase fifteen (the full moon) being considered non–human. The phases are divided into "primary" (i.e. objective) and "antithetical" (i.e. subjective). This classification reflects the two fundamental forces of the human psyche, namely that (primary – symbolized by the sun) directed towards the outside world and that (antithetical – symbolized by the moon) directed towards the inner self. In the process of reincarnation, the total experience of the human soul encompasses both the objective (i.e. primary) and the subjective phases. Yeats himself, *qua* "the last Romantic", preferred subjective, "lonely ecstasy", which he opposed to the "communal wisdom of society"[82].

The moon plays a dominant role in his symbolism, the full moon (phase fifteen) expressing Unity of Being. In the case of an individual life the phase of the full moon signifies the achievement – after a certain number of incarnations – of the internal integration of all man's faculties, i.e. the will, creative intellect (imagination) and the body[83]. In the case of history, the phase of the full moon denotes great cultural ages.

According to Yeats, such great cultural ages were Periclean Athens, the Italian Renaissance and the early period of Byzantine art. Unity of Being signifies the integration – achieved during these ages – of various fields of human endeavour (i.e. history, religion, daily life, art). Art evokes the entire community's spiritual vision, the function of the artist being to express this "social" vision[84]. Yeats also calls the phase of the Unity of Being the "Phase of Complete Beauty". The meaning of "complete beauty" would seem to be close to the Platonic concept of justice as it is understood in *The Republic*, i.e. the harmonious and hierarchical attuning of man's physical and spiritual faculties.

In *A Vision*, both individuals and whole societies belonging to the sign of the full moon (symbolizing the phase of Unity of Being) give themselves up to lonely contemplation of fulfilled desires. The remaining phases of the moon (with the exception of phase one – total darkness and chaos) symbolize the degree in which man (in successive reincarnations) or cyclical history have approached to or receded from Unity of Being.

A.G. Stock, op.cit., ch. VIII and IX.

T.R. Henn, op.cit., ch. 12.

[82] Cf. H. Bloom, op.cit., p. 224.

[83] "During the supernatural incarnation of Phase 15, we were compelled to assume an absolute identity of the Will, or self, with its creative power, of beauty with body" (W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit., p. 162).

[84] "I think that in early Byzantium, maybe never before or since in recorded history, religious, aesthetic and practical life were one, that architect and artificers – though not, it may be, poets, for language had been the instrument of controversy and must have grown abstract – spoke to the multitude and the few alike. The painter, the mosaic worker, the worker in gold and silver, the illuminator of sacred books, were almost impersonal, almost perhaps without the consciousness of individual design, absorbed in their subject – matter and that the vision of a whole people" (W.B. Yeats, ibidem, pp. 279 – 280).

In *A Vision*, Yeats places beautiful women near to phase fifteen, i.e. in the immediate vicinity of "superhuman" perfection, almost unattainable by ordinary mortals but possible in art. In *The Tower* beautiful women are accompanied both by the symbolism of the moon or the union of sun and moon and by allusions to Homer and Plato (who created myths). As it stands, this would seem to suggest that the only perfect expression of "enthusiasm for beauty" (i.e. love) is art which is free of desire, which incarnates dreams and which is given to contemplation.

In *The Tower*, beautiful women become symbols of both Unity of Being and the organic beauty of art, in accordance with the well known Romantic parallel between a poem and a beautiful woman[85].

In the poetical world of *The Tower*, where the moon and the sun are also shown as two equal sources of light, the symbolic aspect of moonlight and sunlight comes to the fore. This can surely be no accident, since in Platonic and especially Neo–Platonic aesthetics, light is identified with both the essence of being and beauty, being thereby indirectly associated with knowledge, love and art. According to Plotinus, light – like love, beauty and knowledge – has two aspects: material and spiritual. The Romantics for their part were fascinated by light, which symbolized "order", "harmony", "spiritual illumination", "work of imagination", "transcendental vision", and the "ideal to which a poet aspires"[86]. Shelley preferred the light of the sun, others preferred that of the moon (imagination, beauty, love).

By the "prosaic light of day" – for which the unfortunate admirers of the beautiful country girl mistake the light of the moon – the protagonist of *The Tower* not only

[85] Cf. F. Kermode, *The Dancer* [in:] op.cit. Cf. also footnote No. 32.

[86] "Inevitably some images proved so appropriate to the Romantic endeavour to tame chaos, to assert an ideal order, that they recur in the work of many poets. The most universal image is perhaps that of light, a fit symbol of spiritual illumination, of the transcendental vision, of the work of the imagination, or of the ideal to which the poet aspires. It takes many forms, but the sun, moon and stars are especially prominent because of their associations with heaven, their nature as permanent sources of light. So for instance, the sun and the moon are controlling influences on the voyage of the ancient mariner and throughout Coleridge's poetry the moon in particular seems, as a light that shines in darkness, to symbolize the work of the imagination. In the Prelude, as elsewhere in Wordsworth's poetry, the sun and moon play their part, especially the 'deep radiance' of the setting sun (...) Again in the climax of this poem it is the moon that reigns 'in single glory' over the grand vision in the last book. Keats wrote a long poem on the theme of the Endymion, a human being spiritualized, made immortal, through his love for the moon, which again represents perhaps the power of the imagination; and the central figure of 'Hyperion' is the sungod. As Keats had appealed to a star as an emblem of permanence, "Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art!' so in 'Adonais' Shelley's vision transmutes the dead poet into a fixed star, made immortal. One of the dominant images in *In Memoriam* is again light, and the restoration of faith in Tennyson is symbolized in the union of evening and morning stars, Hesper and Phosphor (Section cxxi), both Venus, and both representing that love which had seemed destroyed with the death of Hallam, but is finally reborn in the morning light of a new assertion. All the heavenly bodies were types of 'that unchanging realm, where Love reigns evermore', and the pervasive image of light could well be made the basis of an anthology of Romantic poetry" (R.A. Foakes, *Order out of Chaos* [in:] *Romanticism. Points of View*, ed.cit., p. 243).

The meaning of the motif of the moon in this part of *The Tower* is interpreted by T. Parkinson as follows: "In this one poem the moon is used to suggest the fall from unity into diversity, the imagination, feminine enchantment, and one of the antithetical forces that compose art" (T. Parkinson, op.cit., p. 165).

means the purely material, sensual pole of Platonic beauty and love, but also means the world of nature as opposed to art. As in the Plotinic parable, the heroes of *The Tower* suffer defeat (and one of them is drowned in the "bog" of matter) because their fascination with physical charms prevents them from understanding the spiritual aspect of love and beauty (symbolized by moonlight) and also because they fail to recognize the "superhuman" status of the beautiful girl, who embodies beauty in both of its aspects. They do not know that beings who unite in themselves spiritual and physical beauty have no need of ordinary people. The partners of these perfect women can probably only be superhuman beings like themselves. Hence the necessity for the transformation of ordinary people and the wish that – through inspired poetry – they too might be able to partake of love which is at once spiritual and material.

The poem's Greek stanza, devoted to Homer, Helen and the inspired poet, would seem to suggest that in the second part of *The Tower* (especially stanzas 3 and 4) other motifs concerning love and beauty – from *The Banquet* and *Phaedrus* – are recalled by the poet. In particular:

1. The conception of love not so much as a passion, as a mental disposition whose object is the eternal possesion of immortal good, identified with the idea of beauty.

2. The differentiation of spiritual beauty (= good = wisdom = virtue) and physical beauty.

3. The conviction that spiritual beauty is superior to physical beauty (e.g. Socrates).

4. The distinction between two kinds of love: "higher" and "lower".

According to Plato, "higher" love begins at the level of physical attraction to a beautiful body and leads to a knowledge of the very idea of beauty (i.e. of good) through an intensification of spiritual (intellectual) life. At first, the lovers make use of their external senses, the most important being sight. Later they use only the inner counterparts of the senses. "Lower" love begins and ends only at the level of physical pleasure. In *The Banquet* these two kinds of love have their respective goddesses of beauty, namely Venus Uranian (higher love) and Venus Pandemian (lower love)[87].

Whereas the Hanrahan episode is the climax of the narrative, the meaning of the second part of the poem would seem to be expressed by the Greek level of *The Tower*. Here reflections on the theme of love as the basis of imagination develop into reflections on the essence and function of poetry.

Strange, but the man who made the song was blind;
Yet, now I have considered it, I find

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[87] Cf. Yeats's remarks on the symbols of the morning star and evening star in Shelley's poetry:

"We know too that had Prince Athanase been finished it would have described the finding of Pandemos, the Star's lower genius, and the growing weary of her, and the coming of its true genius Urania at the coming of death, as the day finds the star at evening. There is hardly indeed a poem of any length in which one does not find it as a symbol of love, or liberty, or wisdom, or beauty, or of some other expression of that Intellectual Beauty which was to Shelley's mind the central power of the world; and to its faint and fleeting light he offers up all desires..." (W.B. Yeats, *Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 89).

That nothing strange; the tragedy began
With Homer that was a blind man,
And Helen has all living hearts betrayed.
O may the moon and sunlight seem
One inextricable beam,
For if I triumph I must make men mad.

In *The Tower*, Homer is presented as the first creator of the ideally beautiful woman, who is indirectly responsible for the yearning for the ideal world felt by all the male characters of *The Tower*. This Homer is a complex character who has nothing in common with Schiller's "naive" poet. He is close to the ambiguous Homer of Plato's dialogues (the inspired poet and the creator of mimetic poetry), to the inspired Homer of Keats's poem *To Homer* and to the Homer of Pater's essays (where he is on a par with Plato)[88].

According to Pater, Homer and Plato were the first to link the concept of beauty to a human passion – love. Pater was also of the opinion that Homer's gods are the counterparts of Plato's ideas[89]. In *The Tower*, therefore, Homer appears in a context of allusions to the ambiguous Platonic conception of the poet, love and poetry.

In this Platonic context the beautiful Helen too seems to be the embodiment of Plato's thoughts. She is at one and the same time: a woman; the idea of beauty (i.e. that "abstract thing" opposed to "living hearts"); a goddess; a mimetic creation (which becomes the object of desire of the "living heart" and the source of its misfortune)[90].

The feasibility of such an interpretation is supported by a comprehensive analysis of all three love episodes in the second part of *The Tower*. Linked by a common theme and

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[88] The attitude of the English Roamntics and Yeats to Homer is coloured by the allegorical and symbolical interpretation of the Odyssey by the Neo–Platonist Porphyry.

Cf. Footnotes No 16 and 36.

Cf. Shelley, *A Defence of poetry*.

Cf. W. Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, ed.cit.

[89] "It was like a recrudescence of polytheism in that abstract world: a return of the many gods of Homer, veiled now as abstract notions, Love, Fear, Confidence and the like; and as such, the modern anthropologist, our student of the natural history of man, would rank the Platonic theory as but a form of what he calls 'animism'. Animism, that tendency to locate the movements of a soul like our own in every object, almost in every circumstance, which impresses one with a sense of power, is a condition of mind, of which the simplest illustration is primitive man adoring, as a divine being endowed with will, the meteoric stone that came rushing from the sky. That condition 'survives', however, in the negro, who thinks the discharging gun a living creature; as it survives also, more subtly, in the culture of Wordsworth and Shelley, for whom clouds and peaks are kindred spirits: in the pantheism of Goethe; and in Schelling, who formulates that pantheism as a philosophic, a Platonic, theory. Such 'animistic' instinct was, certainly, a natural element in Plato's mental constitution – tne instinctive effort to find *anima*, the conditions of personality, in whatever preoccupied his mind, a mind, be it remembered, of which the various functions, as we reckon them, imagination, reason, intuition, were still by no means clearly analysed and differentiated from each other, but participated, all alike and all together in every single act of mind" (W. Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, ed.cit., p. 151).

[90] This treatment of the character of Helen foreshadows the poetical 'creed' of the protagonist in the third part of *The Tower*. In this 'creed' the world of the imagination is equated with the ideal and real world.

by common motifs, they become as it were three variants of the same basic narrative. In the first episode a real girl is transformed into a living legend and becomes the subject of a poet's song, an idealized creation unattainable by those who seek her in the world of everyday life. In the third episode Hanrahan sets off in vain pursuit of a bewitched hare. In reward, Hanrahan "... had but broken knees for hire/ And horrible splendour of desire ...".

In the context of these two episodes the heroine of the middle fragment – beautiful Helen – also becomes as it were a phantom, a creation of the poetical imagination, which "all living hearts betrayed". It would therefore seem that the protagonist – in an allusive and ironic manner – here recalls Plato's well known arguments in *The Republic*[91] against:

1. Homer as a (literally) mad poet, i.e. the irresponsible maker of mimetic phantoms that lead people away from the path to real knowledge.

2. Art, understood as imitation of imitation, i.e. coming bottom in the Platonic hierarchy: ideas – nature – art (mimesis).

3. Passions, understood as the lower part of the human soul, from which poetry arises and which poetry excites.

The "failure in love" of the male characters of the second part of *The Tower* can also be seen as follows: they fail because irresponsible, blind poets have aroused in them carnal desire for persons who do not exist, i.e. love for the artificial world, which is but the shadow of reality. In other words, the cause of their misfortune is beauty created by man, i.e. art: "... the tragedy began / With Homer that was a blind man, / And Helen has all living hearts betrayed".

Seen in this context, the blindness of Homer and the poet who sang the beauty of the country girl takes on a further meaning, indicating not only the blind poet's proximity to the ideal world (Keats), but also his turning away from people and the real world. In this fragment it would seem that Yeats's understanding of blindness[92] concurs with Plato's and that the poet here recalls yet another motif from *Phaedrus* and Plotinus's treatise on beauty, namely blindness and clairvoyance. In *Phaedrus* blindness symbolizes a false conception of love, based on desire, while sight is linked to the description of real love, whose object is the contemplation of the idea of beauty (= good) and truth. In *Phaedrus* blindness is also the poet's punishment for falsehood, the motif of blindness and clairvoyance being directly linked to the discussion on the reality and "divinity" of Helen.

When Socrates speaks of "lower" love he covers his face with his cloak so as not to offend Eros. Only when he begins to talk about "higher" love does he uncover his face. He explains his behaviour by reminding his listener of the story of the poet Stezichor,

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[91] Cf. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. D. Lee, Penguin Books 1975, parts III and X.

[92] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *Why the Blind Man in Ancient Times was made a Poet* [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit., pp. 277 – 278.

Cf. also footnote No 36.

who was deprived of his sight by the gods for having offended Helen. Stezichor dared to blame Helen – beauty incarnate and almost a goddess (daughter of Leda and Zeus) – for war (i.e. evil). Realizing his mistake, Stezichor wrote in a propitiatory palinode that the Trojan war was waged over a phantom and had nothing whatever to do with the real Helen (who never left Sparta).

In *The Tower*, the order in which the Platonic belief in the spectral, mimetic character of art is opposed to the equally Platonic belief in the superhuman character of inspired poetry (which mediates between the real world and the ideal world) leaves no doubt as to which sphere – nature or art – is "spectral" in character and as to who is really blind. The blindness of the poets turns out to be clairvoyance, while the sight of the admirers of the beautiful girl turns out to be blindness. The ideal world represented by art turns out to be the real world, while the natural world turns out to be an illusion. Beautiful Helen and the heroine of the local poet's song represent "super–reality" which can be the object only of love of a particular kind. The words "The tragedy began with Homer" are not so much a condemnation of inspired poetry as a condemnation of Homer's audience, who like the admirers of the beautiful country girl – were incapable of thinking in extra–material categories and who were incapable of assuming a disinterested attitude towards beauty. Hence the need for people to be transformed.

At this juncture it is worthwhile to refer to the writings of Plato's follower and commentator Plotinus and in particular to that fragment of his treatise on beauty which deals with the difference between real and illusory beauty. Plotinus links the motif of the shadowlike, spectral character of sensual beauty and the motif of love as a pursuit and vain attempt to grasp an elusive phantom to the motif of blindness, as does Yeats in *The Tower*[93]:

"He that has the strength, let him arise and withdraw into himself, forgoing all that is known by the eyes, turning away for ever from the material beauty that once made his joy. When he perceives those shapes of grace that show in body, let him not pursue: he must know them for copies, vestiges, shadows, and hasten away towards that they tell of. For if anyone follow what is like a beautiful shape playing over water – is there not a myth telling in symbol of such a dupe, how he sank into the depths of the current and was swept away into nothingness? So too, one that is held by material beauty and will not break free shall be precipitated, not in body but in Soul, down to the dark depths loathed of the Intellective–Being, where, blind even in the Lower–World, he shall have commerce only with shadows, there as here".

The image (introduced in the next stanza) of the "ancient bankrupt" who is totally disenchanted with life and who is unmoved by love, music[94] or hate (an enemy's clipped

[93] Cf. Plotinus, *The First Ennead*, VI. 9, p. 29 (ed.cit.).

[94] For the ancient Greeks, and for the Romantics and Yeats, dance, music and poetry were a group of related arts.

ear) is not only the epilogue of the love theme (or „thread") but is also the next stage in the discussion on imagination, nature, poetry (art) and the creative role of passions (especially love).

It is noteworthy that in this fragment the present tense, associated with the protagonist's interior monologue, makes its reappearance along with the encoded motifs of the dog (dog's day) and the tower (this house). The tower, once the property of the bankrupt, is now the "house" of the protagonist. The reader has the impression more and more that in *The Tower*, expressive[95] poetry is opposed to mimetic poetry and that all the characters and events symbolize not only the inner experiences of the protagonist but also the experiences of the community to which he belongs and the experiences of mankind as a whole.

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[95] In earliest times the Greeks used the word 'mimesis' to refer to dance, mimicry, song, music and religious poetry. It meant the expression of feelings by means of gesture, movement, melody and song. The primary, ritual meaning of 'mimesis' was therefore 'expression' or 'imitation' ('in the sense of the actor's imitation, and not that of the copyist'). Only later was the meaning of the word broadened out to include painting and sculpture (Socrates). 'Mimesis' became synonymous with the 'imitation' of reality in the sense of 'copying' appearances or the 'representation' of reality. In modern times 'mimesis' has become synonymous with realism and naturalism.

Cf. W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia estetyki*, vol. I, Wrocław 1962, pp. 26 – 27.

Cf. W. Tatarkiewicz, *Odtwórczość: dzieje stosunku sztuki do rzeczywistości* [in:] W. Tatarkiewicz, *Dzieje sześciu pojęć*, Warsaw 1976.

The complex meaning of the word 'mimesis' can be observed in the works of Plato and Aristotle (*Poetics*), as well as Yeats. In *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* 'imitation' means the expression of the actor, the 'wearing of a mask' (Cf. footnote No 113). In *William Blake and his Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* the term 'mimetic' refers to the copying of reality by the artist ('mimetic art' as opposed to 'expressive art'):

"True art is expressive and symbolic, and makes every form, every sound, every colour, every gesture, a signature of some unanalysable imaginative essence. False art is not expressive, but mimetic, not from experience but from observation, and is the mother of all evil, persuading us to save our bodies alive at no matter what cost of rapine and fraud. True art is the flame of the Last Day, which begins for every man when he is first moved by beauty, and which seeks to burn all things until they become 'infinite and holy'". (W.B. Yeats, *William Blake and his Illustrations* ... [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 140).

In the light of this essay it would appear that:

(I) Yeats uses the term 'mimetic' in its narrow sense, as in part X of Plato's *Republic*.

(II) He uses the term 'expressive' in a broad sense.

(III) The term 'expressive art' may therefore encompass both 'inspired poetry' (*Phaedrus*) and symbolist poetry.

(IV) Thus broadly understood, 'expression' may mean not only the 'bringing out of feelings (of experiences)' but also 'their presentation and evocation'.

(V) In this broad understanding of 'expression' there is no place for the Nietzschean dichotomy of contemplation and expression, or of beauty and expression.

"In ancient times two kinds of arts were distinguished, some were destined for contemplation, others for expression. In modern times a controversy has arisen. Some theoreticians are of the opinion that every art has a contemplative character, others, that they all must stand for expression. The thesis may be true or not, depending on what is meant by 'expression'. And there is a wide range of meanings. Expression can be natural or artifical, direct or indirect (making use of some specially constructed objects). It can serve itself or must be shown to others; it can have either normal or intensified scale, individual schemes following general ones, or made to be seen through real objects or by means of signs; but first of all, expression, if used in a very wide sense, is not only the bringing out of the feelings, but also their presentation and evocation" (W. Tatarkiewicz, *Ekspresja i sztuka* (English summary) [in:] *Estetyka*, 1962, pp. 46 – 61).

This impression would seem to be confirmed by the motif of the Great Memory, introduced in the following stanza. This is the Yeatsian counterpart of the memory of the Platonic Soul of the World (*Timaeus*). According to Plotinus this memory "is vested in the imaging faculty" and it is "an active power of the mind"[96].

I must reeall a man that neither love
Nor music nor an enemy's clipped ear
Could, he was so harried, cheer;
A figure that has grown so fabulous
There's not a neighbour left to say
When he finished his dog's day:
An ancient bankrupt master of this house.

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

The motif of the Great Memory directly introduces the poem's "supernatural dimension" and justifies the concept of inspired expressive poetry. The concept of the "Great Memory" is also linked to the question (or problem) of the mode of existence of the characters of *The Tower* and hence to that of art itself.

It is the function and meaning of this Platonic–Romantic concept in *The Tower* that deserves to be examined first. It makes its appearance in connection with the image of the tower in the period preceding its ruin and decline. The tower's condition prior to its ruin also concerns the present, in which the protagonist – moved by rage – conducts his monologue. The past, in which the poet places the "bankrupt", is linked to the ruin of the symbolic tower of imagination – ruin in this case signifying the extinction of all passions.

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[96] Cf. Plotinus, op.cit., *Fourth Ennead*, III.31 and VI.3 (pp. 158 and 190).

Cf. Yeats: "... and I believe in three doctrines which have, as I think, been handed down from early times and been the foundations of nearly all magical practices. These doctrines are:

(1) That the borders of our mind are ever shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy.

(2) That the borders of our memories are as shifting, and that our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature itself.

(3) That this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols" (W.B. Yeats, *Magic* [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 28).

Cf. also W.B. Yeats, *Anima Mundi* [in:] *Mythologies*, ed. cit.

At this stage of his meditation the protagonist reveals the most important feature of the conception of imagination which is sketched out in the poem, namely that each individual imagination, thanks to the creative power of passion, maintains contact with the central imagination of the world, which is the eternal source of creative impulses. The extinction of passion therefore means the interruption of this contact. In the ninth stanza the Great Memory, which remains in contact with the protagonist's own imagination – symbolized by the tower – becomes eternity, which for the present is the tower's only dome. Meditation on imagination, nature and poetry (art) therefore becomes meditation on eternity as well. It is thanks to this use of the concept of the Great Memory that "the beyond" in *The Tower* is not abstract in character[97].

The direct image of eternity is to be found in stanzas 9 and 10. Its indirect image is to be found in the structure of the poem's represented world. The Great Memory of *The Tower* is a spiritual community of people linked to a concrete part of the world. It is also the community of the souls – smouldering with passion – of the former inhabitants, who "come with loud cry and panting breast to break upon the sleeper's rest". In addition, the Great Memory includes fictitious characters (e.g. Hanrahan) who express or project as it were the inner experiences of the poet and the community. The content of these experiences is basically constant.

This Great Memory is stratified, so to speak. The "strata" are the Greek, Celtic, Mediaeval, Renaissance and Romantic "levels" of the poem. There is the suggestion that the whole visible and invisible world, the living and the dead, together with the contents of their imaginations, are creations of or are part of the Great Memory, to which the raging old man – an image of the protagonist – also belongs.

The protagonist (the poet) is as it were an intermediary between the Great Memory and the community, rather like the Platonic inspired poet who is an intermediary between God and the world of ideas on the one hand, and people on the other. Thus the soul of the raging old man – if not the old man in person – invoked in stanza 10 is accompanied from the Great Memory not only by the fictitious Hanrahan but also by the souls of the inhabitants of the environs of Thoor Ballylee. This scene also suggests the interdependence and near synonymy of the concepts of eternity, imagination and art (poetry).

As I would question all, come all who can;
Come old, necessitous, half-mounted man;
And bring beauty's blind rambling celebrant;
The red man the juggler sent
Through God-forsaken meadows; Mrs. French,
Gifted with so fine an ear;
The man drowned in a bog's mire,
When mocking Muses chose the country wench.

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[97] C.M. Bowra has written on the vagueness of the Romantic concept of 'The Beyond' (op.cit., p. 276).

The Yeatsian Great Memory – understood as the memory or imagination of the soul of the world – which so for would seem to be the ultimate frontier of all being – is not to be confused with Plato's *Anima Mundi*, which is presented in *Timaeus* as an intermediate sphere between the ideal world and the material world. In *The Tower*, poetry (art) seems to have as a basis for its existence both the poet's excess of spiritual life, full of creative passion, and the inner experiences – stored in the Great Memory – of dead people, with whom the artist maintains creative contact.

The Great Memory would also seem to be a kind of supraindividual spiritual energy, which for Yeats and for the Romantics was synonymous with creative energy[98]. This would explain why in *The Tower* all the characters, symbols and themes "revolve" around the passion which is most creative and which is common to all people, i.e. love. Love constitutes as it were the mainstream of biological, emotional and intellectual life.

The image of the Great Memory in *The Tower* is therefore close to the conceptions of Shelley and Blake, who identified Plato's Soul of the World either with a central imagination of the world and Christ (Blake)[99] or with a central intellect (Shelley's Great Mind)[100]. It is from this central world imagination or intellect[101] – the real "home" of all individual imaginations – that the law of love radiates (cf. Blake's "pulsation of the artery")[102] and unites opposites. According to Blake, the redemption of man and the world could be achieved thanks to the creative effort of imagination.

In *The Tower*, the motif of the Great Memory – the active and all–embracing memory of the soul of the world – explains the mixing of various levels of narration and time

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[98] Cf. footnote No 77.

[99] "We do not want either Greek or Roman Models if we are but just & true to our own Imaginations, those Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live for ever in Jesus our Lord". (W. Blake: preface to *Milton* [in:] W. Blake, *A Selection of poems and letters*, Ed. J. Bronowski, Penguin Books 1972, p. 161).

Cf. Yeats: "The historical Christ was indeed no more than the supreme symbol of the artistic imagination, in which, with every passion wrought to perfect beauty by art and poetry, we shall live, when the body has passed away for the last time; but before that hour man must labour through many lives and many deaths (...) Our imaginations are but fragments of the universal imagination, portions of the universal body of God, and as we enlarge our imagination by imaginative sympathy, and transform with the beauty and peace of art the sorrows and joys of the world, we put off the limited mortal man more and more and put on the unlimited 'immortal man'". (W.B. Yeats, *William Blake and his Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit., pp. 137 – 139).

"We carry to Anima Mundi our memory, and that memory is for a time our external world; and all passionate moments recur again and again, for passion desires its own recurrence more than any event, and whatever there is of corresponding complacency or remorse is our beginning of jugement; nor do we remember only the events of life, for thoughts bred of longing and of fear, all those parasitic vegetables that have slipped through our fingers, come again like a rope's end to smite us upon the face..." (W.B. Yeats, *Anima Mundi* [in:] *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* [in:] *Mythologies*, ed.cit., p. 354).
"But the passions, when we know that they cannot find fulfilment, become vision; and a vision, whether we wake or sleep, prolongs its power by rhythm and pattern, the wheel where the world is butterfly" (W.B. Yeats, ibidem, p. 341).

[100] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *The philosophy of Shelley's poetry* [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit.

[101] Cf. footnote No 67.

[102] Cf. W. Blake, *Milton* [in:] ed.cit., p. 183 – 184.

planes as well as the elasticity of the boundary between fiction and reality. It also explains the attempt on the part of the poet to render abstracts concrete by approximating them to the world of art and man's inner experiences. It further suggests that the protagonist of *The Tower* – who had so far displayed the duality of Plato's conception of nature, love, beauty, poetry and the poet – in reality favours those of Plato's conceptions which can be consistently interpreted in the spirit of spiritualistic monism.

One has the impression that the preceding display of Platonic ambiguities is directed not so much against Plato himself as against an extremely dualistic interpretation of Plato, which led to (among other things) the concept of so-called "Platonic love", dear to the Romantics. This popular conception of love[103] appears in *The Tower* as the opposite of that hierarchical and cosmic vision of creative love – invoked earlier by means of complex symbolism – which has the power to unite opposites and which also was outlined by Plato (*The Banquet, Phaedrus*) and by the great Romantics.

The motif of "Platonic love" (oscillating between the two poles of fulfilment and non-fulfilment, which as a source of inspiration preferred "woman lost" and which held the promise of fulfilment in the after-life, when the two halves of Androgyne would unite[104]) is introduced in the final question of *The Tower*: "Does the imagination dwell the most/ Upon a woman won or woman lost?" It would seem that it is this one-sided conception of love which is the main bone of contention between the protagonist on the one hand and – on the other hand – not so much the Great Romantics, as their lesser successors:

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[103] The concept of 'Platonic love' was dear to D.G. Rossetti, *Ch. Rossetti and the Tragic Generation*.

Cf. the following fragment from *All Souls night* (the last poem of the collection *The Tower*):

"Horton's the first I call. He loved strange thought
And knew that sweet extremity of pride
That's called platonic love,
And that to such a pitch of passion wrought
Nothing could bring him, when his lady died,
Anodyne for his love.
Words were but wasted breath:
One dear hope had he:
The inclemency
Of that or the next winter would be death".

(W.B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, ed.cit., p. 257).

Cf. Yeats: "If a Rossetti was a subconscious influence, and perhaps the most powerful of all, we looked consciously to Pater for our philosophy" (W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, ed.cit., p. 302).

"Considering such matters, I am tempted by a Spenserian fantasy in which the Damsel Romanticism is sustained and nourished by various writers through the nineteenth century but is captured, finally, and betrayed, by two sibling dragons, a Pre-Raphaelite and Rider Haggard. The damsel is rescued and restored to beauty by two knights, Conrad and Yeats. Conrad of course, slays Rider Haggard, and Yeats, after a struggle, slays Christiana Rossetti" (D. Thornburn, *Conrad's Romanticism* [in:] *Romanticism. Vistas, Instances, Continuities*, ed.cit., p. 231).

[104] Cf. Shelley, *Epipsychidion*.

As I would question all, come all who can;
(...)

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?
But I have found an answer in those eyes
That are impatient to be gone;
Go therefore; but live Hanrahan,
For I need all his mighty memories.

Old lecher with a love on every wind,
Bring up out of that deep considering mind
All that you have discovered in the grave,
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 labirynth of another's being;

Does the imagination dwell the most
Upon a woman won or woman lost?
If on the lost, admit you turned aside
From a great labirynth out of pride,
Cowardice, some silly over – subtle thought
Or anything called conscience once;
And that if memory recur, the sun's
Under eclipse and the day blotted out.

The question as to whether so–called "Platonic love" can be a motive force of the imagination is examined at the end of the second part of *The Tower*, both on a "personal" plane and on the plane of art. The poet shows the other "side" or aspect of Romantic love for a woman, namely the association of love for "woman lost" with art and death[105]. It is for Hanrahan to settle the question of the creative aspect of love for a woman, Hanrahan being an intermediary not only between the world of the dead (eternity) and art, but also between the poem's protagonist – linked to the world of art – and W.B. Yeats, author of the Hanrahan stories. In a certain sense, therefore, "woman lost" (the counterpart of the Muse of the first part of the poem) becomes Hanrahan's equal

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[105] Cf. M. Praz, *The Beauty of the Medusa* [in:] *The Romantic Agony*, ed.cit., ch. I.
Cf. W.B. Yeats, *The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry* [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 72.

insofar as her mode of existence is concerned. Both characters oscillate between "reality" and "fiction", between life and death.

The presence of the Romantic triad love – art (= beauty) – death (eternity) in *The Tower* brings to mind Yeats's interpretation of Shelley's poetry. According to Shelley's Platonic conception – recalled by Yeats – , real love, freedom, beauty and justice are attainable only in art or in life after death. In Yeats's opinion, therefore, Shelley defines the mode of existence of art as being an intermediate state between life and death and compares creative ecstasy to death[106].

The final question of *The Tower*, namely whether it is fulfilled or unfulfilled love that is the passion which nourishes imagination and creativity, gives to the "personal" level of the second part of the poem the character of a bitter examination of conscience made by the protagonist, who is dejected by the knowledge of his defeat. The last stanzas see the definite return of the present tense associated with the interior monologue, while the tenuous distinction between the protagonist and his mask (Hanrahan) is almost swept aside. Hanrahan turns out to be as it were the "second voice" of the protagonist's interior monologue. This is made evident by the ambiguous use of the second person in the following lines, which are addressed either to Hanrahan or to the protagonist himself:

> If on the lost admit you turned aside
> From the great labyrinth out of pride,

The fact that Hanrahan – like the raging old man – inhabits the Great Memory and that both these characters are linked to the bankrupt of stanza 8 suggests that in the second part of *The Tower*, the poet has used the Romantic motif of the hero's symbolic death, which heralds his spiritual renewal or transformation[107]. This motif of transformation is moreover linked to the tower's alchemical dimension and is the point of

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[106] "This beauty, this divine order, whereof all things shall become a part in a kind of resurrection of the body, is already visible to the dead and to souls in ecstasy, for ecstasy is a kind of death". (W.B. Yeats, ibidem, p. 71).

[107] In chapter six of his book *W.B. Yeats and Tradition* (ed.cit.), F.A.C. Wilson, interpreting Yeats's poem entitled *Byzantium*, suggests that: (1) the speaker in *Byzantium* (the poem being linked with *Sailing to Byzantium* from the collection *The Tower*) is a purgatorial ghost; (2) the poem represents the state 'after death', described by Yeats as 'dreaming back'. Wilson supports his hypothesis with very convincing argumentation based on examples taken from mythology which was known to Yeats and Platonic, Hindu, Egyptian and Cabbalistic texts. According to T. Parkinson, however, such a reading of the poem is too 'daring' (T. Parkinson, op.cit., p. 117). Further support for Wilson's hypothesis is nevertheless to be found in Romantic literature. The motif of 'spiritual death and rebirth, or secular conversion' is present not only in Yeats's poetry – and, in my opinion, in *The Tower* – but also in the works of Wordsworth (*The Prelude*), Coleridge (*The Ancient Mariner*), Carlyle (*Sartor Resartus*) and in Polish Romantic works such as, for example, Adam Mickiewicz's *Dziady (Forefathers' Eve)*), where there is also a purgatorial ghost. It is not surprising, therefore, that this Romantic motif is seen by Maud Bodkin as an 'archetypal pattern' ("The Rebirth Archetype").

Cf. M. Peckham, *Towards a Theory of Romanticism* [in:] *Romanticism. Points of View*, ed.cit.

Cf. M. Bodkin, *A Study of the Ancient Mariner* and of the "Rebirth Archetype" [in:] M. Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry. Psychological Studies of Imagination*, Oxford 1934.

departure for the third part of the poem. The protagonist's dramatized interior monologue is concerned with this very possibility of renewal or transformation and reveals the cause of spiritual death, namely the squandering of an opportunity – afforded by properly understood human love – to achieve Unity of Being and creation.

One aspect of the misunderstanding of love is the excessive importance which is attached either to love's spiritual element (some silly over subtle thought) or to love's sensual element (horrible splendour of desire). The other aspect is the denial of love[108]. Of the destructive forces in the human psyche which cause love to be squandered or misunderstood, the protagonist mentions: pride, cowardice, conscience and cruelty. For Yeats, as for Blake, the squandering of the creative power of passion is synonymous with the decline of the imagination. In the essay *William Blake and Imagination* we read:

"He cried again and again that everything that lives is holy, and that nothing is unholy except things that do not live – lethargies, and cruelties, and timidities, and that denial of imagination which is the root they grew from in old times. Passions because most living are most holy – and this was a scandalous paradox in his time – and man shall enter eternity borne upon their wings"[109].

The negation of imagination in the second part of *The Tower* would therefore seem to be represented by: the cruel Mrs. French, heroine of an episode reminiscent of the story of Salome; the bankrupt, who lives in a state of lethargy and who is moved by no passion; the protagonist himself, tortured by pangs of conscience. The image of the labyrinth which makes its appearance at the end of the second part of the poem –

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[108] Another possible interpretation of the 'dismissal of love' by the protagonist of *The Tower* is suggested by the following fragment of *A Vision*:

"Sometimes the bond is between an incarnate Daimon and a Spirit of the Thirteenth Cone. This bond created by the fixed attention of the Daimon will pass through the same stages as if it were between man and some ordinary discarnate spirit. Victimage for the Dead arises through such acts as prevents the union of two incarnate Daimons and is therefore the prevention or refusal of a particular experience, but Victimage for a Spirit of the Thirteenth Cone results from the prevention or refusal of experience itself. This refusal may arise from pride, from the fear of injuring another or oneself, from something which we call asceticism; it may have any cause, but the Spirit of the Thirteenth Cone is starved. Such Spirit may itself create the events that incited the man to refuse experience, St. Simon may be driven to his pillar. In the whirling of the gyres the incarnate Daimon is starved in its turn, but starved not of natural experience, but of supernatural..." (W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit., p. 239).

Cf. Bloom's biographical interpretation of the second part of *The Tower*:

"What is immensely moving here is Yeats's clear self–condemnation, for he implicitly states a failure of desire on his part in his love for Maud Gonne. Like Hanrahan, he turned aside, and could not give all to love. Far in the background, and yet relevant, is Shelley's similarly conscious failure in his *Epipsychidion*, where the limitations of selfhood triumph over the poet's intense love for Emilia Viviani. Hanrahan, in the story *Red Hanrahan's Curse*, felt 'a great anger against old age and all it brought with it', but his struggle with self never proceeded far enough for him to accept the four sacred emblems – cauldron of pleasure, stone of power, spear of courage, sword of knowledge – that could have been his. Taken together, the four attributes would have unified him in the image of a Blakean Divine Man, or God. The implication in *The Tower* is that Yeats, like Hanrahan, has failed, but the failure is not less heroic than most simpler fulfilments of desire" (H. Bloom, op.cit., p. 351).

[109] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *Essays...*, ed.cit., pp. 112 – 113.

Blake's symbol of the fallen world and fallen man[110] – is in contrast to the tower of imagination and united opposites which stands open to eternity.

The motif of the death of the principle hero (Hanrahan) and the protagonist's defeat (synonymous with spiritual death), the question about the meaning of love and the meaning of the old man's rage which opens and closes the second part of *The Tower*, the mythical narration in the past tense (stanzas 2 – 8) which is woven into the interior monologue and whose purpose is to illuminate the problems which haunt the protagonist – all these motifs, as well as the entire poem's structure, would seem to evoke that state of the soul which is "between death and birth" and which Yeats describes in *A Vision* as "Dreaming Back": that state of the soul which precedes reincarnation[111].

At the moment of his death, man makes as it were an appraisal of his past life. He meditates many times over upon the successive episodes of his past existence until – having understood all his shortcomings – he cleanses himself and is then reincarnated. In his review of a book written by a friend who was himself an advocate of Platonic "monism" as well as the theory of the soul's rebirth and "pre–natal memory", Yeats describes this state of the soul in the following words[112]:

"He thinks that when a man is to attain great wisdom he first learns all the evil of his past, assumes responsibility for his share in that evil, follows out with a complete knowledge the consequence of very act, repents the sin of twenty thousand years, unified at last in thought and only when this agony has been exhaused can he recall what was 'lovely and beloved'".

In the light of this commentary, the character of Hanrahan appears to be a "daimon" or "ultimate self" from *Per Amica silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*, i.e. the sum of all the past lives of the protagonist and – at the same time – a living man's spiritual "alter ego", mysteriously linked to the person of his beloved or to the Muse – the second voice of the protagonist's interior monologue or examination of conscience[113].

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[110] Cf. H. Bloom, op.cit., p. 222.

[111] "In the Dreaming back, the Spirit is compelled to live over and over again the events that had most moved it; there can be nothing new, but the old events stand forth in a light which is dim or bright according to the intensity of the passion that accompanied them. They occur in the order of their intensity or luminosity, the more intense first, and the painful are commonly the more intense, and repeat themselves again and again. In the Return, upon the other hand, the Spirit must live through past events in the order of their occurrence, because it is compelled by the Celestial Body to trace every passionate event to its cause until all are related and understood, turned into knowledge, made a part of itself. All that keeps the Spirit from its freedom may be compared to a knot that has to be untied or to an oscillation or a violence that must end in a return of equilibrium" (W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit., p. 226).

[112] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *Essays...*, ed.cit., pp. 416 – 417.

[113] "*The Four Faculties* are not the abstract categories of philosophy, being the result of the four memories of the Daimon or ultimate self of that man. His Body of Fate, the series of events forced upon him from without, is shaped out of the Daimon's memory of the events of his past incarnations; his Mask or object of desire or idea of the good out of its memory of the moments of exaltation in his past lives, his Will or normal ego out of its memory of all the events of his present life, whether consciously remembered or not; his Creative Mind from its memory of ideas – or universals – displayed by actual men in past lives, or their spirits between lives". (W.B. Yeats, A Vision, ed.cit., p. 83).

This examination of conscience is unfavourable for the protagonist. His love for a woman has taken him only halfway up the symbolic tower of imagination ("come old necessitous, half mounted man"). His love for "woman lost" has turned out to be too weak a passion to hold its own against the forces which inhabit the imagination. His love for "woman won" has turned out to be too one-sided. In both cases love has turned out to be uncreative and incompatible with both Unity of Being and Plato's teachings on the "degrees" or "steps" of love.

In the light of this summary, it is not surprising that the protagonist of *The Tower* – the old man full of irony – opposes the power of an old man's rage to the power of love. According to Plato, rage[114] which proceeds from the realization that beauty is missing or lost is a component of the "mania" of the lover. In the case of the protagonist, rage can become a new source of creation and a motive force for the imagination – a means of spiritual rebirth, leading to the recovery of a lost value (beauty). That is why the protagonist begins the final part of his meditation on love with a question about the power of this rage:

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?

Cf. "I thought the hero found hanging upon some oak of Dodona an ancient mask, where perhaps there lingered something of Egypt, and that he changed it to his fancy, touching it a little here and there, gilding the eyebrows or putting a gilt line where the cheek–bone comes, that when at last he looked out of its eyes he knew another's breath came and went within his breath upon the carven lips, and that his eyes were upon the instant fixed upon a visionary world: how else could the god have come to us in the forest? (...) a strange living man may win for Daimon an illustrious dead man; but now I add another thought: the Daimon comes not as like to like but seeking its own opposite, for man and Daimon feed the hunger in one another's hearts. Because the ghost is simple, the man heterogenous and confused, they are but knit together when the man has found a mask whose lineaments permit the expression of all the man most lacks, and it may be dreads, and of that only.

The more insatiable in all desire, the more resolute to refuse deception or an easy victory, the more close will be the bond, the more violent and definite the antipathy (...) and I think it was Heraclitus who said: the Daimon is our destiny. When I think of life as a struggle with the Daimon who would ever set us to the hardest work among those not impossible, I understand why there is a deep enmity between a man and his destiny, and why a man loves nothing but his destiny (...) Then my imagination runs from Daimon to sweetheart, and I divine an analogy that evades the intellect" (W.B. Yeats, Per Amica Silentia Lunae [in:] Mythologies, ed.cit., pp. 335 – 336). This fragment also throws light on the symbolic link between the Muse, Hanrahan, woman won and woman lost. Cf. footnote No 108.

Yeats's 'doctrine of the mask' is interpreted by R. Ellmann (Yeats, the Man and the Mask, ed.cit.).

The character Hanrahan is interpreted as an 'antiself' (in The Tower) by H. Bloom (op.cit., p. 351) who does not link him either with the other male characters of the poem or with the Muse. Bloom also fails to perceive the 'Grail' stylization of Hanrahan.

T. Henn (op.cit., p. 5) interprets the character of the young Fisherman as an 'antiself'.

[114] Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus*, XXXI – XXXII, ed.cit., pp. 79 – 81).

In the second part of *The Tower*, therefore, the popular conception of Romantic love (Platonic love) is opposed not only to the maximalist Platonic–Romantic vision of love and to Plato's teachings on the "grades" or „steps" of love and the essence of the lover's madness (a mixture of rage and joy), but also to the belief of the Romantics that all passions are endowed with creative force.

The motif of the sun in eclipse which closes the second part of the poem is in all probability an allusion to the following famous words of Plotinus, taken from his essay on beauty[115]:

"Never did eye see the sun unless it had first become sunlike, and never can the soul have vision of the First Beauty unless itself be beautiful".

The image of the eclipsed and solitary sun[116] therefore suggests that those concepts which are vital to the Platonic–Romantic conceptions of art and imagination – i.e. love and beauty – have been improperly understood by the protagonist and, furthermore, that harmony between Plato's Venus Urania (woman lost) and Venus Pandemos (woman won) – or between Plotinus's "Heavenly Aphrodite" and "Earthly Aphrodite" – has not been achieved.

III

The third part of *The Tower* is a final summing up of the protagonist's life and also an *envoi* to posterity. The fact that it is written in irregular lines (almost three–stress lines) serves to emphasize its distinct character.

The stylization of the third part of *The Tower* as a will accounts for the visionary rhetoric of this part of the poem. It is also a sign of the Romantic motif of the hero's return to teach[117]. In *The Tower*, this motif is the central link in the group of Romantic narrative motifs which are woven around the theme of life and rebirth. The pre–condition for rebirth is a full awarences of good and evil done in the past. It is to the attaining of an awareness of past "evil" (i.e. the squandered opportunity of achieving Unity of Being and creation which is offered by love for a woman) that the second part of *The Tower* is devoted. The third part of the poem brings images of what in the life of the protagonist was really worthy of love ("lovely and beloved") and worthy of being transmitted to posterity.

The cryptonims of these values are in turn "pride", "giving", "faith" and the images of the young fishermen, great people, the learned and ascetic old man shut up in a

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115 Cf. Plotinus, *First Ennead*, VI.9, ed.cit., pp. 25 – 26.

116 Parkinson interprets the motif of the solitary sun as 'the fall from unity into diversity' and as 'the defeat of reason', the sun being associated with 'objectivity' and 'masculinity' (T. Parkinson, op.cit., pp. 164 – 166. Cf. also p. 156).

117 Cf. footnote No 107.

tower which stands open to the clouds, "Translunar Paradise" and the "Superhuman mirror resembling dream". All these motifs concern the higher form of love – for "intellectual beauty" – this being the only form of love which is creative.

It is time that I wrote my will;
I choose upstanding men
That climb the streams until
The fountain leap, and at dawn
Drop their cast at the side
Of dripping stone; I declare
They shall inherit my pride,
The pride of the people that were
Bound neither to Cause nor to State,
Neither to slaves that were spat on,
Nor to the tyrants that spat,
The people of Burke and of Grattan
That gave, though free to refuse –
Pride, like that of the morn,
When the headlong light is loose,
Or that of the fabulous horn,
Or that of the sudden shower
When all streams are dry,
Or that of the hour
When the swan must fix his eye
Upon a fading gleam,
Float out upon a long
Last reach of glittering stream
And there sing his last song. (...)

The third part of *The Tower* is a counter–proposition of ideas in relation to the second part of the poem. This is emphasized by the fact that in part III the poet has set the motif of the young fishermens' climb against the motif of the labyrinth, which comes at the end of part II.

This contrast of images would seem to suggest that the second and third parts of *The Tower* "discuss" two different Plotinic paths to the vision of the ideal world, namely the "circuit path" and the "direct path". The "circuit path" – symbolized by the winding stairs of the tower and by the labyrinth of love – entails involvement in the outer, material world. The "direct path", whose symbolic equivalent in the second part of *The Tower* would seem to be the climb, leads directly to the "summit" and entails "giving" (i.e. creation).

According to Plotinus, all people strive to attain "superreality" ("vision") and must choose between the "direct path" and the "circuit path":

"... and there is every reason to believe that child or man, in sport or in earnest, is playing or working only towards Vision, that every act is an effort towards Vision; the compulsory act, which tends rather to bring the Vision down to outward things, and the act thought of as voluntary, less concerned with the outer, originate alike in the effort towards Vision[118] (...) Action thus is set towards contemplation and an object of contemplation, so that even those whose life is in doing have seeing as their object; what they have not been able to achieve by the direct path, they hope to come at by the circuit"[119].

The protagonist of *The Tower* would seem to proceed likewise. The steep climb to the top of the mountain (part I) is an image of his youth. The labyrinth (part II) is the winding way of love – linked perhaps to the age of maturity. The image of the climb which opens the third part of *The Tower* is yet another attempt to approach spiritual reality by the direct path[120].

The protagonist's "will" also has as its aim the gradual sketching out of an image of the ideal human creator, climbing up the rungs of the "ladder of love", which takes him to real beauty. The protagonist counts the young fishermen, the national heroes of Ireland and himself as creators. The Platonic concept of creative love (*The Banquet*) is thus broadened out to encompass politics, sport and art – in accordance with Plotinus's opinion that the ultimate goal of all human endeavour is the vision of the ideal world.

In the third part of *The Tower* the young fishermen – who are both sportsmen and poets and who are akin to the national heroes of Ireland – would seem to symbolize a broadened concept of the Unity of Being[121]. They embody the Romantic ideal of a life which is as intensive as possible, combining artistic and intellectual achievement with heroic deeds in the fields of politics, sport, love, war or asceticism[122].

This Romantic yearning for the "unity of life and art" – the yearning to overcome the antinomy of "perfection of life" and "perfection of art" – is constantly present in Yeats's work[123]. It is to be found, for example, in his essay of 1924 entitled *Blake's illustrations to Dante*[124]:

[118] Cf. Plotinus, *Third Ennead*, VIII,1,ed.cit., p. 129.

[119] Cf. Plotinus, ibidem, p. 131.

[120] "In so far as a man is like all other men, the inflow finds him upon the winding path, and in so far as he is a saint or sage, upon the straight path" (W.B. Yeats, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* [in:] *Mythologies*, ed.cit., p. 361).

[121] Cf. My analysis of part I of *The Tower*.

[122] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *In Memory of Major Robert Gregory* [in:] *Collected Poems*, ed.cit., pp. 148 – 152.

[123] "The intellect of man is forced to choose
Perfection of the life, or of the work,
And if it take the second must refuse
A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark".
(W.B. Yeats, *The Choice* [in:] *Collected Poems*, ed.cit., p. 278).

[124] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions*, ed.cit., p. 139.

"Mere sympathy for living things is not enough, because we must learn to separate their "infected" from their eternal, their satanic from their divine part; and this can only be done by desiring always beauty, the one mask through which can be seen the unveiled eyes of eternity. We must then be artists in all things, and understand that love and old age and death are first among the arts. In this sense he insists that "Christ's apostles were artists", that "Christianity is Art", and that "the whole business of man is the arts" ".

What characterizes these "artists of life" or great men in part III of *The Tower* is "pride", "giving", free will (The people of Burke and of Grattan / That gave, though free to refuse) and "faith". Foremost among these characteristics is pride – pride being the source of the others. In the second part of *The Tower* "pride" is also the most important reason for the protagonist's withdrawal from the labyrinth of love.

The context in which the world "pride" appears in *The Tower* would seem to indicate that this word is a synonym for creative imagination. In Yeats's opinion (cf. *Blake's illustrations to Dante*) the word "pride" was given a similar meaning by W. Blake. According to Yeats, the word "pride" for Blake signified not "selfishness" but "mental gift", i.e. creative imagination, which ordinary people attempt to belittle, labelling it "pride". This "mental gift" is the source of all artistic and scientific creativity ("cultivated life"), which strives to transform the world into a "New Jerusalem", governed by laws of the spirit (i.e. of the imagination), namely love, creation, freedom, truth and beauty[125]. In the third part of *The Tower* "giving" is the counterpart of Blake's "cultivated life", equated with creation.

The whole of the first rhetorical period, woven around the theme of "pride" and "giving" and inlaid with examples of the attitudes of exceptional people (the sportsman, great politicians and thinkers, the poet) therefore ends with a sequence of symbolic motifs concerning the soul's beauty: light; the horn of plenty ("fabulous horn"); the "sudden shower"; dawn; the swan singing its last song[126]. These motifs usher in the next

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[125] Cf. ibidem, pp. 136 – 137. H. Bloom interprets the motif of 'pride' differently, arguing – with, it would seem, little justification – against T. Whitaker's interpretation:

"In the third section of *The Tower*, Yeats turns to what is left, as his dream–drunken Hanrahan could not. Like Hanrahan, the poet has not attained Unity of Being, and so finds himself at the impasse of knowing perfection neither in his life nor in his work. But nothing in the first section, with its conflict of active imagination and fading nature, or in the second with its parallel conflict of imagination and the unfading self, compels the poet to surrender his Blakean and Shelleyan pride in the continued autonomy of the imagination. Whitaker boldly claims more for Yeats here, and speaks of a pride 'that is not the ego's apprehensive desire to possess and dominate but the whole being's exultant sense of creative giving'. This is to grant Yeats more than he dared to assert for himself, and neglects his near – identity with Hanrahan in the second part of the poem. There is, one needs to admit, much Anglo–Irish posturing and drumbeating in part III, and much purely Yeatsian striking of attitudes as well. Here the poem is in decline, and its celebration of 'upstanding men' for their pre–dawn fishing expeditions is rather inappropriate if not silly. A little irony would have helped, for once, but it does not come, and the poem becomes very vulnerable to the charge of 'excessive dramatization' that Yvor Winters has urged so vigorously against Yeats's work" (H. Bloom, op.cit., pp. 351 – 352).

part of the "will" – the protagonist's act of faith in the creative and uniting power of human dreams, understood – in accordance with Platonic and Romantic "theory" of dreaming and sleep[127] as an inner vision of super–reality which is accessible through imagination:

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,
Aye, sun and moon and star all,
And further add to that
That, being dead, we rise,
Dream and so create
Translunar Paradise.
I have prepared my peace
With learned Italian things
And the proud stones of Greece,
Poet's imaginings
And memories of love,
Memories of the words of women,
All those things whereof
Man makes a superhuman
Mirror–resembling dream.

The metaphors "Translunar Paradise" and "Superhuman mirror–resembling dream" – the first of which concerns the world created by dreaming while the second

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[126] "The title poem of *The Tower* is one instance in which the swan holds to the confined meanings of Platonic tradition, for in this poem a temporary resolution is made of the conflict between temporal and spiritual experience (...) The swan is associated with the fullness of nature, and as in 'The Wild Swans at Coole', it offers itself to the poet when he is contemplating the winter of his years and a crisis in his spiritual life. This swan, however, is not one of many natural birds but is close to the unique symbolic swan that the moralist or mythological poet identifies with the solitary soul. And this swan represents not rebellious resentment of life but fulfilment (...)" (T. Parkinson, *The Swan* [in:] op.cit., pp. 135 – 136).

Cf. G. Melchiori, *The Swan, Helen and The Tower* [in:] G. Melchiori, op.cit., ch. III.

[127] "The purpose of rhythm, it has always seemed to me, is to prolong the moment of contemplation. the moment when we are both asleep and awake, which is the one moment of creation, by hushing us with an alluring monotony, while it holds us waking by variety, to keep us in that state of perhaps real trance, in which the mind liberated from the pressure of the will is unfolded in symbols" (W.B. Yeats, *The Symbolism of Poetry* [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 159).

Pater, in his 'Romantic' interpretation of Platonism, draws attention to the motif of prophetic and mystical sleep in the ninth part of Plato's *Republic* (W. Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, ed.cit., p. 123).

concerns the work of poetry as an artifact – serve as a framework for the protagonist's creed. This creed contains the following suggestions concerning the inter-relationships between "super – reality", dreaming and poetry:

1. Man is the creator of both the visible world and superreality.

2. In the hierarchy of worlds, this super–reality (Translunar Paradise) – created in dreaming – is not only higher than the earth, but is also higher than Shelley's paradise of art "between earth and moon"[128] and higher than the (implied) Lunar Paradise (a symbol of the *Anima Mundi*)[129].

3. Being a "superhuman mirror–resembling dream", a work of art is only an imperfect mirror ("mirror– resembling", but not "reflecting") of the super–reality of dream-

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[128] "And on a throne o'erlaid with starlight, caught
Upon those wandering isles of aëry dew,
Which highest shoals of mountain shipwreck not,
She sate, and heard all that had happened new
Between the earth and moon, since they had brought
The last intelligence – and now she grew
Pale as that moon, lost in the watery night –
And now she wept, and now she laughed outright".
(Shelley, *The Witch of Atlas* [in:] Shelley, op.cit., p. 698).

[129] "I am persuaded, that a logical process, or a series of related images, has body and period and think of Anima Mundi as a great pool or garden where it moves through its allotted growth like a great water plant or fragrantly branches in the air. Indeed as Spenser's Garden of Adonis (...)" (W.B. Yeats, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* [in:] *Mythologies*, ed.cit., p. 352).

"In the Platonic tradition, the normal image for Anima Mundi is the garden, where the archetypes of ideas of all created things grow as flowers and where the soul, between incarnations, takes its ease; a symbolism which enters our literature with Spenser's Garden of Adonis and round which Shelley wrote his 'The Sensitive Plant' (...) Yeats found however that Italian Neoplatonism used the sea and the garden as interchangeable symbols, and (remarking that Jungian psychology thought similarly) he is at pains to record the fact in the preface to Fighting the Waves (...)" (F.A.C. Wilson, *Yeats's Iconography*, ed.cit., p. 97).

As the 'Mother of the Universe', the moon was indirectly associated in Yeat's symbolism with 'Anima Mundi'. This is suggested, for instance, by the title of Yeats's two–part essay 'Per Amica Silentia Lunae' (I. *Anima Hominis*, II. *Anima Mundi*).

According to E. Panofsky, the Italian Neoplatonists (e.g. Marsiglio Ficino) described the earthly world as 'sublunar'. The sphere between the sublunar world and the cosmic mind was the Soul of the World, inhabited by Venus Pandemos (Venus Vulgaris) – 'vis generandi' – symbolizing the eternal beauty which is present in the corporeal or material world. The highest heavenly sphere of the cosmic Mind was inhabited by Venus Urania (Venus Coelestis) – i.e. 'pure intelligence', comparable with Caritas (mediator between the human mind and God). Each Venus was accompanied by her own Amor, who was thought of as her son. The son of Venus Pandemos was Amor Vulgaris, who was guardian of the sensual imagination. Amor divinus, son of Venus Urania, urged the intellectual contemplation of beauty.

Cf. E. Panofsky, *Neoplatoński Ruch we Florencji (The Neoplatonist movement in Florence)* [in:] E. Panofsky, *Studia z Historii Sztuki (Essays in the History of Art)*, Warsaw 1971, p. 195.

Cf. Wilson's remarks on Yeats's interpretation of the idea of 'Three Worlds' and the three spheres of the human soul in the work of W. Morris (F.A.C. Wilson, *Yeats's Iconography*, ed.cit., p. 56 – 57).

Cf. N. Frye's interpretation of Blake's three worlds (Ulro, Beulah, Eden) (N. Frye, *Fearful Symmetry...*, ed.cit., pp. 26 and 50).

Cf. Yeats: "Shelley, a good Platonist, seems, in his earliest work to set this general soul in the place of God, an opinion, one may find from More's friend Cudworth, now affirmed, now combated by classic authority; but More would steady us with a definition" (W.B. Yeats, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* [in:] *Mythologies*, p. 351).

ing (Translunar Paradise). In the hierarchy of worlds it occupies a position somewhat lower than that of "Translunar Paradise".

It can easily be seen that in the protagonist's credo Romantic and Platonic motifs overlap. The motif of the hierarchy of worlds and the hierarchy of reflections brings to mind Plotinus, as well as Shelley and Blake.

The differentiation between Translunar Paradise and the superhuman mirror–resembling dream recalls the Plotinic categories of vision and image (representation). Vision concerns the ideal world present in the divine mind while image (representation) concerns the material world, which is an imperfect "reflection" of the higher world[130].

The motif of the mirror appears several times in Shelley's essay *A defence of poetry*. In this text, which is a manifesto of Romantic poetry, language is defined as a "mirror of thoughts", poets as "mirrors in which the spectator beholds himself, under a thin disguise of circumstance, stript of all but that ideal perfection and energy which every one feels to be the internal type of all that he loves, admires and would become"[131] and dramatic poetry as a "prismatic and many sided mirror that reflects the brightest rays of human nature"[132].

In the same essay Shelley speaks of the"superhuman wisdom", of poetry[133] and of a new Paradise governed by the law of love and created in place of Eden by the Troubadours of Provence, the Italian poets of the Renaissance and above all by Dante, author of *Il Paradiso* and *Vita Nuova*:

"His apotheosis of Beatrice in Paradise, and the gradations of his own love and her loveliness, by which as by steps he feigns himself to have ascended to the throne of the Supreme Cause, is the most glorious imagination of modern poetry. The acutest critics have justly reversed the judgment of the vulgar, and the order of the great acts of the "Divine Drama", in the measure of the admiration which they accord to the Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. The latter is a perpetual hymn of everlasting love. Love, which found a worthy poet in Plato alone of all the ancients, has been celebrated by a chorus of the greatest writers of the renovated world; ..."[134].

The protagonist's frequent references to Plato and Plotinus are in conformity with the "Platonic spirit" of Shelley's manifesto.

Given that the protagonist's "creed" has clear affinities with Plotinus's theology of creation, the protagonist's "controversy" with Plato and Plotinus would seem to be not

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130 "As long as we were Above, collected within the Intellectual nature, we were satisfied; we were held in the intellectual act; we had vision because we drew all into unity – for the thinker in us was the Intellectual Principle telling us of itself – and the soul or mind was motionless, assenting to that act of its prior. But now that we are once more here – living in the secondary, the soul – we seek for persuasive probabilities: it is through the image we desire to know the archetype" (Plotinus, *Fifth Ennead*, III.6 [in:] Plotinus, op.cit., p. 219.)

131 Cf. Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry* [in:] ed.cit., p. 1035.

132 Ibidem, p. 1036.

133 Ibidem, p. 1029.

134 Ibidem, p. 1049.

really a controversy at all. The opening words of the creed (I mock Plotinus thought / And cry in Plato's teeth) would seem to refer to the extremely dualistic and abstract interpretation of the works of the two philosophers, who for Shelley (*A defence of poetry*) and Pater were first and foremost poets and visionaries. Plotinus for Pater was a new Plato: "in whom the mystical element in the Platonic philosophy had been worked out to the utmost limit of vision and ecstasy"[135].

Yeats's commentary to *The Tower*, which quotes from MacKenna's translation of Plotinus's fifth Ennead, lends support to this hypothesis:

"When I wrote the lines about Plato and Plotinus I forgot that it is some thing in our eyes that makes us see them as all transcendence. Has not Plotinus written: 'Let every soul recall, then, at the outset the truth that soul is the author of all living things, that it has breathed the life into them all, whatever is nourished by earth and sea, all the creatures of the air, the divine stars in the sky: it is the maker of the sun; itself formed and ordered this vast heaven and conducts all that rhythmic motion – and it is a principle distinct from all these to which it gives law and movement and life, and it must of necessity be more honourable than they, for they gather or dissolve as soul brings them life or abandons them, but soul, since it never can abandon itself, is of eternal being'?"[136].

It would seem that in part III of *The Tower* the real purpose of this apparent controversy with Plato and Plotinus is to reveal the mythical and Platonic roots of Romanticism. Hence the concord of Shelleyan and Plotinic terminology which characterizes the protagonist's creed.

The protagonist's Romantic creed constitutes a reinterpretation of Plotinus, whose theology is used (a) to interpret human creation; (b) to reinterpret the sphere of transcendence; (c) to recall the main tenets of expressive poetics[137], concerning the inter–relationships between poetry, nature and the ideal world and also the relationship between the work of art (Superhuman mirror–resembling dream) and the conception which precedes it (dream).

The Enneads are brought to mind above all by the image with which the creed begins: a vision of man who is both the creator of "super–reality" (Plotinic "there") – identified with dreaming – and the creator of reality, i.e. of the real world ("the whole")[138] – of life, death, sun, moon and stars.

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[135] Cf. W. Pater, *Pico della Mirandola* [in:] *The Renaissance*, Macmillan, London 1924, p. 39. Cf. footnote No 134.

[136] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, ed.cit., p. 533.

Cf. Plotinus, op.cit., p. 208.

[137] Cf. footnote No 95.

[138] It is to be noted that in the protagonist's 'creed' Romantic and Plotinic terminology ('the whole') concurs with colloquial idiom. The protagonist's 'creed' is among the most often interpreted fragments of *The Tower*. Its links with the poetry of the Romantics (Keats, Shelley) were pointed out in 1928 by J. Fletcher (see footnote No 2). F.A.C. Wilson has drawn attention to the 'creeds's' 'Neoplatonism' (*Yeats's Iconography*, p. 92 – 93). R. Ellmann has given a decidedly 'non–Platonic' interpretation of the 'creed' (R. Ellmann,

According to the main principle of Plotinus's cosmogony – partially recalled by Yeats in his commentary to *The Tower* – the real creator of the visible world is the Third Person of God, i.e. the Soul, which yearns for unity with the First Person (The First, The One)[139]. The Soul is filled with a feeling of insufficiency and yearning for absolute good, which according to Plotinus constitutes the essence of love and creation[140]. Each individual human soul – including the "bitter soul" of the protagonist's creed – is a part of this Soul, which creates the material world and yearns for the absolute. According to Plotinus, man can therefore in a sense be considered to be co–creator of the world. Being a part of the Divine Soul, which emanates from the two Divine Persons preceding it (i.e. The One and the Intellectual Principle), man is as it were part of the three Divine Persons. He can therefore partake of the spiritual vision of God Himself – "there", i.e. in the sphere of ideal reflections:

"For all There is Heaven; earth is heaven, and sea heaven; and animal and plant and man; all is heavenly content of that heaven: and the Gods in it, despising neither men nor anything else that is there where all is of the heavenly order, traverse all that country and all space in peace (...) And each of them contains all within itself, and at the same time sees all in every other, so that everywhere there is all, and all is all and each all, and infinite the glory. Each of them is great; the small is great; the sun, There, is all the stars; and every star, again, is all the stars and sun. While some one manner of being is dominant in each, all are mirrored in every other"[141].

The Plotinic "There" would seem to correspond to the Paradise (Translunar Paradise) of part III of *The Tower*, created by the Romantic imagination. The indirectly introduced motif of taking part in the inner life of God the Creator through imagination and dreaming recalls Blake's view – close to that of Yeats – that imagination is the first emanation of divinity, identified with Christ and accessible by means of man's individual imagination[142]. This motif also recalls Shelley's belief, voiced in his essay

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op.cit., p. 254). My own interpretation is similar to that of R. Snukal (see footnote No 16). A.G. Stock has drawn attention to the links between the 'creed' and the Druid legends written by Yeats and Lady Gregory (A.G. Stock, op.cit., p. 22 – 23). Cf. the following words written by Yeats in his preface to Lady Gregory's book *Gods and Fighting Men* (1904):

"One remembers the Druid who answered when someone asked him who made the world, 'The Druids made it'" (quoted by A.G. Stock).

[139] Cf. Plotinus, *The Fifth Ennead*, I: *The Three Initial Hypostases* [in:] op.cit. In various Enneads these 'Three Initial Hypostases' are given the names: *The One, The God, The Beautiful*, and *The One, The Intellectual Principle, The Soul.*

In the opinion of T.R. Henn, the dogma of the Holy Trinity was one of Yeats's obsessions: "The history of the Trinity, and heretical modifications of that 'abstract Greek absurdity', seems to have been one of his obsessions" (T.R. Henn, op.cit., p. 151).

Cf. W.B. Yeats, *The Completed Symbol* [in:] *A Vision*, bk. II, ed.cit., pp. 193 – 196).

[140] Cf. Plotinus, *The Third Ennead*, V, *On Love* [in:] Plotinus, op.cit.

[141] Cf. Plotinus, *The Fifth Ennead*, VIII. 3 and 4, ed.cit., p. 241.

[142] Cf. footnote No 99.

A defence of poetry, that the poet takes part "in divine nature as regards providence, no less than as regards creation"[143].

In the remarks on the ideal act of creation (i.e. "giving") contained in the first lines of the creed, where act, idea and shape constitute an indissoluble unity, the terminology of Plotinus concords with that of Shelley (That, being dead, we rise, / Dream and so create / Translunar Paradise). Together with the motif of "Translunar Paradise", another link with Shelley is the comparison of poetic ecstasy to death[144].

The words "rise" and "giving" can be traced to MacKenna's translation of the Enneads. In the fifth Ennead – the various parts of which deal with (among other things) the Holy Trinity (The Three Initial Hypostases) and Intellectual Beauty – the process of reaching the sphere designated by the word "There" is described metaphorically as a gradual "rising" above the material world. The description of the perfect "Giver" – God – also comes from the fifth Ennead. It is the inner life of God (i.e. of the perfect "Giver" – elsewhere called "The Artist") which Plotinus presents as being the perfect unity of act, idea and shape. In *The Tower"*, however, this Romantic endeavour to equate "artist's work" with "artist's dream"[145] – derived from Plotinic theology – is accompanied by the Romantic view – also derived from Plotinus – that the primary vision is not the same as its "image"[146] and that in the hierarchy of reflections, the work of art (Superhuman mirror–resembling dream) comes higher than the material world: "... a poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth" (Shelley – *A defence of poetry*)[147].

The second part of the poetic "creed" – from "I have prepared my peace" to "Superhuman mirror–resembling dream" – being an account of the "stuff" of which a work of art is made, is indirectly also a description of the structure of the imagination.

The meditation on man's creative power which precedes this fragment of the creed, together with the preceding context of the first and second parts of *The Tower* (meditations on the role of passion and imagination, references and allusions to Plato and Homer, Plotinic theology and Dante) adequately explain why "Learned Italian things / And the proud stones of Greece" come at the top of the hierarchy of poetic "material". The meaning of the metaphor "Learned Italian things"[148] is also determined by the

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[143] Cf. Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry* [in:] Shelley, op.cit., p. 1037.

[144] "This beauty, this divine order, whereof all things shall become a part in a kind of resurrection of the body, is already visible to the dead and to souls in ecstasy, for ecstasy is a kind of death" (W.B. Yeats, *The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry* [in:] *Essays...*, p. 71).

[145] Cf. T. Parkinson, op.cit., p. 29.

[146] "... but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet. (...) for Milton conceived the Paradise Lost as a whole before he executed it in portions" (Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, ed.cit., p. 1050.

[147] Cf. Ibidem, p. 1029.

[148] Cf. "Before that end much had she ravelled out
From a discourse in figurative speech
By some learned Indian
On the soul's journey. How it is whirled about,

preceding context. It would seem that the metaphor refers to the works of the Renaissance humanists and Italian artists connected with the "school" of the Platonic Academy in Florence[149]. Two of the most famous representatives of this "school" were Marsiglio Ficino (who translated and wrote a commentary to Plotinus) and Pico della Mirandola, who is mentioned by Yeats in *A Vision*[150] and to whom Pater devoted one of his essays on the Italian Renaissance[151]. It would seem that Pater's Romantic presentation of Pico della Mirandola is of particular significance for an understanding of *The Tower*[152].

Pater's youthful Pico combines considerable physical beauty with an outstanding intellect (i.e. imagination) and "deep and passionate" emotionality. He is capable both of having love affairs and of practising mysticism and asceticism. Pater compares his writings to those of Plato, singling out Pico's Italian commentary on Plato's conception of divine love and unseen beauty for particular mention. Pater also draws attention to Pico's symbolic attitude to the material world. The motifs of the tree and the mountain – important elements in the landscape of *The Tower* – make their appearance in this context.

"Everywhere there is an unbroken system of correspondences. Every object in the terrestrial world is an analogue, a symbol or counterpart, of some higher reality in the

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Wherever the orbit of the moon can reach,
Until it plunge into the sun;
And there, free and yet fast,
Being both Chance and Choice,
Forget its broken toys
And sink into its own delight at last".
(W.B. Yeats, *All Souls' Night. Epilogue to A Vision* [in:] *Collected Poems*, ed.cit., p. 258).

149 Cf. E. Panofsky, op.cit. A. Kuczyńska has drawn attention to the link between the concepts of beauty, love and freedom in the philosophy of Marsiglio Ficino (and, in my opinion, in the poetry of Yeats and the Romantics – J.D.): A. Kuczyńska, *Teoria piękna Marsiglia Ficina* [in:] *Estetyka*, 1963.

150 Cf. W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit., p. 20.

151 Cf. W. Pater, *Pico della Mirandola* [in:] *The Renaissance*, ed.cit.

Cf. F.A.C. Wilson: "... he has leaned heavily upon Italian Renaissance Neoplatonism, of which he clearly knew much more than his critics have supposed. His wife had read Pico della Mirandola, and though Yeats himself is modest about his knowledge of that philosopher, he acquired much that Pico could have taught him from the slightly later English Platonism of Henry More. One of his own Italian sources was Castiglione's The Courtier, and he says that he has drawn upon it in his text (...) The Platonism Castiglione learned from the schools of Pico and Gemistus Pletho is in fact important over the whole range of Yeats's poetry, and he is not writing idly in the famous lines in 'The Tower':
I have prepared my peace
With learned Italian things
And the proud stones of Greece".
(F.A.C. Wilson, *Yeats's Iconography*, ed.cit., pp. 92 – 104).

In the opinion of F.A.C. Wilson, the ideas of the Italian Neoplatonists which were particularly dear to Yeats are: the theory of reincarnation, the belief that corporeal beauty is a reflection of spiritual beauty and the belief that the goal of the soul's reincarnation is Intellectual Beauty.

152 "Pater's account of Pico della Mirandola is applicable, almost word for word, to Yeats himself" (T.R.Henn, *The Lonely Tower*, ed.cit., p. 266). Pater's Pico embodies the Italian Neoplatonist ideal of the unity of spiritual and physical beauty.

starry heavens, and this again of some law of the angelic life in the world beyond the stars. There is the element of fire in the material world; the sun is the fire of heaven; and in the super–celestial world there is the fire of the seraphic intelligence. 'But behold how they differ! The elementary fire burns, the heavenly fire vivifies, the super–celestial fire loves'. In this way, every natural object, every combination of natural forces, every accident in the lives of men, is filled with higher meanings. (...) There are oracles in every tree and mountain–top, and a significance in every accidental combination of the events of life"[153].

Pater considers the significant characteristic of Pico's work to be a yearning (shared by the protagonist of *The Tower*) for the "imaginative reconciliation of opposing traditions" – Greek, Jewish, Cabbalistic, astrological and Christian. Pater also recalls Pico's speech devoted to the "dignity of human nature" and "the greatness of man", where the philosopher–poet puts man and the earth at the centre of a Ptolemaic universe.

The protagonist's words "I have prepared my peace / With learned Italian things / And the proud stones of Greece" therefore in a sense sum up the stormy and wide–ranging discussion with Plato and Plotinus and indicate that the Platonic tradition which is dearest to the protagonist is in all probability that of the Italian Renaissance – in particular that of Pico della Mirandola, whose conception of man as an intermediary between God and people and as a creator of poetry which is not a copy of nature but an expression of inner vision is similar to that of the Romantics[154].

Coming after "learned Italian things / And the proud stones of Greece" in the hierarchy of poetic material are the poet's imaginings and reminiscences of earthly love (memories of love / Memories of the words of women). It would seem that this characteristic gradation of poetic matter is yet another manifestation of the Romantic–Plotinic law of universal analogy (cf. Pater's essay on Pico della Mirandola[155]). According to this law, the structure of a poem corresponds to the structure of the imagination, which in turn corresponds to the structure of the world. The whole of reality appears to be dualistic but is in fact united.

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[153] Cf. W. Pater, *Pico della Mirandola* [in:] *The Renaissance*, ed.cit., pp. 47 – 48.

[154] Z. Łempicki has made a study of the links between the Renaissance and Romanticism (Z. Łempicki, *Renesans, Oświecenie, Romantyzm i inne studia z historii kultury*, Warsaw 1966.

Renaissance poetics introduced the concepts of creation and creator (similar to God) to European thought for the first time.

Cf. W. Tatarkiewicz, *Twórczość: dzieje pojęcia* [in:] W. Tatarkiewicz, *Dzieje sześciu pojęć*, ed.cit.

Cf. A. Kuczyńska, *Człowiek i Świat. Wątki antropologiczne w poetykach Renesansu Włoskiego*, Warsaw 1976.

Cf. E. Sarnowska, *Teoria poezji Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego* [in:] *Studia z teorii i historii poezji*, Ed. M. Głowiński, Seria I, Wrocław 1967.

[155] "With this change of substance, this return to imagination, this understanding that the laws of art which are the hidden laws of the world, would come a change of style..." (W.B. Yeats, *The symbolism in poetry" [in:] Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 163).

"... the laws of composition are the application to art of the universal laws of all creation, so that the work of art becomes in itself a symbol by the simple fact of submitting to them" (A. Gerard, *On the logic of Romanticism* [in:] *Romanticism. Points of View*, ed.cit., p. 235).

This deep unity finds its fullest expression in the human imagination, where two spheres co–operate and coexist: (a) the higher sphere (imagination), which remains in contact with the ideal sphere, and (b) the lower sphere (fancy), which is tied to the world of the senses and provides the higher sphere with "material"[156]. The higher sphere of the imagination is also called "creative" or "pure". The lower sphere – tied to the memory of material things – is also called representational or "material"[157]. The Plotinic theory of expressive art "lends support" to this Romantic conception of imagination:

"Still the arts are not to be slighted on the ground that they create by imitation of natural objects; for, to begin with, these natural objects are themselves imitations; then we must recognize that they give no bare reproduction of the thing seen but go back to the Ideas from which Nature itself derives, and, furthermore, that much of their work is all their own; they are holders of beauty and add where nature is lacking"[158].

The transition from the visionary world of the imagination – where the spiritual is united with the material and the imagined with the experienced – to the poem (Superhuman mirror–resembling dream) is effected by language (memories of the words of women) – Shelley's "mirror of thoughts", mankind's common property and the poem's consistent and immediate "material". It is language (mirror of thoughts) that recreates the concrete world of the imagination, where logical, emotional and sensual elements are indissolubly united. This is emphasized by the image of the jackdaw warming the common, multi–layered nest built in a loophole of the common tower of imagination. This image symbolizes the poet and his work of art.

As at the loophole there
The daws chatter and scream,
And drop twigs layer upon layer.
When they have mounted up,
The mother bird will rest
On their hollow top,
And so warm her wild nest.

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[156] Cf. footnotes Nos 12, 67, 77, 99. On the theory of imagination of Coleridge and Wordsworth see: R. Wellek, op.cit., W.K. Wimsatt Jr and C. Brookes, op.cit., and A. Gerard, op.cit.

"William Blake was the first writer of modern times to preach the indissoluble marriage of all great art with symbol. There had been allegorists and teachers of allegory in plenty, but the symbolic imagination, or, as Blake preferred to call it, 'vision', is not allegory, being 'a representation of what actually exists really and unchangeably'. A symbol is indeed the only possible expression of some invisible essence, a transparent lamp about a spiritual flame; while allegory is one of many possible representations of an embodied thing, or familiar principle, and belongs to fancy and not to imagination; the one is revelation, the other an amusement". (W.B. Yeats, *William Blake and his Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 116).

According to R. Snukal, *Yeats's views on fancy and imagination are closer to those of Wordsworth than those of Coleridge* (R. Snukal, op.cit., pp. 97 - 112).

[157] Cf. G. Bachelard, *Poétique de l'espace*, Paris 1958 (Introduction).

[158] Cf. Plotinus, *Fifth Ennead*, VIII.1 [in:] Plotinus, op.cit., p. 239.

According to a suggestion in *A Vision*, the living bird warming its own nest is also a symbol of "vital knowledge" – the real wisdom of the Romantics[159] or Unity of Being – i.e. an integral experience of reality to which imagination gives direct access and to which poetry gives indirect access:

"My instructors identify consciousness with conflict, not with knowledge, substitute for subject and object and their attendant logic a struggle towards harmony, towards Unity of Being. Logical and emotional conflict alike lead towards a reality which is concrete, sensuous, bodily. My imagination was for a time haunted by figures that, muttering "The great systems", held out to me the sun–dried skeletons of birds, and it seemed to me that this image was meant to turn my thoughts to the living bird. That bird signifies truth when it eats, evacuates, builds its nest, engenders, feeds its young; do not all intelligible truths lie in its passage from egg to dust?"[160].

The image of the jackdaw and its multi–layered nest is therefore at once a symbolic conclusion to the first part of the will and a summing up of the discussion on the themes of imagination, poetry, the poet[161], Unity of Being and abstract transcendence (which had become synonymous with the "mistaken" interpretation of Plato and Plotinus).

This symbolic summing up is yet another indication that in the third part of *The Tower* two tendencies of Romantic poetics – vision (approaching symbolism) and didactic rhetoric – overlap[162]. As an advocate of expressive poetry and as a conscious heir of the English High Romantic tradition, Yeats quite naturally tends to favour symbolism[163].

The symbolic motifs of which the world of *The Tower* is built (e.g. the bird, the tower, the mirror, the climb, the quest, the tree, the fisherman) are firmly based in the European cultural tradition. They are not idle ornaments but are embedded in a special context constructed of selected "realistic" elements. The appearance of these motifs is

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159 "In what Coleridge calls 'vital knowledge' an intimate fusion takes place between the consciousness and its object, and the percept becomes an integral part of the percipient's mind. This is why Wordsworth often uses such metaphysical terms as 'drink', 'eat', 'absorb', 'nourish', 'feed', to describe the relationship of cognition and, above all, of assimilation which is established between the thinking subject and the objective world. Similarly, what Keats calls 'sensation' is not an immediate intuition of truth with which the poet alone is favoured: it is the lived experience of reality, on the physical, moral and metaphysical planes; this experience (in which the personality is totally involved, with its intellectual emotional and volitional faculties), is the fundamental act by which the personality of a man deepens and grows towards the fullness of wisdom. (...) Such type of knowledge belongs to imagination (...) In Romantic doctrine, the work of art, like the poetic experience which it expresses, owes its value as synthesis to a concert of the faculties which is orchestrated by the imagination. All the faculties, sensory, emotional, intellectual, imaginative and moral contribute to the elaboration of the work of art" (A. Gerard, op.cit., p. 233).

160 Cf. W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit., p. 214.

161 "... the lonely subjective temperament is always symbolized as a bird, simply because it lives primarily in the zone of pure intellect, or 'air'" (F.A.C. Wilson, *Yeats's Iconography*, ed.cit., p. 166).
Cf. Shelley, *To a Skylark* [in:] *Shelley*, op.cit., pp. 763 – 766.

162 Cf. C.M. Bowra, *Prometheus Unbound* [in:] *The Romantic Imagination*, ed.cit.

163 Cf. footnotes Nos 7, 156, 159.

always prepared for by other objects in the represented world and by the intellectual and emotional atmosphere which permeates that world.

At the centre of the Yeatsian image there is always "a strong visual basis"[164] (Cf. the fisherman climbing to the top of the mountain or the jackdaw sitting on its nest in a loophole of the tower). A cluster of multiple and multivalent emotional and intellectual meanings is constructed around this centre. In this sense Yeats's "images" are "icons" and are comparable to the symbols of the French symbolists, the images of the imagists and the concept of the Vortex introduced by Ezra Pound[165]. It is also in this sense that Yeats's "images" would seem to "tally" with T.S. Eliot's (essentially Romantic) concept of "unified sensibility"[166].

At this juncture it may be recalled that Yeats himself particularly appreciated the "visionary realism"[167] of Blake's *Illustrations to Dante*. In *A Vision*, Blake is placed together with Michelangelo – another master of vivid expression – in the sixteenth phase.

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[164] Cf. G. Melchiori:

"It is actually the pattern that makes a work of art out of materials which, in themselves, have no aesthetic value. It could be said of a poem that it is the expression of the inner world of the poet within a certain mental pattern. And the pattern itself is not superimposed afterwards, is not a metrical scheme or a technical device; it is a form of mental organization developed by the poet at the same time as he was gathering, more or less unconsciously, the materials from which the poem is born. I propose to enquire into the mental pattern upon which Yeats's poetry is built. And I may as well state that I suspect that this mental pattern had, in Yeats's case, a strong visual basis: that it approached a geometrical scheme (...) By way of introduction I wish in the next few pages to dwell on the definition of 'pattern': a scheme of organization both of thought and of form. I prefer 'pattern' to scheme because of its associations with sensuous impressions rather than with thought impressions. Poetry and art appeal to the mind through the senses (or to the senses only). The creator of poetry and art in his turn, even when his work expresses serious philosophical conceptions, operates through the senses, and his intuition is essentially sensorial. Impressions which would be merely physical for the average man affect the artist so deeply as to become for him the very essence of thought. His thought will therefore organize itself according to a mental pattern, which is not only of the mind but of all the senses. (Author's note: In his essay of April 1916 on 'Certain Noble Plays of Japan', Yeats himself wrote: 'We only believe in those thoughts which have been conceived not in the brain but in the whole body'. Not long afterwards T.S. Eliot wrote his famous pages on poetry as 'a direct sensuous apprehension of thought' and on the necessity of feeling 'thought as immediately as the odour of a rose'). So, for instance a visual pattern (a certain arrangement of lines and planes, a pictorial or plastic motif) may so impress a poet's mind as to become transformed there into a philosophical or metaphorical system.

That Yeats realized this transference of patterns from the sensory to the mental plane at a late stage of his development, appears clearly from the final passage of the introduction to the 1937 edition of *A Vision* (...)" (G. Melchiori, op.cit., pp. 2 – 3).

[165] R. Snukal uses the following terms as synonyms: 'symbol', 'icon, 'natural, not conventional sign' (R. Snukal, op.cit., pp. 75 – 80). Cf. F. Kermode, loc.cit. in footnote No 7.

[166] Cf. G. Melchiori, loc.cit. in footnote No 164.

R.H. Fogle points out that Eliot's concept of 'unified sensibility' and the New Critics' 'doctrine of irony' are both derived from the Romantic views of Coleridge and Shelley (R.H. Fogle, *Romantic Bards and Metaphysical Reviewers* [in:] *Romanticism. Points of View*, ed.cit.).

[167] In the first part of his essay 'William Blake and his Illustrations to the Divine Comedy' Yeats describes Blake's drawings as symbolic and expressive of 'visionary realism'. The source of this 'visionary realism' is the 'sharp and wiry bounding line'. In the opinion of Yeats (and Blake), great art is characterized by 'determinate outline'.

The end of the third part of *The Tower* sees the return of the initial vision (the image of the young man) in a transformed version. This symbolic vision is the poem's frame-work, clear to the point of iconic representation.

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.

Now shall I make my soul,
Compelling it to study
In a learned school
Till the wreck of body,
Slow decay of blood,
Testy delirium
Or dull decrepitude,
Or what worse evil come –
The death of friends, or death
Of every brillant eye
That made a catch in the breath –
Seem but the clouds of the sky
When the horizon fades;

Or a bird's sleepy cry
Among the deepening shades. (1926)

The last part of *The Tower* is permeated with irony. The last stanzas of the poem would seem to constitute as much a negation as an affirmation of the worst misgivings of the protagonist *qua* the old man of the first part of *The Tower*.

The finale of *The Tower* is yet another voluntary relinquishment both of that form of Unity of Being which can be achieved by combining creation with heroic deeds and of that form of Unity of Being which can be achieved by creativity. The only passion which would seem to move the protagonist is therefore "bitterness".

It must be remembered, however, that in the terminology of Pater and Yeats, "bit-terness" is a synonym of love for the ideal world. This "bitterness" is capable of creating "sweetness", i.e. beauty: the great art of Michelangelo[168], the splendid aristocratic

[168] "In the story of Michelangelo's life the strength often turning to bitterness, is not far to seek (...) Even his tenderness and pity are embittered by their strength (...) We know little of his youth, but all tends to make one believe in the vehemence of its passions. Beneath the Platonic calm of his sonnets there is latent a deep

homes of eighteenth-century Ireland and also the "Translunar Paradise" of the third part of *The Tower*. The protagonist's retreat into his "bitter" inner self – prescribed by the Platonists (learned school) – would therefore appear to be yet another attempt to achieve Unity of Being by the "direct path". The way of love for a woman and that of sport, politics and poetic creation turn out therefore to be "circuit paths" ("winding way" / "serpent way").

The true "direct path" to Unity of Being is the way of the imagination of the ascetic and learned old man, who withdraws into the depths of his own "bitter" soul in order to meet that which in the first part of *The Tower* was described as "impossible", and the synonyms of which were in turn "abstract things" and "Translunar Paradise". The only reliable guides on this authentic "direct path" are the spiritual masters: Plato, Plotinus and the Italian Neo-Platonists.

The tower becomes more and more a symbol both of the imagination of the world and the imagination of the protagonist, whose attention is directed as much to what is outside him as to what is inside him. The symbolic tower of the protagonist therefore integrates meanings which – according to Yeats – are suggested in the poetry of Shelley by the symbolic motifs of the tower and the cave ("the mind looking outward upon men and things and the mind looking inward upon itself")[169].

The Tower's closing image of external reality as an amorphous mass of mist, clouds and shadows is therefore an allusion both to Shelley's cave and Plato's cave (in *The Republic*) – not to mention the cave (connected with the "regeneration myth") in Porphyry's essay.

The motif of the gradual ascent to the top of the tower – or to Shelley's "reality beyond" which "was something other than thought"[170] – is a direct allusion to a fragment of Plotinus's fifth Ennead. Here Plotinus distinguishes three kinds of people:

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delight in carnal form and colour (...) The interest of Michelangelo's poems is that they make us spectators of this struggle; the struggle of a strong nature to adorn and attune itself; the struggle of a desolating passion, which yearns to be resigned and sweet and pensive as Dante's was..." (W. Pater, *The Poetry of Michelangelo* [in:] *The Renaissance*, ed.cit., p. 84).

"Some violent bitter man, some powerful man
Called architect and artist in, that they,
Bitter and violent men, might rear in stone
The sweetness that all longed for night and day,
The gentleness none there had ever known; ..."

(W.B. Yeats: 'Meditations in time of civil war – I. Ancestral Houses' [in:] *Collected Poems*, ed.cit., p. 225). 'Ancestral Houses' comes immediately after the title poem of the collection of *The Tower*.

169 "The tower, important in Maeterlinck, as in Shelley, is, like the sea, and rivers , and caves with fountains, a very ancient symbol, and would perhaps, as years went by, have grown more important in his poetry. The contrast between it and the cave in Laon and Cythna suggests a contrast between the mind looking outward upon men and things and the mind looking inward upon itself ..." (W.B. Yeats, *The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry* [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 87).

170 "When one turns to Shelley for an explanation of the cave and fountain one finds how close his thought was to Porphyry's. He looked upon thought as a condition of life in generation and believed that the reality beyond was something other than thought" (W.B. Yeats, ibidem, p. 84).

those who cannot rise above the earth; those who rise a little but who fall down again; finally those who succeed in leaving the world behind them in order to reach God. The end of the eighth part of the fifth Ennead allows us to conclude that this breaking free of the earth means journeying into the depths of the inner "self": "retreating inwards, he (i.e. man – J.D.) becomes the possessor of All":

"But there is a third order – those godlike men who, in their mightier power, in the keenness of their sight, have clear vision of the splendour above and rise to it from among the clouds and fog of earth and hold firmly to that other world, looking beyond all here, delighted in the place of reality, their native land, like a man returning after long wanderings to the pleasant ways of his own country. (...) It is to be reached by those who, born with the nature of the lover, are also authentically philosophic by inherent temper; in pain of love towards beauty but not held by material loveliness, taking refuge from that in things whose beauty is of the soul – such things as virtue, knowledge, institutions, law and custom – and thence, rising still a step, reach to the source of this loveliness of the Soul, thence to whatever be above that again, until the uppermost is reached. The First, the Principle whose beauty is self–springing: this attained, there is an end to the pain inassuageable before"[171].

The only "direct path" turns out therefore to be the way which leads into the depths of the inner self to an inner vision. Eternity – whose confines traverse the human soul (cf. the "thirteenth cone" in *A Vision*) – turns out to be not an abstraction after all[172].

The journey to "abstract things" in the company of Plato and Plotinus, which is announced in the first part of *The Tower*, is eventually given a Romantic modification. The protagonist's last chance of achieving Unity of Being turns out to be "lonely ecstasy"[173]. This is the final task of his "excited, fantastical" imagination. He risks defeat and "derision" only if he fails to proceed along the true straight path.

At this juncture it may be recalled that in *A Vision* – chronologically closest to *The Tower* – Yeats considers the essence of holiness to be "supersensual receptivity"[174]. In

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[171] Plotinus, *Fifth Ennead*, IX. 1 and 2, ed.cit., p. 246).

[172] Cf. Blake's 'pulsation of the artery':

"For in this Period the Poet's Work is Done, and all the Great
Events of Time start forth & are conceiv'd in such a Period,
Within a Moment, a Pulsation of the Artery.
(...)
For every Space larger than a red Globule of Man's blood
Is visionary, and is created by the Hammer of Los:
And every Space smaller than a Globule of Man's blood opens
Into Eternity of which this vegetable Earth is but a shadow"
(W. Blake, *Milton, Book the First, 31* [in:] W. Blake, op.cit., p. 184).

Cf. Yeats: "The particulars are the work of the Thirteenth Cone or cycle which is in every man and called by every man his freedom. Doubtless, for it can do all things and knows all things, it knows what it will do with its own freedom but it has kept the secret" (W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit., p. 302).

[173] Cf. H. Bloom, op.cit., p. 224.

[174] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit., p. 180.

the earlier *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* he wrote that it is only saints and sages that tread the straight path to "super–reality"[175], defined as the Condition of Fire[176].

The image of the ascetic old man living in a lonely tower that rises into the clouds appears in one of Yeats's earliest essays (*A Tower on the Apennines*), where it symbolizes the surmounting of the Romantic antinomy of "perfection of life" and "perfection of art":

"Away south upon another mountain a mediaeval tower, with no building near nor any sign of life, rose into the clouds. I saw suddenly in the mind's eye an old man, erect and a little gaunt, standing in the door of the tower, while about him broke a windy light. He was the poet who had at last, because he had done so much for the word's sake, come to share in the dignity of the saint"[177].

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[175] "Many years ago I saw, between sleeping and waking, a woman of incredible beauty shooting an arrow into the sky, and from the moment when I made my first guess at her meaning I have thought much of the difference between the winding movement of Nature and the straight line, which is called in Balzac's Séraphita the 'Mark of Man', but is better described as the mark of saint or sage. I think that we who are poets and artists, not being permitted to shoot beyond the tangible, must go from desire to weariness and so to desire again, and live but for the moment when vision comes to our weariness like terrible lightning, in the humility of the brutes (...) Only when we are saint or sage, and renounce experience itself can we, in imagery of the Christian Cabbala leave the sudden lightning and the path of the serpent and become the bowman who aims his arrow at the centre of the sun" (W.B. Yeats, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* [in:] *Mythologies*, ed.cit. p. 340).

[176] "There are two realities, the terrestrial and the condition of fire. All power is from the terrestrial condition, for there all opposites meet and there only is the extreme of choice possible, full freedom. And there the heterogeneous is, and evil, for evil is the strain one upon another of opposites, but in the condition of fire is all music and all rest. Between is the condition of air where images have but a borrowed life, that of memory or that reflected upon them when they symbolize colours and intensities of fire: the place of shadows who are 'in the whirl of those who are fading' (...) When all sequence comes to an end, time comes to an end, and the soul puts on the rhythmic or spiritual body or luminous body and contemplates all the events of its memory and every possible impulse in an eternal possesion of itself in one single moment. That condition is alone animate, all the rest is fantasy, and from thence come all the passions and, some have held, the very heat of the body" (W.B. Yeats, ibidem, pp. 356 – 357).

Interpreting the Condition of Fire (ibidem, p. 363), Yeats makes reference to the Neoplatonist Henry More. Yeats's remarks on the Condition of Fire (or the ultimate realty) are reminiscent of Pater's remarks on Pico della Mirandola, quoted above. According to Pater, corresponding to Pico's three worlds are three kinds of fire:'elementary fire','heavenly fire' and 'super–celestial fire' (W. Pater, *The Renaissance*, p. 47).

[177] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 291.

According to Bloom, the following fragment from Coleridge'e poem 'Limbo' (written late in the poet's life) contains "the most Yeatsian vision in a poem not by Yeats himself":

"But that is lovely – looks like Human Time, –
An Old Man with a steady look sublime,
That stops his earthly task to watch the skies;
But he is blind – a Statue hath such eyes; –
Yet having moonward turned his face by chance,
Gazes the orb with moon-like countenance,
With scant white hairs, with foretop balk and high,
He gazes still, – his eyeless face all eye; –
As 'twere an organ full of silent sight,
His whole face seemeth to rejoice in light!
Lip touching lip, all moveless, bust and limb –
He seems to gaze at that which seems to gaze on him!"
(Quoted by H. Bloom in op.cit., p. 215 – chapter on *A Vision*).

The protagonist's final autocreation – the last stage of the ascent to the top of the Platonic ladder of love, immediately preceding rebirth – is as the ascetic old man shut up in the tower of imagination. As though he were in a monastery[178], the old man makes a last survey of his past life before leaving this world for eternity and the unknown.

Seen from this "super–terrestrial" viewpoint, love (as in Plato's *Banquet* and *Phaedrus*) is above all a desire for eternity, immortality and wisdom (i.e. the vision of the perfect world). Thus understood, love manifests itself not only as ecstasy, but also as rage and bitterness. The protagonist recalls the successive "rungs" of the ladder of love – i.e. his successive roles in life:

First there is the role of the young fisherman–sportsman– poet, who embodies the educative ideal of Plato's Academy as interpreted by Pater:

"Not to be 'pure' from the body, but to identify it, in its utmost fairness, with the fair soul, by a gymnastic 'fused in music', became from first to last, the aim of education as he conceived it"[179].

Then follows the role of the lover, who as a "half mounted man" reaches the level of *Anima Mundi* (Great Memory) and who attempts to reconcile the two aspects of love and the two poles of poetry (mimetic and expressive – there being no doubt that he prefers the latter).

Next comes the role of the poet–prophet–mystic, who endeavours to break free of *Anima Mundi.*

Lastly there is the role of the ascetic sage who yearns for direct contact with eternity – i.e. with the sphere above the Great Memory (*Anima Mundi*). The frontier of eternity traverses his soul.

Each of these roles would seem to be created by the protagonist's imagination as it attempts to reconcile the conflicting urges which present themselves to the protagonist, namely love for the world of the senses and passion which is purely intellectual.

The most difficult role for the protagonist is that of the sage. The protagonist *qua* old man is to the end filled with unquenched sensuality. To the end he remembers earthly love, "the words of women" and the ideal of the unity of the spiritual and material world. To the end he wavers between the lower and higher poles of the imagination – between the Muse on the one hand, and Plato and Plotinus on the other. He ultimately chooses Plato and Plotinus -- not as philosophers who have created systems, but as spiritual guides and as poets who have created a mythical vision of the world. Whereas the presence of God in man and man's creative power fills him with admiration, the vision of the decline of material beauty fills him with rage and a feeling of rebellion. The protagonist's ironic detachment from the most difficult "role" in life

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[178] Cf. "My Imagination is a Monastery and I am its Monk..." (J. Keats, *Letter to Percy Bysshe Shelley, 16 August 1820* [in:] *English Critical Texts*, ed.cit., p. 259).

[179] Cf. W. Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, ed.cit., p. 130.

" – that of the ascetic wise man " – stems from the impossibility of reconciling these conflicting emotions.

The protagonist of *The Tower* therefore embodies the Romantic ideal of the literary hero, who in Shelley's opinion should be "the living impersonation of the truth of human passions"[180] and the "image of the divinity in man"[181]. The protagonist of *The Tower* is "embodied passion"[182], in the sense that he embodies passion to the same extent as Eros[183] ("Love" in Shelley's translation) in Plato's *Banquet.* According to Socrates and Diotima, Eros is not a god but a divine element of the world – a spirit ("daemon" in Shelley's translation) that "holds an intermediate place between what is divine and what is mortal", that mediates between God and man and that "fills up that intermediate space between these two classes of beings, so as to bind together, by his

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[180] Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, ed.cit., p. 1035.

[181] Cf. ibidem, p. 1035.

[182] According to T. Parkinson, the poet in Yeats's poems may speak "in any of five separable functions":

(1) "He may speak as the individuated being, whose life gives weight to his words" (*The Municipal Gallery Revisited*).

(2) He may speak "as a social character" or "a spokesman for his civilization" (*Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen*).

(3) He may speak as a prophet (*Second Coming, Leda and the Swan*).

(4) "The poet may speak as overt dramatist. In this role he is a maker of dramatis personae, the shaper of personifications of passions, whether in stage plays or nominal lyrics. Even the poems of self–utterance, as suggested above, must to be succesful attain the status of objectified drama (...) In lyric poems, too, he shapes personae not only out of his own being but out of admired historical figures like Swift or invented figures like Crazy Jane (Cracked Mary) or the man and woman young and old. These personae like those of his plays or those wrested from his individual fate, are 'voices', personifications and passionate embodiments that evoke Yeats's partisanship, his conviction of their importance and ultimate propriety, their decorum in the universal structure. It is in his loyalty to these figures, his conviction of their rightness, that his employment of the personae differs from that of Pound and Eliot. Pound's use of Malatesta is baffling in its ambiguities, and in some sense he seems to feel that Malatesta's complete wrongness is more admirable than any possible rightness, while at the same time he disclaims identity of himself with Siggy. Eliot's use of Gerontion and Prufrock as personae is motivated chiefly by his abiding contempt for their human incompetence. But Yeats's personae are the affirmations won by his struggle, so that the only persona regarded with amusement or with dislike in his poems is usually some abstraction from his own being. Crazy Jane and Tom the Lunatic he accepts and admires".

(5) "The poet makes a statement when he acts as editor, maker of books (...) The most notable instance in Yeats's work is his preparation of the text of *The Tower*, his resurrection of an earlier poem, his exclusion of several poems (notably the sequence 'A Woman Young and Old') written well before the book was to go to press" (T.S. Parkinson, *The embodiment of truth: five modes, one poet* [in:] op.cit., pp. 42 – 55).

The protagonist of *The Tower* would seem to speak in all five modes listed by Parkinson, with the mode of 'overt dramatist', creator of 'passionate embodiments' prevailing.

My term 'embodied passion' corresponds to Parkinson's 'passionate embodiment' and to Yeats's ... formula (quoted by Parkinson, op.cit., pp. 3 – 4): 'Man can embody truth but he cannot know it'.

[183] This passion (love), the embodiment of which would seem to be the protagonist of *The Tower*, is – it seems – the essence of eternity.

Cf. W.B. Yeats, *Whence had they come?* [in:] *Collected Poems*, ed.cit., p. 332.

Cf. F.A.C. Wilson's remarks on Yeats's early tendency to personify 'human faculties' in a manner characteristic of polytheism (F.A.C. Wilson, *Yeats's Iconography*, ed.cit., p. 169.) See also footnotes Nos 76, 89 and 185.

own power, the whole universe of things" He is neither particularly wise nor particularly ignorant – neither ugly nor beautiful. He is a "homeless and unsandalled" hunter. The son of Plenty and Poverty, conceived at Aphrodite's wedding, he yearns to possess beauty and wisdom and is torn by conflicting feelings of admiration, bitterness and rage. He is also a philosopher, "philosophy being an intermediate state between ignorance and wisdom"[184].

The protagonist of *The Tower* is at the centre of the poem's structure – this being in conformity with the Romantic belief that a poem expresses the personality of the speaker, who is commonly – though mistakenly – physically identified with "the author of the poem"[185].

As presented in the poem, the personality of the protagonist renders a "naive" Romantic[186] interpretation of *The Tower* as a simple expression of the author's life–experiences quite impossible. The protagonist of *The Tower* is a portrayal of a Romantic personality which has much in common with the character of "daimonic man" in *A Vision*. Such a portrayal is characteristic of Yeats's mature Romanticism. Like "daimonic man", the protagonist of *The Tower* strives to reconcile the conflicting poles of sensual and spiritual passion between which he is torn. In Yeatsian terminology this yearning for unity is given the name of "Mask". Unity is jeopardized above all by the protagonist's ageing body and by impulses which inhibit the imagination. The contradiction between "impossible" love for the material world and yearning for spiritual beauty can only be overcome by imagination (i.e. "creative mind", "intellect"), which creates images of Unity of Being or of "simplicity that is also intensity", i.e. successive roles in life: – the lover, the lone fisherman, the sage. These images (i.e. roles) become successive objects for imitation and desire by the Mask, which yearns for inner order. External circumstances and the inhibiting action of the body, however, prevent these roles from ever being fully assumed[187].

According to T. Parkinson, Yeats's understanding of "personality" differs both from the egotistic concept of "individuality" (characteristic of "naive" Romanticism) and from the concept of "character", identified with man as an abstract social being, empty of "inner life".

Yeats's conception of personality is therefore "antisocial", dramatic and mythical. According to Parkinson, it is linked to the discovery by man's imagination of a universal

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[184] Cf. Shelley, *The Banquet of Plato*, ed.cit., pp. 855 –)

[185] "A poet writes always of his personal life, in his finest work out of its tragedy, whatever it be, remorse, lost love, or mere loneliness; he never speaks directly as to someone at the breakfast table, there is always a phantasmagoria. (...) ...he is more type than man, more passion than type" (W.B. Yeats, *A General Introduction For my Work. I. The First Principle* [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 509).

[186] Cf. T. Parkinson, op.cit., p. 46.

[187] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit., Phase Seventeen. The Yeatsian ideal of 'daimonic man' is embodied in *A Vision* by Dante and Shelley. Blake and Michelangelo come close to achieving this ideal.

Cf. H. Bloom, For the daimonic man the love of the actual is not yet possible. Indeed such love makes Unity of Being impossible (H. Bloom, op.cit., p. 244).

or "passionate" role in "the great universal drama". It means the being's total identification with one of the spiritual passions that pervade the universe:

"... he saw the human being in three categories: that of individuality, in which the being refused both social function and his passionate role in the structure of the universe; that of character, in which the being refused his larger responsibilities in the interests of the safe, the defined, the abstract; and finally that of personality, in which the being accepted his passionate function in the great universal drama[188] (...) Personality is strongest when the being is living in a condition of greatest beauty and unity of being, while individuality is strongest when the being is living through a phase of conflict and fragmentation. Personality is a much freer condition and a more accurate one, closer to the truth, and distinct from both character and individuality because closer to unity with the design of the universe. Personality might be called the fated or assigned role of the being, character the socially imposed, individuality a product of refusal of both social and universal role, egotism, false self–assertion, denial. (...) Personality is religious, character social, individuality anarchic. The "personal" in such a psychology is not antithetical to the universal, though the 'individual' – or 'individuated' – is antipathetic to the timeless and spaceless community of spirits that is reality"[189].

In *A Vision* Yeats mentions the four "traditional attitudes" (or universal roles) which are to be found in *The Tower*, namely the lover, the sage, the hero, the scorner of life. They have the power to bring the life of a human being to perfection. These universal roles reveal themselves to the human spirit during one of the last stages of the state "between life and death"[190] – this in conformity with the Platonic myth. In *A Vision*, this stage is called "Purification". It almost immediately precedes reincarnation. A universal role, however, is difficult to assume or imitate[191], because as a rule it runs

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[188] E.g. W.B. Yeats, *In Memory of Major Robert Gregory*. Cf. T. Parkinson, op.cit., p. 21.
See footnote No 182.

[189] Cf. T. Parkinson, op.cit., p. 40.

[190] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit., p. 234. Cf. Plato, *The Republic*, ed.cit., part 11 (Book Ten): The Myth of ER.

[191] "Some years ago I began to believe that our culture, with its doctrine of sincerity and self–realization, made us gentle and passive, and that the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were right to found theirs upon the imagination of Christ or of some classic hero. Saint Francis and Caesar Borgia made themselves overmastering, creative persons by turning from the mirror to meditation upon a mask. When I had this thought I could see nothing else in life. (...) I was always thinking of the element of imitation in style and life, and of the life beyond heroic imitation. I find in an old diary: 'I think all happiness depends on the energy to assume the mask of some other life, on a re–birth as something not one's self, something created in a moment and perpetually renewed; in playing a game like that of a child where one loses the infinite pain of self–realization, in a grotesque or solemn painted face put on that one may hide from the terror of judgement... Perhaps all the sins and energies of the world are but the world's flight from an infinite blinding beam; (...) If we cannot imagine ourselves as different from what we are, and try to assume that second self, we cannot impose a discipline upon ourselves though we may accept one from others. Active virtue, as distinguished from the passive acceptance of a code, is therefore theatrical, consciously dramatic, the wearing of the mask..." (W.B. Yeats, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* [in:] *Mythologies*, ed.cit., pp. 333 – 334).

Cf. W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit., p. 84. For Yeats's understanding of the concept of 'mimesis' or 'imitation' see footnotes Nos 94 and 95.

counter to man's real inclinations. It is a revelation of the imagination, which remains in contact with the sphere of spirits – in particular with the Daimon or "anti-self" or "ultimate self"[192]. In essence, therefore, human personality is dramatic. It stems from the choice – continually renewed – of a difficult archetypal role: "Personality, no matter how habitual, is a constantly renewed choice..."[193]. The protagonist of *The Tower* is faced with just such a choice. He hesitates to fully accept the only role worthy of an old man, namely that of the ascetic sage.

In *A Vision*, Yeats describes the continual struggle to maintain the chosen role which takes place in the consciousness of the individual[194]:

"The stage–manager or Daimon, offers his actor an inherited scenario, the Body of Fate, and a Mask or role as unlike as possible to his natural ego or Will, and leaves him to improvise through his Creative Mind the dialogue and details of the plot. He must discover or reveal a being which only exists with extreme effort, when his muscles are as it were all taut and all his energies active. But this is an antithetical man. For primary I go to the Commedia dell'arte in its decline".

The portrayal of the protagonist of *The Tower* as a Romantic personality has much in common both with Plotinus's conception of personality as a role in the universal drama of the world[195] and with Shelley's conception of personality, contained in his

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[192] Cf. footnotes Nos 108 and 113.

[193] Cf. W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit., p. 84.

[194] Cf. W.B. Yeats, ibidem, p. 84.

See also Bloom's interpretation of *A Vision* in the light of similar conceptions of Blake, Shelley, Freud and Jung (H. Bloom, op.cit., in particular pages 213 and 219).

[195] "So Plotinus had understood the nature and function of human personality, and although Yeats came to the dedicated study of Plotinus (in the Stephen MacKenna translation) late in life, he knew Plotinus early and the passage in the Third Ennead on the drama and the soul articulates with more than coincidental fullness many of Yeats's implicit notions" (T. Parkinson, op.cit., p. 37).

Parkinson quotes the following fragments from the Third Ennead:

"In the dramas of human art, the poet provides the words but the actors add their own quality, good or bad – for they have more to do than merely repeat the author's words – in the truer drama which dramatic genius imitates in its degree, the soul displays itself in a part assigned by the creator of the piece.

As the actors of our stages get their masks and their costume, robes of state or rags, so a Soul is allotted its fortunes, and not at haphazard but always under a Reason: it adapts itself to the fortunes assigned to it, attunes itself, ranges itself rightly to the drama, to the whole principle of the piece: then it speaks out its business, exhibiting at the same time all that a Soul can express of its own Quality, as a singer in a song. A voice, a bearing, naturally fine or vulgar, may increase the charm of a piece; on the other hand, an actor with his ugly voice may make a sorry exhibition of himself, yet the drama stands as good work as ever: the dramatist, taking the action which a sound criticism suggests, disgraces one, taking his part for him, with perfect justice: another man he promotes to more serious roles or to any more important play he may have, while the first is cast for whatever minor work there may be. (...) Souls, (...) act in a vaster place than any stage: the Author has made them masters of all this world; they have a wide choice of place; they themselves determine the honour or discredit in which they are agents since their place and part are in keeping with their quality: they therefore fit into the Reason Principle of the Universe, each adjusted, most legitimately, to the appropriate environment, as every string of the lyre is set in the precisely right position, determined by the Principle directing musical utterance, for the due production of the tones within its capacity. All is just and good in the Universe in which every actor is set in his quite appropriate place, though it be to utter in the Darkness and in Tartarus the dreadful sounds whose utterance there is well.

remarks (made in his essay *A Defence of Poetry*) on creators (poets), heroes and readers of works which are great works according to Romantic criteria. Reconstructed in a hypothetically "Yeatsian" light[196], Shelley's conception of personality would read as follows:

1. Human personality is formed by the imitation of ideal personal models.
2. These ideal personal models are discovered by inspired poets, who in the moment of inspiration partake of Divine life (i.e. creativity and providence) and perceive the "divinity in man".
3. These ideal models of humanity are "living impersonations of passion", embodiments "of passion", "of energy and magnificence", "of energy, beauty and virtue".
4. The ideal personality (the "living impersonation of the truth of human passions") finds its expression in the Greek actor's tragic mask "on which the many expressions, appropriated to his dramatic character might be moulded into one permanent and unchanging expression"[197].
5. Shelley makes a clear distinction between the personality of the poet in the moment of inspiration ("the wisest, the happiest, the best of men") and his personality in everyday life[198].

As a personality, the protagonist of *The Tower* appears simultaneously in three aspects: as an inspired poet, as a dramatic hero ("living impersonation of the truth of human passions") and – partially – as the poem's "addressee"[199].

The combining of these three basic functions means that the protagonist of *The Tower* is a much more dynamic[200] personality than the Romantic poet of Shelley's

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This Universe is good not when the individual is a stone, but when everyone throws in his own voice towards a total harmony, singing out a life – thin, harsh, imperfect though it be. The Syrinx does not utter merely one pure note; there is a thin obscure sound which blends in to make the harmony of Syrinx music: the harmony is made up from tones of various grades, all the tones differing, but the resultant of all forming one sound (...) there is local difference but from every position, every string gives forth its own tone, the sound appropriate, at once to its particular place and to the entire plan" (Plotinus, *The Third Ennead*, II.17, ed.cit., pp. 91 – 92).

196 I.e. taking into account those concepts of Yeats and Shelley which would seem to overlap.

197 Cf. Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, ed.cit., p. 1044.

198 "The frequent recurrence of the poetical power, it is obvious to suppose, may produce in the mind a habit of order and harmony correlative with its own nature and with its effects upon other minds. But in the intervals of inspiration, and they may be frequent without being durable, a poet becomes a man, and is abandoned to the sudden reflux of the influences under which others habitually live. But as he is more delicately organized than other men, and sensible to pain and pleasure, both his own and that of others, in a degree unknown to them, he will avoid the one and pursue the other with an ardour proportioned to his difference. And he renders himself obnoxious to calumny, when he neglects to observe the circumstances under which these objects of universal pursuit and flight have disguised themselves in one another's garments" (Shelley, ibidem, p. 1053).

199 This mythical addressee is the second voice of the protagonist's interior monologue (Hanrahan) in part II of *The Tower*. The protagonist's next addressees – in part III – are the young fishermen, who embody the protagonist's youth. Cf. footnote No 113.

200 "I had begun to get rid of everything that is not, whether in lyric or dramatic poetry, in some sense character in action; a pause in the midst of affection perhaps, but action always its end and theme. (...)

manifesto. The protagonist–poet of *The Tower* simultaneously creates his hero according to immemorial models and identifies himself with that hero.

By "assuming" archetypal masks (or "images" or "roles")[201], the protagonist–poet of *The Tower* also creates himself as a personality, striving to achieve inner harmony. By creating himself in the image of a universal model, he expresses this model and exerts an influence on his listeners or readers, transforming them into superhuman personalities like himself[202]. He therefore takes part in the divine act of creation and maintains contact with mortals, with the world of spirits and with the sphere of vision – thus achieving full Unity of Being[203].

Given the "overlapping" viewpoints of the poet and teacher, the Romantic hero and the poem's addressee, the protagonist's monologue is at once:

1. An examination of conscience and a summing up of the Romantic hero's life – reminiscent of the poems of Wordsworth, Shelley and Browning[204].

2. A Romantic poet's testament addressed to posterity.

3. A treatise on expressive poetry composed by the protagonist–poet "against the background of" the mythical past of the protagonist–hero and the discussion with Plato, Plotinus and the Romantics.

The direct and indirect allusions to Plato, Plotinus, Celtic mythology, the Italian Renaissance, Blake, Shelley and Pater serve to reveal the links between this *ars poetica* and the earliest versions of expressive poetics as well as their Romantic mutation.

The actual and apparent controversies with both closer and more distant predecessors serve to trace the evolution of expressive poetry down to its latest manifestation, i.e. the poetry of W.B. Yeats, who is concealed by the represented world of *The Tower* and who, according to T. Parkinson:

"... carried the ideas of the Romantic movement to their full fruition, and (...) assimilated and qualified the ideas of the modernist aesthetic. He lived through two

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I delight in active men, taking the same delight in soldier and craftsman; I would have poetry turn its back upon all that moodish curiosity, psychology – the poetic theme has always been present. I recall an Indian tale: certain men said to the greatest of the sages, 'Who are your Masters?' And he replied, 'The Wind and the harlot, the virgin and the child, the lion and the eagle" (W.B. Yeats, *An Introduction for my Plays* [in:] *Essays...*, ed.cit., p. 530).

[201] Cf. footnotes Nos 191, 194 and 195.

[202] Cf. 'I shall make men mad'.

[203] W.Y. Tindall interprets 'Unity of Being' as the 'integration and harmony of self, world and spirit' (W. Tindall, *The Symbolism of W.B. Yeats* [in:] *Yeats. A Collection of Critical Essays*, Ed. J. Unterecker, ed.cit., p. 49).

[204] Cf. W. Wordsworth, *The Prelude*; P.B. Shelley, *Epipsychidion*; R. Browning, *The Pope*; A. Tennyson, *Ulysses*.

"Whitaker subtly presents the analogue of Tennyson's Ulysses, another old man who lusts after action, seeking a death that will be his own creation. Other Victorian dramatic monologues suggest themselves also, including perhaps the greatest, Browning's visionary Pope brooding on the abyss of history, and on the necessity for accepting human responsibility, lest all action be wasted, and human death lose all significance. Yeats's poem almost sustains such comparison without loss of dignity, which is a considerable tribute to it" (H. Bloom, op.cit., pp. 349 – 350).

major literary periods, affirming continuities and accepting changes with a clear sense of tradition rather than convention, and innovation rather than novelty. His poetry thus represents the widest range of dramatic possibilities, in practice and in implied theory, so that all the major issues are raised by him"[205].

The Tower is an excellent illustration of the evolution of Romantic poetics in the direction of both dramatic and symbolic expression. The poem's structure is permeated by contrasts and tensions, which are present both at the level of versification (the difference between the "meditative" first two parts of the poem and part III)[206] and on the level of style (the interior monologue with its two currents – emotional and intellectual – and which changes into narration or a speech). The monologue is addressed to a certain "You". Poeticisms, colloquialisms, regionalisms, literary allusions and multilevel emotional and intellectual symbols coexist in this monologue. The meanings of individual words are continually modified and enriched by the changing context in which they appear. The entire monologue is stylized – partly as a ballad, partly as a testament. All this goes to explain why, at the level of style, *The Tower* appears at one and the same time to "shimmer with meanings" and to tend towards maximal condensation of meaning around a basic emotional and intellectual centre.

This "dramaticism" is also to be found in the structure of the poem's represented world. The three time planes, "overlapping" so to speak (i.e. those of the protagonist *qua* hero, the protagonist *qua* poet /creator of the hero/ and the protagonist *qua* addressee) mean that the monologue is conducted as it were on three levels and that the distinction between past, present and future is blurred. The protagonist's degree of

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[205] T. Parkinson, op.cit., p. 70.

[206] According to M. Perloff:

Part I of *The Tower* is pentameter cross–rhyme.

Part II of *The Tower* is pentameter aabbcd4d4c.

Part III of *The Tower* is trimeter cross–rhyme, where "the term cross–rhyme refers to the scheme abab". (M. Perloff, *Rhyme and Meaning in the poetry of Yeats*, The Hague 1970, pp. 155 and 145).

Cf. T. Parkinson: "The prosodic possibilities available to Yeats as a poet writing in English were four in number. He could conceive of the line as written in feet, chiefly iambic and he could attempt to maintain a set number of feet per line as in the standard iambic pentameter. He could count syllables and keep a fixed syllable count of six, eight, ten, any given number, to a line. Or he could ignore syllable count or the concept of the foot and simply maintain a relatively fixed number of heavy stresses per line, with a wide range of syllable count. Or he could ignore any fixed count of foot, stress, or syllable and write in free verse, using breath and phrase as prosodic units. (...) I find no positive evidence that Yeats thought in terms of feet, and my own persuasion is that he combined a syllabic and a stress prosody. In such a prosody a five stress line is the equivalent of a ten syllable line, and the two are interchangeable. The ten syllable line may have in it well over five stresses; but they are equivalent. Any given poem may be in one or the other measure predominantly, and in Yeats's prosody there tends to be a correlation between the kind of poem and the kind of line used. His more formal, commemorative, and meditative poems tend to be in decasyllabic lines that give them their air of philosophic weight and contemplative grasp. His brief intense lyrics, on the other hand, are written in lines that are best understood as being divisible into a fixed number of stresses, with a wide range of syllabic count" (T. Parkinson, op.cit., pp. 203 – 204).

See also footnote No 52.

detachment with respect to the past varies according to whether he merely recalls, relives or directly experiences it[207].

Variations of distance in time are accompanied by mythological and symbolic variations in the meaning of characters, situations and motifs, which appear in or are suggested by changing and often contrastive contexts (e.g. the tower, the fisherman). This results in irony and a multiplicity of solutions to problems.

Platonism, which is so vital to the questions raised in the poem (the relation between the poet's imagination, passions, nature /i.e. the material world/, the ideal sphere and the work of art; the problem of the Unity of Being) is by no means a fixed and invariable point of reference. As presented in *The Tower*, Platonism is a transformational series of different interpretations of a group of basic themes. Platonism appears in several versions: mythical and philosophic; Plotinic; mediaeval; that of the Italian Renaissance; English Romantic; popular and extremely dualistic; that reduced to the concept of so–called "Platonic love". While some of these versions of Platonism are accepted by the protagonist, others are rejected outright or are treated with ironic detachment.

The "motive force" behind such a dramatic construction of the represented world is the protagonist's emotional and intellectual tension, which accompanies the search for inner and cosmic order, i.e. for Unity of Being.

In Yeats's opinion, the concept of Unity of Being is "impossible" without the concept of Unity of culture[208]. In *The Tower*, this unity of culture is created by motifs, characters and situations coming from various literary and cultural epochs and which appear to be ever newer manifestations of the same immemorial passion. This is in keeping with Shelley's view that the poetry of the whole world constitutes as it were one great multivocal poem "which all poets like the co–operating thoughts of the great mind have built up since the beginning of the world"[209].

The Tower suggests that the evolution of expressive poetry has proceeded along the lines set down by Shelley and the Romantics. In this view, the poet enjoys the status both of mediator between the material world and the spiritual world (the essence of both worlds being the eternal passion) and of creator of visions and maker of "living images"[210] and poems (which are transformations of visions). In the words of Shelley: "A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal form"[211]. In the words of the protagonist of *The Tower*: "Man makes a superhuman mirror–resembling dream". In

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[207] Cf. R. Ingarden, *Zjawiska perspektywy czasowej* [in:] R. Ingarden, *Studia z Estetyki*, vol. 1, Warsaw 1957.

The present analysis of Yeats's *The Tower* is in large measure based on Ingarden's 'layer' and 'phase' theory of the structure of works of literature. Cf. R. Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk* (1931), and the Polish version: *O dziele literackim*, Warsaw 1960.

[208] Cf. footnotes Nos 32 and 203.

[209] Cf. Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, ed.cit., p. 1039.

[210] Cf. ibidem, p. 1030.

[211] Cf. ibidem, p. 1029.

the words of W.B. Yeats: "Man can embody the truth but he cannot know it"[212]. In this Romantic view the poetic work is an analogue of reality and "the laws of art are the hidden laws of the world"[213].

Expressive poetry therefore not only formulates feelings, but also presents and evokes them. Thus understood, expressive poetry is in no way hostile to contemplation and does not preclude it[214]. In *The Tower*, Homer's Helen is at once an object of contemplation and an expressive symbol. There is therefore no place for the Nietzschean dichotomy in Yeats's *Ars poetica*.

The Tower is intended to exert an influence on the reader or hearer by restoring to him both inner harmony and harmony with the world. The reader is therefore led to contemplate a perfect vision of the world – "Translunar Paradise", Shelley's "Paradise" or Blake's New Jerusalem.

The protagonist of *The Tower*, however, holds himself aloof from this ideal. This detachment derives from his catastrophism, based on a circular vision of history and culture (which he shares with Plato, Vico, Shelley[215] and Nietzsche) and grounded in a fear that the Romantic personality – torn by contradictions – might ultimately be dispersed[216]. Such a dispersal could lead to the decline of human personality in general and hence to total chaos and the decline of art. The finale of *The Tower* can therefore be interpreted as a last heroic effort made by the protagonist to restore inner order at the cost of completely cutting himself off from the wheel of civilization (symbolized by the winding stairs of the tower[217] speeding into chaos.

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212 Quoted by T. Parkinson, op.cit., p. 4.

213 Cf. footnotes Nos 153 and 155.

214 Cf. footnote No 95.

215 Cf. Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, ed.cit., p. 1040.

216 'Daimonic man' has two possibilities:
(1) Simplification through intensity
(2) Dispersal
Cf. W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed.cit., Phase Seventeen.

217 Such an interpretation of the finale of *The Tower* is supported by the sequence of poems which comes immediately after the poem and which is entitled 'Meditations In Time of Civil War'. The last stanza of the last poem of this sequence runs as follows:

"I turn away and shut the door, and on the stair
Wonder how many times I could have proved my worth
In something that all others understand or share;
But O! ambitious heart, had such a proof drawn forth
A company of friends, a conscience set at ease,
It had but made us pine the more.The abstract joy,
The half-read wisdom of daemonic images,
Suffice the ageing man as once the growing boy".

(W.B. Yeats, *I see Phantoms of Hatred and of the Heart's Fullness and of the Coming Emptiness* [in:] *Collected Poems*, ed.cit., p. 232).

Cf. T. Henn, op.cit., pp. 131 – 134. Cf. T. Parkinson, op.cit., p. 144.

"I foresee a time when the majority of men will so accept historical tradition that they will quarrel not as to who can impose his personality upon others but as to who can best embody the common aim, when all personality will seem an impurity, 'sentimentality', 'sullenness', 'egotism' – something that revolts not morals alone but good taste. There will be no longer great intellect for a ceaseless activity will be required of all; and where rights are swallowed up in duties, and solitude is difficult, creation except among avowedly archaistic and unpopular groups will grow impossible"[218].

[218] W.B. Yeats, *A Vision* (A), pp. 212 – 213. Quoted by H. Bloom, op.cit., p. 289.

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Part Two

K. WIERZYŃSKI: *Piąta pora roku*

I

Wierzyński included *Piąta pora roku* in a collection of poems entitled *Tkanka ziemi*. When this collection was published – in 1960 – Wierzyński was sixty-six years old and – as an émigré – had already published two collections of poems which, taken together, can be considered to mark a turning-point in the evolution of his poetry. These are: *Korzec maku* (1951) and *Siedem podków* (1954). In these collections Wierzyński's poetry has been renewed and has been shorn of the patriotic rhetoric of his wartime poems[1].

The main themes treated in *Korzec maku* and *Siedem podków* are: the poet, poetry and art. The *leitmotiv* of Wierzyński's poetry – earth – also makes its re-appearance in these two collections. Towards the end of his life Wierzyński wrote as follows about this *leitmotiv* in his poetry:

Ziemia jest trwaniem pośród przemijania życia i jednością pośród różnorodnego świata. Ziemia unosi mnie jak religia ponad doczesność i jak religia przedłuża chwile mego istnienia. Była, zanim tu przyszedłem, i zostanie kiedy stąd odejdę. W melancholii ludzkiego życia nie znam nic radośniejszego niż ta myśl, która za każdym uświadomieniem przemawia do mnie jak nie znana przedtem nowina[2].

The earth endures in the transience of life and it brings together the variety of the world. It is the earth which raises me above the ephemeral and, with religion, it lengthens the brief span of my existence. It was there before my coming and it will be after I have gone. In the melancholy of human existence I know of nothing as joyful as this thought: every time it surfaces in my mind it appears as news never heard before.

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[1] Cf. Jolanta Dudek, *Liryka Kazimierza Wierzyńskiego z lat 1951 – 1969*, Wrocław 1975.

[2] Cf. K. Wierzyński, *Cygańskim wozem*, London 1966, p. 8.

CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing analyses of *The Tower* and *Piąta pora roku* show that – as mature poets – both W.B. Yeats and K. Wierzyński closely 'identified themselves' with the 'native' Romantic literary tradition which they happened to 'inherit' (so to speak). In doing so, both poets became linked by a common European cultural tradition – Romanticism (and Symbolism, its continuation).

Both poets employed the native Romantic 'forms' which they chose to inherit (genre, style, versification, structure) in relatively short lyric poems, transforming them in accordance with their own artistic inclinations. The poems of both poets may be described as being extremely 'condensed' yet rich in complex meaning, as well as being 'dramatized'.

Yeats's poem 'continues' the English Romantic tradition of an interior monologue which – in one and the same work – may take the form of a vision, a mythical narration, a meditation or an 'address' to a second person (cf. Shelley's *Epipsychidion*). The monologue of *The Tower* 'oscillates' – in characteristically Romantic fashion – between a dualistic and a monistic (spiritual monism) view of the world. Yeats – following in Pater's footsteps – traces this 'oscillation' to its source. In doing so, he discovers (in the works of Plato and Plotinus) the Platonic and Neoplatonic sources of Romantic expressive poetics.

Wierzyński's poem 'continues' – in a relatively short, lyrical form – the Polish Romantic tradition of 'ritualistic' drama (cf. Mickiewicz's *Dziady*) and mythical epic poetry (cf. Słowacki's *Król-Duch*). The overall structure of *Piąta pora roku* – as in the case of some of Słowacki's greatest poems – is that of a cosmogonic myth. The 'ideological infrastructure' of this myth is the monistic (spiritual monism) pole of the Romantic philosophy of nature (Mochnacki, Słowacki) continued (and modified – Bergson!) in the twentieth century by Leśmian. Wierzyński finds support for such a view of the world in Bergson's philosophy of nature, in the *Fioretti* of St. Francis of Assisi and in the mythology of Ancient Greece. In *Piąta pora roku*, therefore, Platonism is only indirectly present.

In both poems the 'represented world' has been constructed in such a way as to continually express the protagonist's detachment towards the themes and motifs of Romantic poetry which are dear to the poet. This detachment finds its expression in manifest or hidden irony, which may take the form of: 'self-mockery' (Yeats); open or subdued polemics (Yeats); the use of the optative mood (Yeats); a lyrical joke (Wierzyński); the 'prosaic transformation' of the loftier themes of Romantic poetry

(Wierzyński); frequent allusions and suggestions (Yeats and Wierzyński); the transference of the 'centre of gravity' of the poem's 'represented world' from the sphere of indefinite transcendence to that of the 'everyday environment'. In Yeats's poem this 'everyday environment' is the landscape and architecture of a district in Ireland (the land of the poet's birth) – Ballylee and its environs – chosen by the poet as a material as well as a spiritual 'homeland'. The 'everyday environment' in *Piąta pora roku* is the Sub-Carpathian landscape in which the poet spent his youth.

The lyric monologue of both poems has been stylized as a strongly rhythmical spoken utterance. Both poems have been written in verse which is free and irregular. In both poems colloquialisms 'coexist' happily with 'hidden' (i.e. inconspicuous) archaisms and regionalisms. Metaphors are invariably 'prepared for' and 'motivated' by the context in which they appear.

The 'represented world' in both *The Tower* and *Piąta pora roku* has a 'multi-dimensional' as well as a 'multi-layer' (or 'multi-level') structure. The most conspicuous 'layer' in both poems is that of the 'everyday environment' (i.e. the 'personal' or 'authentic' layer). The mythical 'layer' – hidden 'below' that of the 'everyday environment' (so to speak) – can in the case of both poems be said to consist of several 'secondary layers' or 'sub-layers' – Greek (Homer and Plato – Yeats; Dionysian – Eleusinian and Promethean – Wierzyński); Biblical and Celtic (Yeats); Slavonic (Wierzyński); Renaissance (Neoplatonism – Yeats; Franciscanism – Wierzyński); Romantic (Yeats and Wierzyński). Each element of the 'represented world' of both poems may be viewed through the 'prism' (so to speak) of any one 'layer' or 'sub-layer' – thus becoming a complex symbol, which is the counterpart of the Romantic 'image' (cf. Kermode). All the symbols (or 'images') are linked by a rational 'axis' which in *The Tower* takes the form of an interior monologue and in *Piąta pora roku* that of a dramatized narrative.

The intellectual 'axis' of the 'represented world' of both poems is the (transformed) mythical theme of the quest for (Yeats) and the finding of (Wierzyński) 'paradise lost'. In *The Tower*, this theme is associated with dialectic meditation, with the Platonic motif of climbing up the hill (or ladder) of love and knowledge and with the quest for the Grail. In *Piąta pora roku* the theme is associated with the gradual intuitive, mythical initiation (reminiscent of the Eleusinian myth and of Dante) into the secret of the (visible and invisible) world (cf. Bergson's 'creative lasting').

Both poets make use of a wide range of emotionality. Yeats's protagonist often speaks about his feelings directly. By contrast, Wierzyński's protagonist is much more 'reserved' and indirect in speaking about his feelings, even going as far as to make use of gestures.

Both poems are permeated by dramatic tension which results from the conflict between a yearning for unity with people and with the visible world (on the one hand), and the need to rebuild inner and cosmic order by means of imagination and art (on the other).

The two poets – Yeats and Wierzyński – are deeply linked by their common, Romantic belief in the capacity of poetry and imagination for creation, cognition and the

reconciliation of opposites. They are also linked by their belief that 'the laws of art are the hidden laws of the universe'. At the end of *The Tower*, Yeats's protagonist shuts himself up in the tower of imagination (a symbol of the Great Memory and the protagonist's own imagination). The protagonist of *Piąta pora roku* begins his monologue by 'repeating' in his imagination the process of the creation of the world.

In both poems, creative imagination is closely linked with memory. The world of imagination is in both poems also equated with eternity. The work of art is at one and the same time an image of and a form of eternity. The 'justification' for this common point of view, however, is not the same in the two poems – Plotinus in the case of Yeats, Bergson in the case of Wierzyński.

Both poets are linked by an expressive approach to poetry and by a conscious inclination to blur the distinction between 'life' and 'art'. *The Tower* and *Piąta pora roku* are both – directly – the 'autobiographical' narrations of a protagonist. Indirectly, the two poems both constitute as it were an *ars poetica*.

In both poems, the protagonist is 'situated' (so to speak) at the centre of the 'represented world'. He is in both poems a 'multi-layer', 'mythologized' personality. His 'super-human' status derives from the fact that he is a visionary who is united with the creative principle of the world and who 'mediates', as it were, between a definite human community and the world of Spirits. This liaison with the human community is much more strongly expressed by the protagonist of *Piąta pora roku* than by that of *The Tower*. Wierzyński's protagonist is much more 'natural' than that of Yeats in the manner in which he makes contact with the world of Spirits. Wierzyński's protagonist is visited in 'ritualistic circumstances' by the Spirits of his dead parents. By contrast, Yeats's protagonist himself 'invokes' the Spirits of past inhabitants of the environs of Ballylee. In both poems, however, the invocation of Spirits (cf. the invocation of the Spirit of earth in *Piąta pora roku*) is treated by the protagonist with humorous detachment.

Both protagonists speak on two levels, as it were – one 'human', the other 'super-human'. As 'people', the protagonists of both poems can be seen to be reminiscent of their creators – Yeats and Wierzyński. As a 'super-human' being, the protagonist of *The Tower* is the embodiment of the 'passion' which from time immemorial has filled the Great Memory of the 'soul of the world'. For his part, the protagonist of *Piąta pora roku* is pure imagination, which is the counterpart of the imagination of the 'soul of the world'.

For both protagonists, life is synonymous with creation, which in turn is synonymous with action, cognition and expression. Both protagonists are conspicuous for their complex activity. In *Piąta pora roku*, the creative activity of the protagonist is 'in unison' (so to speak) with the creative impetus of *natura naturans*. The images of nature in Wierzyński's poem – like those in Polish Romantic and Symbolist poetry – are therefore continually 'on the move', as it were. By contrast, the images of nature in *The Tower* are fairly static.