

Tribhuvan University

Female Voice in W. B. Yeats' Selected Poetry

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By

Kriti Singh

Roll No. 923/ 2066-067

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

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Tribhuvan University
Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences
Central Department of English

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Female Voice in W.B Yeats' *Selected Poetry*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Kriti Singh has been approved by the undersigned member of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee:

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head

Central Department of English,

Tribhuvan University

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Date: _____

Abstract

This research analyzes the W. B. Yeats' poetry from the feminist perspective taking the ideas of Simone De Beauvoir and Elaine Showalter. It observes that W. B. Yeats is supporter of women issues. His poetry depicts the women's pathetic condition in patriarchal society and sometimes his poetry gives rebellious character to the women. Despite being a male, Yeats has able to suspend male ego in many of his poem. Yeats has focused on enlightenment of women. He believes that to create better world men and women are necessary and equal worth. Unlike his contemporaries, Yeats upholds the issues of women in a positive way.

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I. Influences of Women in W.B. Yeats's Poetry

This study analyzes W.B Yeats' poems entitled "The Living Beauty", "A Prayer for My Daughter", "Leda and the Swan", "The lady's First Song", "The Heart of the Women", "That Crazy Girl", "The Lover Mourns for the Loss of Love" and "Crazy Jane Talks with Bishop" from the perspective of feminism. In the selected poems, Yeats searches the voice of women who are suppressed by patriarchy.

William Butler Yeats was an Irish poet and playwright, and one of the foremost figures of 20th century literature. A pillar of both the Irish and British literary establishments, in his later years he served as an Irish Senator for two terms. Yeats was a driving force behind the Irish literary revival and, along with Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn, and others, founded the Abbey Theatre, where he served as its chief during its early years. In 1923, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature as the first Irishman so honored for what the Nobel Committee described as "inspired poetry, which in a highly artistic form gives expression to the spirit of a whole nation" (17). "The Tower" is the most famous poem in the collection, and it's most intense and immediate in terms of imagery. The myth of Leda and the Swan is a familiar one from classical mythology. Zeus fell in love with a mortal Leda, the Trojan queen, and raped her while taking both the form of a swan to protect his identity. She became pregnant with Helen of Troy. That Helen was part goddess helps to explain how her beauty brought about the destruction of two civilizations. Despite its ABAB rhyme scheme, the poem maintains a breathlessness that is partially due to enjambment, a poetic technique that Yeats uses liberally in this collection.

The impregnation in this poem has many layers. There is the physical impregnation of the girl with a daughter, but also the sense that her womb holds the

blueprint for the entire Trojan War. Therefore even the rape takes on a sort of inevitability, similar to the events that the still unborn Helen will cause.

Yeats was born and educated in Dublin, but spent his childhood in County Sligo. He studied poetry in his youth and from an early age was fascinated by both Irish legends and the occult. Those topics feature in the first phase of his work, which lasted roughly until the turn of the 20th century. His earliest volume of verse was published in 1889 and those slow-paced and lyrical poems display debts to Edmund Spenser, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and the Pre-Raphaelite poets. From 1900, Yeats' poetry grew more physical and realistic. He largely renounced the transcendental beliefs of his youth, though he remained preoccupied with physical and spiritual masks, as well as with cyclical theories of life.

In the selected poems, writer describes situation of women in different socio-cultural and economic background. In this study, it will analyze how females' voices are projected in selected poems and what images and symbols are used to show the situation of female and why Yeats project female voices as form of various images and symbols.

Many critics have commented on the poems of W.B. Yeats. Michael Kenneally writes:

No poet of the twentieth century more persuasively imposed his personal experience onto history by way of his art; and no poet more successfully plumbed the truths contained within his "deep heart's core," even when they threatened to render his poetry clichéd or ridiculous. (23)

Above lines show the position of Yeats in English literature. Yeats is the greatest poet in the history of Ireland and probably the greatest poet to write in English during the

twentieth century; his themes, images, symbols, metaphors, and poetic sensibilities encompass the breadth of his personal experience, as well as his nation's experience during one of its most troubled times.

The speaker writes of a group of dolls on a shelf, disgusted by the sight of a human baby. In each case, the artificial (the golden casket, the beautiful doll, the golden bird) is seen as perfect and unchanging, while the natural is prone to ugliness and decay. George Harper says on Yeats:

Yeats is the greatest poet in the history of Ireland and probably the greatest poet to write in English during the twentieth century; his themes, images, symbols, metaphors, and poetic sensibilities encompass the breadth of his personal experience, as well as his nation's experience during one of its most troubled times. Yeats's great poetic project was to reify his own life his thoughts, feelings, speculations, conclusions, dreams—into poetry: to render all of himself into art, but not in a merely confessional or autobiographical manner; he was not interested in the common-place. (44)

Anthony Jordan write about the poet and his writing style as:

No poet of the twentieth century more persuasively imposed his personal experience onto history by way of his art; and no poet more successfully plumbed the truths contained within his "deep heart's core," even when they threatened to render his poetry clichéd or ridiculous. His integrity and passionate commitment to work according to his own vision protect his poems from all such accusations. To contemporary readers, Yeats can seem baffling; he was opposed to the age of science, progress, democracy, and modernization, and his

occultist and mythological answers to those problems can seem horribly anachronistic for a poet who died barely sixty years ago. But Yeats's goal is always to arrive at personal truth; and in that sense, despite his profound individuality, he remains one of the most universal writers ever to have lived. (55)

In "Leda and the Swan," Yeats rewrites the Greek myth of Zeus and Leda to comment on fate and historical inevitability: Zeus disguises himself as a swan to rape the unsuspecting Leda. In this poem, the bird is fearsome and destructive, and it possesses a divine power that violates Leda and initiates the dire consequences of war and devastation depicted in the final lines. Even though Yeats clearly states that the swan is the god Zeus, he also emphasizes the physicality of the swan. Anthony Jordan says, "the beating wings, the dark webbed feet, the long neck and beak. Through this description of its physical characteristics, the swan becomes a violent divine force" (9). By rendering a well-known poetic symbol as violent and terrifying rather than idealized and beautiful, Yeats manipulates poetic conventions, an act of literary modernism, and adds to the power of the poem. Yeats employs the figure of a great beast a horrific, violent animal to embody difficult abstract concepts. The great beast as a symbol comes from Christian iconography, in which it represents evil and darkness. Francis King writes:

Yeats's participation in the Irish political system had origins in his interest in Irish myth and folklore. Irish myth and folklore had been suppressed by church doctrine and British control of the school system. Yeats used his poetry as a tool for re-educating the Irish population about their heritage and as a strategy for developing Irish nationalism. (44)

Yeats's poems that do not deal explicitly with subjects from myth retain powerful tinges of indigenous Irish culture. Yeats often borrowed word selection, verse form, and patterns of imagery directly from traditional Irish myth and folklore.

Yeats' poem has been analyzed from various perspective though it has not been analyzed from the prospective of feminism so in this study searches female voice in Yeats selected poems. Feminism is a political movement, which emerged in the late 1960s with an aim to enhance the status of women both in theory and practice. The term 'Feminists' or 'Feminism' are political labels indicating support for the aims of the new women's movement, which is committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism. Feminism defines women as the people who are either of the freedom of self-expression. The growing feminist movement sought to change society's prevailing stereotypes of women as relatively weak, passive, docile, and dependent individuals who are less rational and more emotional than men. Feminists want to achieve greater freedom for women to work, to broaden both women's self-awareness and their opportunities to the point of equality with men.

Most of the feminists have accepted that the concept of femaleness is biological, related to female body and female experience but femininity is actually and essentially a cultural product. They believe that sex is determined biologically, but gender is a psychological concept, which refers to culturally acquired sexual identity. As Stevi Jackson claims, "Masculinity and femininity are defined not by biology but by social, cultural and psychological attributes which are acquired through becoming a man or a woman in a particular society at a particular time" (133). The concept of femininity is artificially shaped by custom and fashion. Simone de Beauvoir believes that biological existence of a female is socially covered as a demure creature. She views that 'femininity' is a second and cultural construction of women. In her

"Feminist Literary Criticism" Troil Moi, a feminist claims, "'Femininity' is a cultural construct: One isn't born a woman, one becomes one" (209). When women reach a certain age and understand their gender, they are loaded with the concept of 'Femininity', which is a set of cultural norms reserved for the female. Society considers women as objects rather than human beings of flesh and blood.

Feminists believe that the entire cultural spectrum is dominated by patriarchal values. Patriarchy is a society in which formal power over public decision and policy making is held by men. Feminists use the term 'patriarchy' (rule of the father) to describe the causes of women's oppression. Raman Selden states, "Patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male" (137). Patriarchy has determined a very large part the nature and quality of our society: its value and priorities, the place and image of women within it, and the relation between sexes. Patriarchy historically exists and sustains itself in the form of male domination through female subordination by means of ideological practice. Men are always overpowered with the sense of "I am man; she is woman. I am strong; she is weak. I am tough; she is tender. I am self-sufficient; she is needful" (Ruth 55). Patriarchy fosters gender-based inequalities that decides male as superior and woman as inferior, man as powerful and female as powerless. In male-made culture, women have to survive in formulated expression and discrimination on the basis of sex, race, age, class, religion, etc.

In patriarchy, women are projected as the 'other,' subordinate being. Men perceive themselves as self and women as other. Men assume that they (male) are the defining and dominating 'subject' who represent humanity in general. This 'othering' according to Beauvoir, mystifies woman's qualities and pushes her into isolation. The categories with which men think of the world are established from their point of view

as absolute. In her celebrated book *The Second Sex* Beauvoir states, "Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not as herself but as relative to him; She is not regarded as an autonomous being" (XVIII). Man defines woman as a relative being. They treat women like their 'object' or 'property'. It is taken for granted everywhere that women as such can have no right and privilege. Men assume that women are inherently inferior to them and therefore must be always subordinate to them. Male by nature is superior and female is inferior. The one is ruler and the other is ruled, and this principle of necessity extends to all mankind. But in actuality, there is no such difference between the sexes. As Beauvoir says, this duality of the 'self' and 'other' is not dependent upon any empirical facts. It is used to show contrast between good and evil, lucky and unlucky, God and Lucifer. There is nothing lacking in female, if anything is lacking, that is the lack of freedom to exercise their free will.

The images of women in patriarchy are fraught with contradiction: woman is sublime, perfect, and beautiful; she is awful, stupid, and contemptible. Beauvoir discloses the ambivalence of man's nature towards woman as he calls woman a Muse or Goddess on the one hand while he associates her with demon, death, cruel stepmother or the other. Woman is the mother of God as well as Traitor of the Garden. As Sheila Ruth claims, "This bifurcation of images is called the Mary/Eve dichotomy: Woman is represented as being at once a manifestation of the divine and an incarnation of evil" (87). She is the tender young creature man marries and protects as well as the treacherous, manipulative sneak who tricked him into a union he never sought. Explicitly or implicitly, women are represented as having dual nature, of being all that is desirable, fascinating, and wonderful, yet extremely destructive and dangerous. Actually, in patriarchy, images of women, like other conceptualizations, have been male created. The stereotypes of women, contradictory

and conflicting, are male projections, and as such, they must be understood as outward expression of male attitudes. This dichotomy in the representation of women, therefore, it is a strong indication of extreme ambivalence on the part of men.

The first chapter presents the general introduction of this research including the background to the present study, views of the critics on the author, and his writing and an introductory outline of the present research. A theoretical guideline of the analysis has been mentioned in second chapter. In the same way, conclusion has been mentioned in the fourth chapter.

II. Female in W.B Yeats' Selected Poetry

This study analyzes how Yeats represent women in his selected poetry entitled “The Living Beauty” , “A Prayer for my Daughter”, “Leda and Swan” , “That Crazy Girl” , “ The Lady’s First Song “ , “ The Heart of Women” , “Crazy Jane Talks with Bishop” and “The Lover Mourns for the Loss of love”. Yeats loves children and women though he is a male poet. He is against violence that occurred in the beginning of 20th century and he raises voice for love and peace which is related female voice. Patriarchy assumes that women are inherently inferior to men and therefore must be always subordinate to them. Yeats denies such values and projects women as superior creature of the world and compares them with nature and love. In the poem entitles “A Prayer to my Daughter” Yeats projects his daughter to possess some qualities so that she can face the future years independently.

Yeats in his prayer wishes the inner beauty for his daughter. The outer beauty is nothing for him and it may bring vain attitude. Inner beauty is permanent. In this regard Yeats contradicts the patriarchal idea of beautiful women. Women should search for inner beauty as they are not an object to delight. He lifts the women status from an object to human.

May she be granted beauty yet not
Beauty to make a stranger’s eye distraught,
Or hers before a looking – glass, for such,
Being made beautiful overmuch,
Consider beauty a sufficient end,
Lose natural kindness and maybe
The heart –revealing intimacy
That chooses right, and never finds a friend. (17-24)

These lines show the perception of W. B. Yeats which is different from traditional opinion about female beauty. Unlike the traditional perception of beauty as appearance an outward thing, he gives less importance to physical beauty. He prays for beauty however the beauty must not be so exaggerated. Beauty should not puzzle stranger or make his daughter narcissistic. She should not consider beauty as goal. Outward beauty is not goal for him but inner beauty. However, Yeats was at times also guided by male values that undermined the position of females in society. Male by nature is thought to be superior and female inferior. The one is ruler and other to be ruled, and this principle of necessity extends to all mankind. But in actuality, there is no such difference between sexes. As Beauvoir says, “This duality of the ‘self’ and ‘other’ is not dependent upon any empirical facts. It is used to show contrast between good and evil, lucky and unlucky, God and Lucifer” (345).

There is nothing lacking in female, if anything is lacking, that is the lack of freedom to exercise their free will. Yeats always valorizes the free will of the person but the will had been captured by male ego in many times. In the poem “Leda and the Swan”, God captures the freedom of female (Swan) and seduces her. Yeats poem are against on traditional male values though he is the prominent male writer of his time. The great thing about the poem is that it has a specific as well as general applicability. At the same time, the poem makes an indirect to Maud Gonne also whom Yeats loved and yet could not win her hand. Yeats ideology of respect for women is evident in his poem. Though he is male, he is not like mythical Swan who attacks an innocent woman who does not know what is going to happen. For him love is pious and it is kept in heart. Traditionally male forces women to their will and be satisfied. Women’s desires are ignored. In the poem “The Lover Mourns for the Loss of Love” poet shows platonic love. Love is never a thing of force. To be crazy for love disallow the

violence for the poet. Love neither necessarily mean physicality nor acceptance. This idea is manifested in these lines, "She looked in my heart one day / and saw your image was there; / She has gone weeping away" (5-7). These lines show how he is crazy for love although he never attacks women like the mythical Swan that attacked Leda and violated the rules and freedom of women. There is love between three people which ends in separation and realization. Speaker of the poem loves a woman and kept her image in heart and another woman loves the speaker but realizing the speaker's love for another woman she weeps. The speaker is against the patriarchal values.

Patriarchy is associated with violence, war, fight and destruction and feminism is related to love, life and peace. Feminist believe that the entire cultural spectrum is dominated by patriarchal values. Patriarchy is a system in which formal power over public decision and policy making is held by men. Feminist use the term 'patriarchy' to describe the causes of the women's oppression. Raman Selden states, "Patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as inferior to male" (137). Social norms and values are male oriented and they favour male bestowing them the higher rank.

In Yeats' poem it is found that the representation of bodies and sexuality in Irish culture is conditioned by the social power of the Catholic Church. St. Paul's antifeminism and valorization of the spiritual over physical were especially influential in Ireland. The catholic clergy in the national struggle against England gave them moral authority. Norman Jeffares says:

A Penitential Catholicism intensified by residual Victorian prudery...
Economic conditions resulting from [British] colonial exploitation and
the Great Famine played a major part in producing late marriages, a

high rate of celibacy, and a concomitant need to control the body and its desires in the Irish countryside. (32)

Unregulated eroticism was sacrificed to the need to pass on the meager landholding. Undivided to the chosen male heir, the survival of the family in perilous economic circumstances dictated sexual choices. Norman Jeffares adds, “when small framers moved to the towns, they brought their ethic with them despite the fact that it was no longer economically relevant, and their sexual conservatism continued to be reinforced by the ideals of celibate clergy” (23). Yeats has also claimed in Coventry Pamore’s words the end of art is peace, but desire is both impetus to art in nature and the impetus to violence. Although, desire abates chaos in nature, when interaction between subjects occurs that Barbara Croft states, “When the move from nature to culture is made because of desire, then violence is the result” (22). Man made cultural is the result of desire and that ends in violence. The way out of nature due to human desire that erases the peace by objectifying the women. Yeats’ poem “The Crazy Girl” demonstrates the similar idea of Croft. The girl divided in nature and cultural aspect of life has difficult life. She has no destination as she falls and climbs. The life of the girl is utter despair. The girl is a ‘lofty’ thing not a human being in society. Yeats writes in his poem “The Crazy Girl” as:

Her soul in division from itself
Climbing, falling She knew not where,
Hiding amid the cargo of a steamship,
Her knee-cap broken, that girl I declare
A beautiful lofty thing or a thing
Heroically lost, heroically found. (7-12)

Situation of the women in society is disgraceful. Women are object of men's desire. They are devoid of aim in life and due to social regulation and the nature's regulation they are torn apart. Society as represented as "I" declares the women who is violated and terrified a thing of beauty that is heroically lost and heroically found. The women is lost in social norms and found as a thing. Women's identity is erased and new identity is created according to male ideology so she is heroically lost and heroically found. Yeats presenting the pathetic condition of women in patriarchal society shows the mirror to patriarchal society how just they are.

In 1896 Augusta Gregory was 44 and had been widowed for four years. When she married the much older William Gregory at the age of 28, she has moved from the philistine, horsy and hard-line protestant world of Roxborough into Gregory milieu of retired colonial governors and liberal Tory politician in London and 'abroad'. Plain, decisive and masterful, she never lost a certain air of the evangelically-minded country lady; but this was only one side of complex personality. After her death an old Galway acquaintance, who was young girl had known her well wrote:

She was most complicated woman I can think of... loving-cold.
Womanly-cold. Patriotic-cold. Very calculating, dutiful, courageous,
purposeful, and all built upon a bedrock sense of humour and love of
fun and bitter sarcasm with a vein of simple coarseness of thought and
simple inherited Protestantism. (2)

Yeats' poem are guided by love and peace which appear painful but productive relationship with women that determined his favor for certain type of women with masculinity rather than passive, complaisant, and traditional beauty . As in his fascination of Norman Jeffares suggests, "Yeats liked to praise beautiful women who have masculinity, and he took a courtly love attitude to receive their love" (23). His

ideology is against patriarchy that determined a very large part the nature and the quality of our society: its values and priorities, the place and women within it, and the relation between sexes. Patriarchy historically exists and sustains itself in the form of male domination through female subordination by means of ideological practice. Men are always overpowered with the sense of “I am man; she is woman. I am strong; she is weak. I am tough; she is tender. I am self sufficient; she is needful” (Ruth 55). Patriarchy fosters gender – based inequalities that decides male as a superior and woman as inferior, man as powerful and female as powerless. In manmade culture, women have to survive in formulated expression and discrimination on the basis of sex, race, age, class religion.

During Yeats time there was wave of feminism in Europe. He was aware about the waves so he presents women differently. He writes poems which needed great labour like a woman’s childbirth and praise woman of a masculine spirit. Yet Maud Gonne ‘s constant decline of his suit and radical political inclination , and his depressed libido made him deeply feel the pain caused by such a mannish woman. Especially, the sudden confession of her past love with Millevoeye and her marriage with MacBride gave him a great shock and changed his view of women. He instead dreams of living a comfortable life with a woman who has traditional femine nature. At last, Yeats got married to Hyde- Lees with such a femine factors, only to find that her charm and sexual satisfaction did not last long. However he demonstrates the patriarchal ideology in his poem “That Crazy Girl”.

Yeats as male member of the society has the male ideology and that is demonstrated in his poetry. He, though, a progressive man in regard to women’s issue at a times struggles with the patriarchal values that he is confined from birth. He shows women negatively in “That Crazy Girl”. He depicts the women as selfish and

only concerned with herself. Women does not pay attention to the worldly affair but concerned with their own pretty issues. Women are careless. He depicts the women negatively as his love is not fulfilled. He writes depicting women negatively,

No matter what disaster occurred
She stood in desperate music wound,
Wound, wound, and she made in her triumph
Where the bales and the basket lay
No common intelligible sound
But sang, O sea starved, Hungry sea (9-14)

The extract shows the situation of Yeats that is related to love relationship with his beloved. Yeats came to emphasize conservative view of woman, insisting that woman should live in a pure blessing and give up her opinionated mind. He asserts that “woman with perfect beauty could be happy only when she made herself beautiful and played a faithful role as man’s supporter” (3). In this period, the images of women are painted dark in his poems; such images however, soon disappear. Yeats again lunges for his lost love. However, he cannot escape from the conflicts between body and soul, ideal and reality. Such a dilemma makes him pay attention to harmonious union of body and soul, and creates his persona. His view’s of women undergo many changes through his earlier, middle and later poems. His views of women are expressed according to the increase or decrease in femininity or masculinity inherent within Yeats' self, the influence of his suppressed libido and his attitude to Irish politics. However, it cannot be denied that women were continuous motif and inspiration of his poems.

The last decade of 19th century that brought several strange encounters as well as warnings, veiled and aggressive, about earthbound in alien domains, whether

literary or spiritual. It has also seen the appearance of Yeats' poem that perceive them as self and woman as other. During the time men assume that men are the defining and dominating 'subject' who represents humanity in general. The 'othering' according to Beauvoir, mystifies woman's qualities and pushes her into isolation. The categories with which men think of the world are established from their point of view as absolute. In her celebrated book *The Second Sex* Beauvoir states: "Thus humanity is male and man defines woman as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being" (XVIII). Man defines woman as relative being. They treat woman like their 'object' or 'property'. It is taken for granted everywhere women as such can have no right and privilege. Patriarchal society always teaches women what to do or not to do. Yeats demonstrates the preaching tendency of male and rebellious women in his poetry "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop". And proves himself not inherently sexist.

Yeats in "Crazy Jane Talks with Bishop" gives voice to the taboo field of female sexuality. He sets crazy Jane against civilized, decorous and accommodated women. He writes:

"Fair and foul are near of kin,

And fair needs foul," I cried.

"My friends are gone that's' a truth

Nor grave nor bed denied,

Learned in bodily lowliness

And the heart's pride. (6-11)

These lines shows crazy Jane is free and sexual character who frankly affirms both of sexual experience and flesh as having authority over book-leaning of Bishop. Jane is outlaw never confined to the inside of building but outside and free. She rejects the Bishop tries to move her inside to the traditional realm of womanhood. Yeats in these

lines celebrates female's sexual transgression. These lines show the perception of W. B. Yeats which is different from traditional opinion about female. Yeats personal history marks significant role in his attitude towards women. His relation with Maud Gonne has helped to idealize the women in his writing. "In his early poetry he idealized her and always regarded her beauty as transcending the merely everyday"(kiely 3). Yeats perception toward female is guided by his relation with women and occult teaching where the traditional roles of man and women were broken and replaced by more progressive views of gender. Yeats has valorized the situation of women outside and inside of the household. Patriarchal views are neglected in his poetry. Patriarchy is fraught with contradictions. Woman is the mother of God as well traitor of the garden. As Sheila Ruth claims, "This bifurcation of images is called the Mary/ Eve dichotomy: Women is represented as being at once a manifestation of the divine and an incarnation of evil" (87). She is the tender young creature man marries and protects as well as treacherous, manipulative sneak who tricked him into a union he never sought.

Gender issues have occupied a significant space in Yeats' writing that creates critical discourse in English writing. It is, however, necessary to point out here that the doctrine of perpetual tutelage of women was universally accepted almost everywhere until quite recently. All social, literary, economic, religious, and legal and many other aspects are dominated by men to suit their purpose. The cultures that developed carried out the masculine ideology and continued to emphasize male interest, male ego and male objectives. Female had little space in social, cultural and economic areas and had to remain dominated, invisible and ineffective acting merely as the playmate of the male. They were not even given slight consideration.

The poem entitled “prayer for my Daughter” demonstrates the traditional binary of male and female. The poet while talking about the possible weakness of women deals with opinionated mind. Reference of Helen is prejudiced as Helen’s destiny is already written. The poet himself in the poem “The Leda and The Swan” has questioned the intentions of the disguised God. Helen’s destiny was written at Swan’s attack. Helen has no choice in his view however he shows in this extract Helen as ignorant and witless. While talking about possible weakness he has scapegoat to another woman.

Helen being chosen found life flat and dull
And later had much trouble from a fool,
While what great Queen, that rose out of the spray,
Being fatherless could have her way
Yet chose a bandy- legged smith for man.
It’s certain that fine women eat
A crazy salad with their meat
Whereby the Horn of plenty is undone. (25-32)

While wishing for perfect life for own daughter Yeats presents Helen negatively. Helen is foolish and she makes wrong choices. Yeats shows double standard here. In one poem Helen is destined to be fall of a civilization and in another poem he argues that Helen is foolish. And she lacks the intellectuality, she is crazy. Though he is struggling time and again with his sense of ‘I’ he wishes well for women. He wants his daughter to possess some qualities so that she can face the future years independently and with confidence.

Yeats wishes, “let her be given beauty but a more important thing is that her beauty should not be of a kind which may either make her proud of her beauty or

distract a stranger's mind and eyes" (2). Those whose beauty is capable of making them proud consider beauty an end in itself. The result is that prides leads to their losing natural kindness in some cases of that heart revealing intimacy which helps them to make the right choice in life. Being able to make the right choices in life is a very important thing but those who have excessive beauty are unable to do so and never find a good friend in the true sense of the world. Similarly he wishes free mind to her daughter as bias mind is always harmful. Prejudice breeds negativity without reason. He writes in "A Prayer to my Daughter"

An intellectual hatred is worst,
So let her think opinions are accursed.
Have I not seen the loveliest woman born?
Out of the mouth of plenty's horn,
Because of her opinionated mind
Barter that horn and every good
By quiet natures understood
For an old bellows full of angry win? (57-64)

It is facile to argue that poem is not really a "prayer" or that Yeats is not praying for his Christian virtues for his daughter. Yeats wishes for organic innocence and freedom from hatred- the basis on which other virtues will inevitably grow. The images in the poem that serve to express the poet's wishes for the future flourishing tree, songbirds, sweet music, the green laurel tree, the horn of plenty- all emphasize the need for order, aim, grace in a battered civilization. Behind the prayer, of course, are Yeats' bitter memories of Maud Gonne who had come to stand for the tragedy of how beauty and grace can be distorted by politics, intellectual hatred and arrogance.

In this regard it is relevant to quote the lines of the poem entitle “The Lover Mourns for the Loss of Love” as

I had a beautiful friend
And dreamed that the old despair
Would end in love in the end:
She looked in my heart one day
And saw your image was there;
She has gone weeping away. (2-7)

The lines indicate the circumstances that play vital role to shape ideology toward women of the time. He uses various images to project the beauty and strength of women though he is not clear about the situation of women in his society because he is also guided by the silence urge of patriarchy. On the other side of the coin, some efforts were made by some male writers, critics and philosophers in the past to uplift women’s position in society. For Socrates and Plato, ‘man’ includes all human beings even women. For Socrates, in short, an underlying quality exists in the human species. He says that all men and women are equal at least until they prove themselves to be otherwise. According to Socrates, “All men and women are equal there, and all are qualified to rule, because there, rule requires no special expertise” (qtd. In Doren47). This remark clarifies that all the men and women are equally qualified to rule. This is splendid thing for someone living in the fifth century B. C. to believe. Plato shared with Socrates an overweening concern and fascination with politics and morality.

Plato claims, “Women would govern just as effectively as men for the simple reason that the rulers govern by virtue of their reason” (qtd. In Garder 92). Women, he asserts, have exactly the same powers of reasoning as men, if they get the same training and education. Male and female are equal. Like male female can do any

work. And have the same reasoning capacity as male. However, in many pretext women are denied the opportunity of training and education. Women provided with equal opportunity can challenge male in every sphere of life.

Yeats reflects the beauty of women in the poem entitled “Heart of the Women”. He praises the beauty of woman. He transcends the physical world because of the beauty of woman. Women’s beauty is positive thing as it has the capacity to free man from the chain of life and death. Thus he writes,

O hiding hair and dewy eyes,
I am no more with the life and death,
My heat upon his warm heart lies,
My breath is mixed into his breath. (9-13)

The images of the women reflected in this extract are related to his own experiences related to the love affair with his hostess. He himself projects the situation as, “By the following summer, a routine had been established and Russell could write to Gregory, he ought not to get dinner until he has produced specific number of lines every day” (33). The point was, as he put it more than once, that process passionately outlined in his poem “Adam’s Curse” seems to have been accurate representation. Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Rousseau and Freud have depicted women as inferior and incomplete beings in their intellectual discourses. Aristotle thinks that like slaves, women should occupy a subordinate place. For him, male by nature is superior and female is inferior. He regards women as passive and receptive creature. He claims that female is female by virtue of certain lack of quality. He further argues, “We should regard the female as afflicted with nature defectiveness” (qtd. In Beauvoir XVIII). For him, the inferiority of women is innate. It cannot be cured. The blind believers of Aristotle continued thinking along the same line. St. Thomas

Aquinas, a believer of Aristotle also adopted Aristotle's view of women. According to him, it is only as nature- being that women are inferior to man. He pronounces women to be an "imperfect man" and "incidental being" (XVIII). This statement shows that humanity is male and man defines woman not as herself but as relative to man.; she is not regarded as autonomous being. Man can think of himself without woman but she cannot think of herself without man, however, W.B. Yeats is against that prediction. He charges male activities which made females victimized in this universe. Female has no choice but to tolerate the action of male. The poem entitled "Leda and the Swan" shows the how helpless a woman in our society.

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast. (1-4)

It reflects the fascination with Greek mythology, as can be seen in the lines, which tells the story of Leda, who was raped by Zeus in the form of swan, an act that led to the birth of Helen of Troy and twins Castor and Pollux. The birth of Helen resulted in the death of Agamemnon and the Trojan War. Yeats brings that legendary references and shows the brutality of males against females.

From childhood he had nurtured to bring out the new notion on poetry writing, as well as an attraction towards romantic nationalism; as a young bride she had taken up the cause of the Egyptian rebels, defending ArabiBey in long pamphlet. With her husband still alive alive, she had a passionate affair with the professional philanderer that persisted about the parentage of her only son. The myth is somehow related the myth of Helen as described in following lines:

Being so caught up,

So mastered by the brute blood of the air,

Did she put on his knowledge with his power?

Before the indifference beak could let her drop. (11-14)

These lines indicate that Yeats has not clear cut vision about the woman because he could not be fully feminist writer. He only praises beauty though he also undermines the courage of women. In *Leda and the Swan*, Leda challenges the god Apollo and he converted as a bird and raped her. The poem shows the power of swan actually, the God regrets after he raped Leda.

Most of the time he is indulged in Irish folk belief and myth that is totally in favour for women. Within a year he would publish articles on fairy traditions, folktales and language revival. His political views would change throughout his life, tending more and more to separatist nationalism. As he later remarked, "I am all born bigots in Ireland and want a great deal of grace to get us out of bondage" (2). Many of the poems by Yeats induce an image of an aged man as such a scarecrow or as a man in tatters with little left of any substance. Such a man is only able to stagnate in one position and can look backward since moving forward is no longer a possibility. Although this is a rather bleak image, it is highly representative of the struggles W. B. Yeats endured in as a young man, a frustrated suitor, a political pioneer, and finally an aged poet, a sage. Although traces of these themes are recurrent in several poems by Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium", portray these complex themes most completely. One of the most stunning poems reflecting implicit fear of aging in poems by Yeats occurs throughout "Sailing to Byzantium". This poem was written in 1926 as Yeats was growing older and beginning to realize the meaning and consequences of patriarchy and femininity. "Sailing to Byzantium" reflects the speaker's desire to return to an older age far from the youthful excesses and their inability to recognize age and

wisdom. One of the important quotes from “Sailing to Byzantium” is at the beginning and says , “that is no country for old men. The young/ in one another’s arms, birds in the trees- those dying generations” (239) which discusses the reason for speaker’s journey. He no longer feels he has a place among the youthful exuberance and seeks something more fulfilling and ancient. Although the young represent in the poem by Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium” are “those dying generations” they are nonetheless too engaged with their trivialities to understand the pursuit of an old man who feels he is condemned to live in a aging body, or “fastened to a dying animal” while his soul yearns to be free.

While analyzing female’s representation in W.B. Yeats' poem different demarcation are found. Sometimes he praises women and worships them like goddess and then he expresses his male ego and symbolically projects women as weak fragile creature. He is vague about the perception of women reflects in the poem entitled “The Lady’s First Song.” His identity crises is caused by a woman. Due to woman he has lost his self, the patriarchal prejudiced male and fallen from the social position like Adam in the eyes of God. He writes,

I turn round
Like a dumb beast in a show.
Neither know what I am
Nor where I go,
My language beaten
Into one name;
And that is my shame.
What hurts the soul
My soul adores,

No better than a beast

Upon all fours. (1-6)

Yeats' presents the song which is dedicated to the symbolic woman whom he loves since long time though he is unable to establish life long relationship with her so he expresses his feeling as form of poem. Due to woman he has been aimless and foolish. He does not know who he is and where he is going? He is just like beast which has nothing to do in his life and desire to know the real identity. Woman is the sole reason of his downfall. The poem creates vague figure of woman that only talk about freedom which is similar to the idea of Rousseau, who bewails the fact that men though born free should be in chains everywhere, condemns woman as servile. He argues, "Girls should be early subjected to restraint" (332). This statement shows that he is not in favour of women's freedom. He further says that women should be educated to please to complement men. Their duty is to please and pray to their male partners. Similarly, Martin Luther, the great renaissance reformist, also has quite negative views regarding women. He says that women are the stock of tricks from which they destroy men. He further says, "God made Adam master over all creatures, to rule over all living things, but when Eve persuaded him that he was lord even over God she spoiled everything...with tricks and cunning women deceive men" (qtd. In Ruth 158). Similarly Sigmund Freud has massively brought gender issues while talking about the formation of the unconscious of a woman. He finds fundamental differences in dream images of men and women and attributes egoist, ambitious dream to men and erotic dreams to women. As he states, "In young women the erotic wishes predominate almost exclusively, for their ambition is as a rule absorbed by erotic trends. In young men egoistic and ambitious wishes come to the fore clearly enough alongside of erotic ones" (Adams 713). The intellectuals like Luther and

Freud has the opinionated mind regarding the women it is obvious that the society is biased towards the women. And Yeats is not different from the social psyche.

May she become a flourishing hidden tree
That all her thoughts may like a linnet be ,
And have no business but dispensing round
Their magnanimities of sound,
Nor but in merriment begin a chase,
Nor but in merriment a quarrel.
O may she live like some green laurel
Rooted in one dear perpetual place. (41-48)

The lines reflect the socio economic situation of women in early 20th century. Yeats projects the situation of his own daughter and highlights the circumstances, which is similar to the idea of Virginia Woolf, an important precursor of Feminist Criticism who attacks the patriarchal structures through her essay *A Room of One's Own* (1928). Through this essay, she displays how the structure of the patriarchal society has prevented women from realizing their productive and creative possibilities. Her central argument is that women do not have money and a separate room of their own for writing. In his comments on Woolf, Raman Selden writes, "She believed that women had always faced social and economic obstacles to their literary ambitions" (142). Her belief is that women can freely develop their artistic talents if they achieve social and economic equality with men. She believes that human race is split up into two parties. She states, "Men are the 'opposing faction', men are hated and feared, because they have the power to bar her way to what she wants to do- which is to write" (Adams 818). She points out that men are the sole cause for women's limitation in creative works. She dislikes the possessiveness and love of domination in

men. In fact, she dislikes the quality of masculinity. She challenges patriarchal society by expressing her indignation that the libraries can be locked but not the freedom of women's mind.

A milestone in the rise of modern feminism is Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* (1949) raises many fundamental questions concerned with women. This book offers historical, biological and psychological perspective on women, a consideration of prevailing patriarchal myths about women, and an account of female love and sexuality in virtually all of its forms. M.H. Abhram writes,

The Second Sex (1949) is wide –ranging critique of the cultural identification of women as merely the negative object, or “other”, to man as the dominating “subject” who is assumed to represent humanity in general; the book dealt also with “the great collective myth” of women in the works of many male writers. (88)

The prevailing concept of the ‘the feminine’ are not natural to women but have instead imprisoned women and held them in a status secondary to men. Women are not born as women; women are women, which is just a cultural construct. Beauvoir's central thesis is based on the distinction between biological fact and what is made of it. While female refers to features of anatomy and physiology, the idea of woman is a cultural one derived from and dependent on how men have seen women and how the latter have lived their crucial relationship with the dominant sex. Men believe that women cannot transcend because transcendence is a spiritual sublimity which can only be attained by men. They project women as inherently demure creatures and men as powerful and virile so that the latter can achieve transcendence. *The Second Sex* also deals with ‘the great and collective myths’ of women in the works of many male writers. According to Beauvoir, the male is defined according to particular manner in

which one chooses to set himself up. She says that the myth surrounding women is so powerful that even contrary facts seem impotent to disprove it. According to her, the myth is one of those snares of false objectivity into which the man who depends on ready-made valuation rushes headlong. She further states, “We can see now that the myth is in large part explained by its usefulness to man. The myth of women is luxury” (Adams 1999). Myths are full of ideas of femininity, eroticism and seductiveness. Here Beauvoir says that myth has been utilized for man’s purpose to look woman as luxury. Patriarchal society has imposed its laws and custom upon individuals in a picturesque and effective manner. Very often women are projected into the myths adopted by the institutions and values to which they adhere. She further states that paternalism claims women for the hearth and home to define her as sentiment, inwardness, and immanence. The false presentation of women is shown in myths. Therefore Beauvoir calls for abolition of false and unfair myths of women for the emergence of women as independent, individual and responsible; not for her traditional feminine role but for her own action and behavior.

However, Yeats projects the typical image what feminist like Beauvoir strongly object. He glorifies the physical beauty of women unlike his first phase of writing. He associates beauty with youth that is only physical beauty as intellectual beauty is timeless. Presentation women as passive receiver as love and paying much attention to the physicality of the women he strengthens the stereotypical images of women as an object. Talking about the beauty that is transient he confines the women to beauty blocking the path of overall personality development. He in poem entitled “Living Beauty” writes:

My discontented heart to draw content

From beauty that is cast out of a mould

In bronze, or that in dazzling marble appears,
Appears, but when we have gone is gone again,
Being more indifferent to our solitude
Than 'twere an apparition. O heart, we are old;
The living beauty is for younger men. (3-10)

These lines portray the situation of women projected by W. B. Yeats in his poem where he compares women as an object of love. He projects men as hunter of love and women as receiver of love so he has negative vision of women in his writing especially in second phase of writing. So we cannot pay full attention to him which Yeats raise in his poem.

As feminist literary critics try to explain how power imbalances due to gender discrimination in a given culture are reflected or challenged by literary texts. Elaine Showalter, one of the founders of feminist criticism demands distinct literary tradition of and for women as she believes that meaning of writing of women partially understood and presented by male critics. So she makes distinction in two kinds of criticism in her book "Literature of Their Own" (1977) as 'feminist critique' and 'gynocritics' dealing with women writer. The first is ideological and concerned with women as reader. Its subjects include the image and stereotypes of women writing in literature. The second type of feminist criticism is concerned with women as writer with women as producer of textual meaning. Hazard Adams sites Showalter while defining gynocritics as "Gynocritics eschew the inevitability of male models and theories and seek female model" (1223). Gynocritics began at the point when women freed themselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stopped trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition and focused instead on the newly

visible world of female culture. According to Showalter, gynocritics construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature. She further states as;

Gynocriticism is related to feminist research in history, anthropology, psychology, and sociology, all of which have developed hypothesis of a female subculture including not only the ascribed status and the internalize constructs of femininity, but also the occupations, interactions, and conscious of women. (Adams 1227)

The program of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adopt male models and theories.

Showalter's *A Literature of their Own* examines British women novelist since the Bronte sisters from the point of view of women's experience. She has reconstructed the past of literary history of British women novelist by dividing this tradition into three stages, feminine, feminist and female. In the 'feminine' phase, 1880-1920, included writers such as Elizabeth Robins and Oline Schredner, who asserted themselves in determined efforts for political and social equality, and women's literature was able to protest against unjust treatment of women. The third, 'female' phase (1920 onwards), inherited characteristics of the former phases and developed the idea of specifically female writing and female experience in phase of self discovery. The developments of feminist criticism over period of time challenges the male created meaning and literary tradition and seek own meaning. In this point of view Yeats poetry is against the new and radical idea of feminism that demands female writer to raises the women's experience:

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.
Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of it {Spiritus Mundi}
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds. (5-17)

The extract highlights the situation of world and its genesis that is going on continuously in the wheel of time. To complete the wheel the role of nature is important. Symbolically the poet addresses the female body as nature and that only continue the existence of the world. Through the poem Yeats addresses the power of the world in the presence of female body though the world is handled by male that creates the problem in each sector of life. The recent times, some critics have moved to the realm of linguistics to get the origins of oppression in language. They found that they are at disadvantage working with the male-made language. The works of Luce Irigaray are interesting illustration of the strengths and weakness of an analysis focusing on femininity. In her illuminating critique of patriarchal discourses from pre-Socratic times to Freud, *Speculum de L'autre Femme*, Irizaray argues that throughout history the feminine has been repressed by and excluded from western philosophical discourse. She considers patriarchal oppression of women as founded on the type of negative constructions associated with Freud's theory of female sexuality. She views

patriarchal oppression such as “The concept of ‘penis envy’ as founded upon a view of women as man’s ‘other’: She lacks the penis which he possesses” (qtd. In seldom 152). Patriarchal society applies different ideologies to oppress female. She is of the opinion that the style of female writing will overcome the male style of writing because male sexual organ is centralized whereas the female gets the pleasure through touch and therefore women’s writing is connected with fluidity and touch.

W.B. Yeats use male language to address the female ejects of the world and tries to give values of female’s body as well as voices in modern time. In his time many female critics and writer like Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, Harriet and other produce many text by using their language which is different from male writing. Apart from the growing female writing Yeats relation with women and his occult belief makes him positive about women in comparison to male writer of the time. However, as male he is too confined to male egos and due to that he has not done enough in presentation of women in his writing. His personal conflict has reflected in his writing. On the basis of these selected poem I make argument that W. B. Yeats is positive toward female though he does not totally concentrated on the problems of the 20th century women.

III. Yeats an Advocate of Women

Yeats has presented positive picture of women in his poetry though biographical history of Yeats has shaped the representation of women in his poetry. Yeats is progressive male surrounded by sexist society and that is reflected in his poetry. Influence of his feminist friend, his progressive occult teaching and his traditional sense of male has made his poetry seemingly contradictory. At beginning he is positive about the women and projects women as goddess of love. However, his such belief does not remain all the time because he is unable to get pure love from the women he love and his self of being male. Though he is soft toward the women, he is male and his poetry reflects his struggle to that identity. His struggle with 'self' and his progressive views make his poetry contradictory.

Yeats concerned with the welfare of women. His association with the Irish movement, close relation with women and his occult teaching has helped him to shade positive light on women. He wishes well for women and poems entitled "A Prayer for my Daughter", "Leda and the Swan" demonstrate Yeats' positivity towards women. Unlike the traditional thinking, he presents women as a victim of the patriarchal values. Women's desire is ignored so women has no role into present and older events that cost the civilization. Women are intellectual and guided by reason. So he wishes good education for women so that they can save themselves from the corruption of the world and develop their overall personality. Yeats deconstructs the patriarchal values that presents women as an object and witless creature. He supports towards the women's enhancement of personality and status in society.

Yeats to show the injustice towards the women from time immemorial uses myth abundantly. He revisits myths that shows the women as secondary being and valorizes the male actions and questions patriarchal values. The patriarchal values

make women victim and took away the chances to gain access to the knowledge and improve their choices. Yeats while revisiting and questioning the patriarchal myth about the status of women makes distinct place for himself in history. However, Yeats is male and his poetry is characterized with his identity of male.

Showalter's demand for distinct criticism to Women's literature is the result of writer like W. B. Yeats who seems supporter of women's plight and their feelings but actually are not. Yeats at early phase especially after the friendship with Maud Gonne seems women's friendly in his writing but in reality he is male and his male ego, the unconscious defeats the consciousness. He projects women in their perceived role as weak, filthy, emotional. Personal conflict of conscious and unconscious is reflected in his poetry and for a time being he shelters in the traditional patriarchal values. Despite the fact that Yeats poetry depicts the patriarchal norms he is advocator of women's identity.

Yeats poetry unlike his contemporary deals with women's issues. Though his struggle with his own identity as male and his progressive mindset often makes reader perplexed. Question arises in reader's mind whether he is supporter of male ideology or female ideology. He is in fact progressive male writer caught in sexist society. He is women's supporter. While talking about the male and female issues he presents the creation of the world. Earthly existence is only possible at the presence of women. However, female is suppressed by male and take them as supports. He projects that male is always eager to capture female such as Swan rapped Leda. Male activities always presented as war and conflict whereas female's role is peaceful in the world.

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