

3-5-2021

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS` INDIVIDUAL POETIC STYLE

Sitora Bakhshilloyevna Khamdamova

teacher of english literature and stylistics department, BSU, s.b.xamdamova@buxdu.uz

Follow this and additional works at: <https://uzjournals.edu.uz/buxdu>



Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Khamdamova, Sitora Bakhshilloyevna (2021) "WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS` INDIVIDUAL POETIC STYLE," *Scientific reports of Bukhara State University*. Vol. 5 : Iss. 1 , Article 16.

DOI: 10.52297/2181-1466/2021/5/1/16

Available at: <https://uzjournals.edu.uz/buxdu/vol5/iss1/16>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by 2030 Uzbekistan Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scientific reports of Bukhara State University by an authorized editor of 2030 Uzbekistan Research Online. For more information, please contact sh.erkinov@edu.uz.

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS' INDIVIDUAL POETIC STYLE

Khamdamova Sitora Bakhshilloyevna

teacher of english literature and stylistics department, BSU

[*s.b.xamdamova@buxdu.uz*](mailto:s.b.xamdamova@buxdu.uz)

Abstract:

Introduction. *William Butler Yeats is widely considered to be one of the greatest poets of the XX century. He was one of the modern poets, who influenced his contemporaries as well as successors. He felt like a stranger in the world of technology and rationalists. A traditionalist, constantly ahead of his contemporaries, Yeats is rightfully considered one of the major poets of XX century world literature.*

Research methods. *In this article we are intended to learn and form evolutionary background of the author's individual poetic style. Sense of moral wholeness and humanity of the prominent poet is discussed. Through analysis of his poems creative way, peculiarities of his style, and interpretation of symbols, their connection with the author's intellectual condition have been studied. While commenting on his poetry we have tried to realize his individual poetic style and the evolutionary path to its formation.*

Results and discussions. *Unique inner inertia made Yeats constantly search for a style that, for this poet, was never reduced to a craft. Yeats saw the style as a reflection of the artist's personality. The search for style is the search for oneself, freeing it from clichés is the search for personal freedom. And the fact that Yeats constantly rewrote and edited his poems speaks of the high demands not only on skill but also on his personality.*

What we have paid attention to is a kind of sketchiness, the ethereality of the characters in Yeats' lyrics, on the one hand, and their theatricality, on the other. Yeats has a lot of poems from someone's face and dialogue poems. This is explained by the fact that by playing the poem "by roles", the poet gets rid of the tyranny of the romantic "I"; dramatizing emotions, gives them objectivity.

Conclusion. *Yeats's contribution to the development of XX century English poetry can hardly be overestimated. Where, at first glance, he appears to be a traditionalist, innovation lurks. Yeats wasn't just one of the old conservative poets. He truly believed in the ability of old forms to modify themselves for the new challenges and possibilities of his modern world.*

LITERARY CRITICISM

Keywords: *modern poetry, poetic sensibility, tradition, individuality, symbolism, mysticism, mythology, individual style, poetry analyses, interpretation of poetic images.*

Introduction. A traditionalist, constantly ahead of his contemporaries, Yeats is rightfully considered one of the major poets of XX century English literature. Yeats' early poetry was largely influenced by the Romanticists, especially William Morris. Typologically, Romantic aestheticism correlates with French symbolism. Art theorists such as Walter Pater tried to instill in English literature some features of symbolism. But symbolism did not take root in England - its own romantic inertia was too strong. For all its alienation from the "poetic mainstream" of the time, the Symbolist movement played an important role in English poetry. To begin with, the acquaintance of T.S. Eliot with the work of the French symbolist Jules Lafarge, who turned the young American's ideas about the possibilities of poetic language, was due to Arthur Simons, the English theorist of symbolism and author of the book "The Symbolist Movement in Literature". Besides, this era gave England Oscar Wilde and W.B. Yeats.

"You can hardly find two contemporary poets whose views, education, and accomplishments were more different," writes A. Partridge of Yeats and Eliot. However, these poets are united by the fact that both, in their own way, determined the paths of development of English poetry of the XX century. Yeats was the most influential poet in the 1900s and 1910s, Eliot in the 1920s and 1930s. Both Yeats and Eliot developed their own unique style that influenced the next generations of poets; both poets defended tradition while being the brightest innovators.

Yeats's poetry is very rhythmic. Ezra Pound's interest in verse libre was always called "devilish size" by Yeats. In the hands of this master, the seemingly outdated tonic syllabic opened a second wind. Yeats was a master of imprecise rhyme, repetition, and alliteration. While many other poets were exploring verse libre in search of a new rhythm, Yeats was updating the traditional syllabi-tonic, as if he foresaw that in the XX century, despite all the metric experiments, it would not lose its relevance.

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) is a poet who embodied the path of English poetry from the XIX to the XX century. Yeats began writing in the 1880s when Tennyson was still alive. And throughout the fifty years of his creative life, the poet never stopped developing and improving his poetry. Yeats' accomplishments would be enough for a few people: by the early 1900s, he led Celtic Twilight, the movement to revive Irish literature, and later founded the Abbey Theater, the first Irish national theater. Yeats studied world religions and occult teachings, collected folklore, and wrote plays for the theater. By the 1900s, Yeats had already created remarkable

LITERARY CRITICISM

examples of the poetry of English Symbolism. However, in the 1910s, the poet goes further and develops a new, completely individual poetic language, creates his own mythology, composes a philosophical and mystical treatise.

Research methods. The main method of poetic analysis of works is based on the results of poetic-stylistic and literary analysis, analysis of the vertical context of works. W.B. Yeats' works written from 1889 to 1939, which are conditionally divided into three periods: early, middle, mature; are considered as the object of our research. The subject of the research is poetic patterns of the use of stylistically marked linguistic units, potentially participating in the creation of a certain aesthetic effect, characteristic of a particular period.

In the poetry of Yeats, three stages can be distinguished (early, middle, and late periods), the differences between which are explained not simply by individual thematic or stylistic differences, but are of regular nature and are associated with lingo-poetic factors. Determination of the aesthetic originality of poetic texts can be carried out using a variety of methods of poetic analysis, including the theory of narrative types.

Richard Ellmann, Yeats' leading researcher, questions the direct influence of French symbolism on the young Yeats' work. Yeats was a member of the English club of symbolist poets, "Rhymer's Club". However, by his admission, the poet did not have an accurate idea of French symbolism [2, 17]. Yeats' symbolism is a distinctive phenomenon, formed before the acquaintance with continental symbolism. In terms of influence, it was Blake, whose poetry Yeats published, as well as other English romantic poets, to a much greater extent influenced Yeats' symbolism.

Yeats' symbolism is not an external borrowing, but an internal necessity, "an attempt to restore the unity of consciousness and nature". Symbols are needed to connect everything in the world where "everything is connected with everything" [2, 21]. Thus, the poet manages to give a universal character to individual experiences, to equate a person with the Universe. Therefore, the lyrical hero of early poetry is not just an unhappy lover; he is "all unhappy lovers in the world and nothing unhappy in the Universe is alien to him" [2, 24]. Unhappy love becomes a symbol of general, cosmic injustice, the tragedy of existence. Each symbol forms "concentric circles", which, diverging, cover all spheres of being. So Maud Gonne, an Irish patriot with whom Yeats was unrequitedly in love, appears in the poems of the Beloved, personifies magical Ireland, and becomes the embodiment of eternal beauty.

Speaking of Yeats, one cannot but mention the Irish theme in his work. However, Ireland in Yeats' poetry is not a real country, but a projection of an ideal, a version of the romantic "there". Despite his sincere love for his country, Yeats was not a politician, he was alien to any extremism, he was ambivalent about the 1916 uprising, and his work in the Irish parliament was disappointing. He did not

LITERARY CRITICISM

know the Irish language, he grew up in Ireland, and Celtic place names sounded much fresher than ancient ones. "Celtic Twilight" is the result of a rather romantic interest in Irish folklore, and noble images from Celtic mythology. It expresses a longing for nobility in real life. Like another Irishman, James Joyce, for Yeats, local flavor is not an end in itself, but a way of conveying universal ideas, despite all the difference between "Green Helmet" and "Dubliners".

What many critics have paid attention to is a kind of sketchiness, the ethereality of the characters in Yeats' lyrics, on the one hand, and their theatricality, on the other. Some experts have compared Yeats' poetry to a puppet show. Indeed, Yeats has a lot of poems from someone's face and dialogue poems. This is explained by the fact that by playing the poem "by roles", the poet gets rid of the tyranny of the romantic "I"; dramatizing emotions, gives them objectivity. The place of "lyrical hero" in Yeats is taken by a mask. In the XIX century, this method was applied in his poetry by Robert Browning, in the XX - by Ezra Pound. The mask helps to depersonalize the experience, to transfer attention from the speaker to what is being said. Besides, Yeats has a mask - the antithesis of the face, the antithesis of "I". Yeats has always emphasized that the center of any of his poems is "mood", "state", and not the poet himself. Therefore, as one critic observes, "The lyrical hero of Sailing to Byzantium is Yeats himself — and no more."

Several critics have gone so far as to say that "Sailing to Byzantium" explains itself or needs no extensive clarification. But if it were actually such a case, it would not generate the greatest amount of commentaries. The general reader would firstly ask the inevitable question, "Why Byzantium?" Byzantium was an ancient city later named Constantinople, which is situated where Istanbul, Turkey, now stands. During his life, the author has traveled there. And the impact of that voyage could inspire him to choose that city as the ideal imaginary place of his poem.

Results. The poet whose work is considered in this work wrote during great changes of the XX century. On the one hand, he takes the baton of the "poetic revolution", on the other hand, in the works of the poet there is a polemic with his ideas. The poet, in his own way, rethinks the poetic heritage - including the poetry of the XIX century bright innovation side by side with close attention to tradition. So the essence of the "romantic revival", which is spoken of in XX century English poetry, is not that romanticism was forgotten, but that a new, younger generation of poets managed to rethink the romantic tradition already in the context of the XX century.

Staying true to his principles, this poet never stood still. Despite his romantic "origins," Yeats was, according to Ellman, "a romantic with remorse." [2, 36]

Inheriting Blake's individualism and belief in the power of the imagination, Yeats nevertheless remembered that he lived in an era of doubts about human capabilities. This sense of reality saved him from the tightness in the spirit of Stefan

LITERARY CRITICISM

George. Behind the elevation of creativity to the rank of religion, behind a passion for the occult - and this was often blamed on Yeats, especially in the 1930s - there is a constant search for a personal myth, i.e. a "symptom" characteristic of the literature of the early XX century. So the complex personal mythology of the late Yeats, grounded in the mystical treatise "Vision" (1925). And it can be put on a par with the "White Goddess" by Robert Graves.

The same "remorse" made Yeats constantly search for a style that, for this poet, was never reduced to a craft. Yeats saw the style as a reflection of the artist's personality. The search for style is the search for oneself, freeing it from clichés is the search for personal freedom. And the fact that Yeats constantly rewrote and edited his poems speaks of the high demands not only on skill but also on his personality.

Starting from the earliest collections, the poet takes "simple modern speech" as the basis of his language. Gradually, archaisms and clichés disappear from poetry. Striving for natural sound, Yeats finds his own voice. It costs incredible work: while creating poems for the collection "The Wind in the Reeds" (1899), the poet often works all day on 3-4 lines. This collection is both the pinnacle of Yeats' early work and its result. From the very first poems, we find ourselves in the folklore, fairy-tale world, which Ellmann very accurately calls "Yeatsland", "Yeats's country". Place names and names of heroes on the one hand, and symbols on the other, create the effect of a magical dream, vision.

Neither the perfection of style nor the success of his collection prevented Yeats from listening to the opinions of younger contemporaries, such as Joyce or Ezra Pound. And if Joyce simply accused Yeats of the schematic, excessive generalization of his images, then Pound, who considered Yeats great, but old-fashioned, helped "Uncle Billy" forge a new style. The acquaintance and collaboration with Ezra Pound helped Yeats implement the changes the poet himself felt the need for. The famous critic F.R. Leavis called this period in the life and work of Yeats "detoxification", sobering up.

However, it would be a great mistake to believe that the "Poetic Revolution" did away with the Victorian legacy once and for all, given that English poetry is often divided into "before" and "after" Pound, and Eliot. Let's not forget that the XIX century was five generations of English romanticism, and this era possessed the most powerful inertia. Both Georgians and trench poets write within this tradition. In the 1920s, the influence of this poetry is still strong, and its popularity is great. At the same time, the echoes of Victorianism in the XX century can be very different - and not necessarily from the pen of epigones. Hardy and Yeats are recognized as the most influential figures for poets of the XX century from Auden to F. Larkin and C. Heaney. Hopkins provided more than one generation of new poets with the technique of verse.

LITERARY CRITICISM

The two most significant major poets of the 1900s, Thomas Hardy and W.B. Yeats, influenced the further development of English poetry in the XX century.

In spirit and belief, Yeats remained romantic and imaginative as he lived in the increasingly positivistic and energetic twentieth century. It was in form, not content, that he gradually allowed himself to develop in keeping with his times. He didn't follow *verse libre* and never wholly attached himself to various traditional poetic modes. [3; 83] His creativity, however, remained a certain romantic quality, what he called passionate, that remarkable gift for just the right turn of phrase to express emotional intensity or to describe impassioned heroic action.

According to the analysis of Yeats' poetry, we can include the following characteristics of modernism in it:

- direct language;
- political views (not rural themes);
- simple, common speech (not highly colored expressions)

Yeats was the greatest poet in the history of Ireland and the most prominent poet to write in English during the twentieth century. He rendered all of himself into his poetry. His elaborate style takes elements from Irish and Greek mythology, nineteenth-century occultism, English literature, European politics and Christian imagery. All these features would together depict his own experience and interpretive understanding.

Discussions. Already in the first collections, ideas and themes are outlined that will run like a red thread through all the poet's work: love and suffering, life and art, the beautiful and the terrible, earthly and unearthly, passion and mind, time and eternity, body and soul, youth and old age. Yeats's poetry is built on antitheses, on opposites:

Between extremities
 Man runs his course;
 A brand, or flaming breath,
 Comes to destroy
 All those antinomies
 Of day and night.

These antitheses unite the entire poet's work, revealing it richer and deeper at each stage. Yeats's creative method is a kind of poetic dialectic, poetic motives: the poet makes opposites argue, fight, and as a result of it all - a poem is born. "Talent sees a difference, genius sees unity" - this is the creative principle that Yeats follows [3, 58].

LITERARY CRITICISM

One more characteristic feature of his poetic individual style is undoubtedly hypnotizing rhythm and repetition. In the following lines reader can enhance this sensation:

Come, heart, where hill is heaped upon hill:
For there the mystical brotherhood o
Of sun and moon and hollow and wood
And river and stream work out their will;

And God stands winding his lonely horn,
And time and the world are ever in fight;
And love is less kind than the grey twilight,
And hope is less dear than the dew of the morn.

(Into The twilight)

The poet's beloved, Maud Gonne, in 1903 marries John McBride, a military man and, as it seems to Yeats, completely prosaic compared to the common ideals for Yeats and Gonne. Despite frustration about Gonne's marriage with another man, she encourages Yeats's dedication to Irish nationalism and produced such nationalistic plays as "Countess Kathleen" (1892), which he dedicated to her. The poet featured his beloved as the personification of Ireland. Maud Gonne was a symbolic feature of the author's country, even their relationships reminded of the social and political crisis during the Irish revolution. As Yeats got older, he saw Ireland changing in ways that angered, alarmed him. "The movement for the liberation of Ireland turns into political intrigue, the greatness of Ireland is in the past:

Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

(September 1913)

In the following poem, the poet talks about going to Innisfree, magical land of peace. Let's pay attention to the fact that the poet himself is devoid of specific features, and Innisfree's description looks like a romantic painting. Moreover, the hero does not really think about going to the station: at the end of the poem it turns out that, standing on the "gray sidewalk", the poet hears the splash of the lake in his heart. In fact, the theme of the poem is not Innisfree and not a poet in the city, but a desire, an impulse. This is evidenced by the modality of the poem (I will, I shall). Therefore, it does not matter at all who and where aspires, the very mood of longing for a distant land is important.

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree, And a small cabin built there, of
clay and wattles made: Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,

LITERARY CRITICISM

And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore; While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavement grey, I hear it in the deep heart's core.

(The Lake Isle Of Innisfree, 1888)

The early lyrics of Yeats are characterized by unity, consistency of mood within a single poem. The following poem is entirely addressed to the beloved, imbued with one mood. The beloved herself is devoid of any features, silent and static. The poet himself grew old and tired, trying to love her "sublimely, as in the old days." Instead of asking him to "tread gently on his dreams," the poet bitterly reflects on the price of sublime love, on how both hearts "have worn out like this empty moon". However, the poet does not blame himself or his ideal for this. And also we should pay attention to extraordinary structure of the poem: division of lines, capitalizations and punctuation. These kind of features could be pioneer marks of modern poetic devices:

Why should I blame her that she filled my days
With misery, of that she would
of late Have taught to ignorant men most violent ways
Or hurled the little streets
upon the great?.. What could have made her peaceful with a mind
That nobleness
made simple as a fire, With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
That is not natural in
an age like this, Being high and solitary and most stern? Why, what could she have
done, being what she is? Was there another Troy for her to burn?

(No Second Troy)

Having chosen the Beautiful Elena as a symbol of eternal beauty, the poet does not blame her for the bloodshed for her, for the ruined lives. On the contrary, the poet defends her. The fault lies rather with the era, which has nothing to compare with "beauty like a tightened bow." The problem of incommensurability of the human and the ideal will occupy the poet for the rest of his life. These are the most famous lines written by Yeats about the Irish Revolution of 1916:

All changed, changed utterly: terrible beauty is born.

(Easter 1916)

This "terrible beauty" is more than horror and admiration for the revolution. Any phenomenon that is eternal, unearthly through the eyes of a mortal man, beautiful outside of morality, outside of human understanding is considered as "terrible beauty." The horror of this beauty is that it is antihuman, but inevitable and true. This

LITERARY CRITICISM

idea is illustrated in different ways in such works as "There is no second Troy", "Leda and the Swan".

The ephemeral, ghostly world of "Celtic Twilight" has become small for the poet, the time has come to remove the scenery and address the audience in the first person. Here is how the poet himself says about it in the poem "Coat":

I made my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies
From heel to throat;
But the fools caught it
Wore in the world's eyes
As though they'd wrought it.
Song, let them take it,
For there's more enterprise
In walking naked.

(A Coat)

This is a kind of manifesto and an example of the "new Yeats". The intricately embroidered tapestry of early lyrics has been discarded; the poet sees more sense in "walking naked." Clarity, concreteness, prosaic directness has now become the main features of Yeats' language. Instead of the enchanting rhythms of early poetry - energetic, "sinewy" verse. Instead of monotony and symmetry - dynamics; the poet sometimes lengthens the line, sometimes makes it shorter, and adds accents.

Yeats' new poetry is the poetry of conversation, heard or overheard by the reader. The attitude towards conversation presupposes spontaneity, immediacy - instead of the deliberate thoughtfulness of early works. The dreamy sadness of the unfortunate lover, serving his lady, was replaced by the distinct, slightly ironic, and sometimes harsh thoughts of a pensive, contemplating poet. Just compare two examples from love lyrics, and although they are only three years apart, the changes are obvious:

...I had a thought for no one's but your ears:
That you were beautiful, and that I strove
To love you in the old high way of love;
That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown
As weary-hearted as this hollow moon

(Adam's Curse)

LITERARY CRITICISM

For the later poetry of Yeats, in general, a more pronounced human principle is characteristic. The poet moves from the collective "we" myth to the individual "I" myth. If in early work the idealization of the human is obvious, in later work the poet tries, if not to humanize the ideal, then to defend the human in the face of the ideal. Mad Jane, in a 1931 poem, seems to be speaking through Yeats himself:

'Fair and foul are near of kin,
And fair needs foul,' I cried.
'My friends are gone, but that's a truth
Nor grave nor bed denied,
Learned in bodily lowliness
And in the heart's pride'

(Crazy Jane Talks With the Bishop)

Lines from this poem can be considered as the climax of the formation of author's individual style. Now directness, clarity, addressing openly become prosaic features of this style. The poet began characterizing mainly inner personal feelings and thoughts.

Yeats' latest poetry is the poetry of conversation. In the late period of the poet's work, all three narrative types are encountered ("will", "description", "reasoning"). The most common type of narrative is "reasoning". At the level of the sound organization of the verse, there is a return to the alliteration of sonorous and voiced consonants. The syntax is complicated by parentheses and the mismatch of verse transfers and the boundaries of syntactic constructions, as well as nominative sentences that contribute to the acceleration of the tempo. Along with traditional, individual metaphors in the later period, there are also conceptual ones. Interpretation of images becomes more difficult as words acquire additional associations.

Conclusion. Yeats's contribution to the development of XX century English poetry can hardly be overestimated. Where, at first glance, he appears to be a traditionalist, innovation lurks. Staying true to the syllabi-tonic and clear division into stanzas, he achieved incredible nuances within these limits. Neither meter nor rhyme ever enslaved him. Yeats possessed tremendous rhythmic flexibility, a poetic sense of rhythm, varying it in the course of the poem, instinctively choosing the rhythm most suitable for the theme. We can say that Yeats approached the syllabi-tonic from the point of view of the Imagist theory of "organic form."

The same applies to rhyme: it was not only Owen's para-rhyme but also Yeats's imprecise rhyme, "the experimental possibilities of which Yeats developed further than any other poet." [5, 36] Add here the language of the mature Yeats, simple, clear, with syntax close to colloquial speech - and we have one of the most perfect poetic styles in English literature.

LITERARY CRITICISM

Besides, Yeats showed that personality in modern poetry is not necessarily an "unwanted intrusion" - if, of course, the poet has deep thoughts and the skill to translate them. Interpretation of personality as a conflict between "masks and faces", a dramatization of the lyrical "I", the balance of the personal and the supra-personal - all these interested new poets. Also, Yeats, even in old age, was a living example of an open creative personality:

"Yeats wore many masks but was not pleased with any of them. He was now a clairvoyant, now a prophet, now a fool, now a dreamer, and, perhaps, it was this constant concern of his that turned the insignificant poet in 1908 into the greatest, after Tennyson's death, a figure in English poetry "[5, 69].

In spirit and belief, Yeats remained romantic and imaginative as he lived on into the increasingly positivistic and empirical twentieth century. It was in form, not content, that he gradually allowed himself to develop in keeping with his times, although he didn't follow verse libre and never wholly relinquished his attachment to various traditional poetic modes.[3;83] In the direction of modernism, he adopted or employed at various times irregular rhythms, writing by ear, and other modern poetic techniques. His creativity, however, remained a certain romantic quality, what he called passionate, that remarkable gift for just the right turn of phrase to express emotional intensity or to describe impassioned heroic action.

REFERENCES

1. Bornstein George. *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page*. -New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
2. Ellmann R. *The Identity of Yeats*. - NY, 1964.
3. Kenner High. *The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot*. - NY, 1959.
4. Leavis F.R. *New Bearings In the English Poetry*. -NY, 1964.
5. Muhammad Azam, "W.B. Yeats – is a modern poet, *Education*, 2011.
6. Perkins David. *History of Modern Poetry*. -London, 1979.
7. Stead C.K. *The New Poets: Yeats to Eliot*. - Harmondsworth, 1969.
8. Thwaite Arthur. *20th century English Poetry*", -London, 1978.
9. Tuma Keith. *Anthology of Twentieth-Century British and Irish Poetry*. - Oxford, 2001.
10. Yeats William Butler; *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Twentieth Century and After*. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt. -New York: Norton. 2006.