



**HENRY BERGSON'S THEORY OF TIME AND
MEMORY IN SELECTED POEMS BY WILLIAM
BUTLER YEATS**

**2023
MASTER THESIS
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

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Prepared as

Master Thesis

KARABUK

May 2023

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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that in my opinion the thesis submitted by Manal BELLAMQADDAM titled “HENRY BERGSON'S THEORY OF TIME AND MEMORY IN SELECTED POEMS BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS” is fully adequate in scope and in quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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This thesis is accepted by the examining committee with a unanimous vote in the Department of English Language and Literature as a Master of Arts thesis. 05 May 2023

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The degree of Master of Arts by the thesis submitted is approved by the Administrative Board of the Institute of Graduate Programs, Karabuk University.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own work and all information included has been obtained and expounded in accordance with the academic rules and ethical policy specified by the institute. Besides, I declare that all the statements, results, materials, not original to this thesis have been cited and referenced literally.

Without being bound by a particular time, I accept all moral and legal consequences of any detection contrary to the aforementioned statement.

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FOREWORD

All praise and thankfulness are to (ALLAH), the Almighty, who made it possible for me to finish my thesis by providing me with the opportunity and the courage.

I would like to thank my supervisor (Prof. Dr. Abdul Serdar ÖZTÜRK) for his positive attitude and insightful feedback. The chance to take his notes on my thesis with him was valuable.

I would also like to take this chance to express my heartfelt appreciation to the lecturers who taught me during the first year of my master's program at Karabük University's English Language and Literature Department. They were kind enough to share their expertise and academic knowledge with us.

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to everyone who has contributed significantly to the completion of this study in any way.

ABSTRACT

The twentieth century was hectic; wars, inventions, social movements, and philosophy stained and branded the world between 1900 and 1999. Many concepts came to the spotlight and gained unprecedented attention, concepts like consciousness, time, space, and multiplicity. The French philosopher Henri Bergson contributed immensely into defining these notions, especially when he denied the quantifiable nature of time but rather saying that time should be defined by intuition and that the only stable element about humanity is its perpetual state of evolution and change. This point of view of his was, of course, wildly controversial, and popular because instead of being intimidated by “chaos”, Bergson’s theory embraced it then infused it into modernism, making this new- found fluidity an actual attribute of the artistic movement.

The dissertation will try to detect and delve into the aspects of the Bergsonian philosophy present in the works of W. B. Yeats, discussing how an Irish ex-romantic poet could have borrowed and used Bergson’s idea of time and memory in his writings. The study argues that Yeats’ poems are not divided into isolated eras, each being completely separate from the overall flow of his career but that they are all the result of an ongoing, constant process of growth. This growth was achieved remarkably through the fluid presence of memory, as the main mechanism that pushes this process in the right direction. This thesis also challenges the tendency to describe Yeats as a poet who shed his initial romantic skin for a new modernist one.

Keywords: Bergson, Yeats, Theory of time, Theory of memory, modernism.

ÖZET

Yirminci yüzyıl hareketliydi; savaşlar, icatlar, toplumsal hareketler ve felsefe, 1900 ile 1999 arasındaki dünyayı lekeler ve damgaladı. Bilinç, zaman, mekan ve çoğulluk gibi kavramlar birçok kez öne çıktı ve eşi benzeri görülmemiş bir ilgi gördü. Fransız filozof Henri Bergson, özellikle zamanın niceliksel doğasını reddederek zamanın sezgi tarafından tanımlanması gerektiğini ve insanlığın tek sabit ögesinin sürekli evrim ve değişiminin olduğunu söylediğinde, bu kavramları tanımlamada büyük ölçüde katkıda bulundu. Elbette bu görüşü, "kaos" karşısında korkaklık yerine Bergson'un teorisi bunu kucaklaması ve modernizme dahil etmesi nedeniyle oldukça tartışmalı ve popülerdi, bu yeni bulunan akıcılığı sanatsal hareketin gerçek bir özelliği haline getirdi.

Bu tez, W. B. Yeats'in eserlerinde bulunan Bergson felsefesinin yönlerini tespit etmeye ve incelemeye çalışacak, İrlandalı bir eski romantik şairin neden yazılarında Bergson'un zaman ve bellek fikrini ödünç alıp kullandığını tartışacak. Çalışma, Yeats'in şiirlerinin, kariyerinin genel akışından tamamen ayrı olan izole dönemlere ayrıldığını, ancak tümünün devam eden, sürekli bir büyüme sürecinin sonucu olduğunu savunuyor. Bu büyüme, bu süreci doğru yönde iten başlıca mekanizma olarak belleğin akıcı varlığı sayesinde dikkat çekici bir şekilde gerçekleştirildi. Bu tez ayrıca Yeat'ı, ilk romantik cildini yeni bir modernist ciltle değiştiren bir şair olarak tanımlama eğilimine meydan okuyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bergson, Yeats, zaman teorisi, hafıza teorisi, modernizm.

ARCHIVE RECORD INFORMATION

Title of the Thesis	HENRY BERGSON'S THEORY OF TIME AND MEMORY IN SELECTED POEMS BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS
Author of the Thesis	Manal BELLAMQADDAM
Thesis Advisor	Prof. Dr. Abdul Serdar ÖZTÜRK
Status of the Thesis	Master
Date of the Thesis	05/05/2023
Field of the Thesis	English Language and Literature
Place of the Thesis	UNIKA/IGP
Total Page Number	58
Keywords	Bergson, Yeats, Theory of Time, Theory of Memory, modernism

ARŞİV KAYIT BİLGİLERİ (in Turkish)

Tezin Adı	HENRY BERGSON'UN WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS'İN ŞİİRLERİNE UYGULANAN ZAMAN VE HAFIZA TEORİSİ
Tezin Yazarı	Manal BELLAMQADDAM
Tezin Danışmanı	Doç. Dr. Abdul Serdar ÖZTÜRK
Tezin Derecesi	Yüksek Lisans
Tezin Tarihi	05/05/2023
Tezin Alanı	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı
Tezin Yeri	KBU/LEE
Tezin Sayfa Sayısı	58
Anahtar Kelimeler	Bergson, Yeats, zaman teorisi, hafıza teorisi, modernism.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BERGSON

If there is a word that describes the 20th century or at least the first half of it, that word would be chaotic. The 20th century came and brought with it a change so overwhelming that it didn't leave a side of life unfazed. This change did not just involve the obvious global conflicts that took place and the wars and the financial crises, it also included the huge industrial growth and the scientific progress. These elements made the 20th century one of the most fast paced eras, so much so that it even altered people's vision and the way they viewed not only the new notions but also the previous ideas that used to seem clear and familiar. Since this dissertation discusses the representation of time, it is only fair to choose Henri Bergson as his theory of time had so much influence and made waves in the philosophical sphere back in the day.

Henri Bergson was adamant on explaining how our view of time as measurable and linear was wrong, and that instead we should look at it through the lenses of intuition because according to Bergson, time is but that, a series of moments to be experienced and not calculated. This new scope was borderline revolutionary and it opened a whole new door of interpretation. As a matter of fact, Henri Bergson's works, even his earliest studies like his 1889 *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, were basically criticisms and even to some extent rebellions against the conventionality with which time was being understood (Duong, 2020). His efforts were directed towards asserting intuition as a viable theory with which time could be viewed and understood, along with the notion that accompany it

Emmanuel Levinas actually said that Henri Bergson's biggest accomplishment was freeing philosophy from the prestigious shackling idea of scientific time going all the way back to Aristotle. In fact, throughout history, philosophers regarded time as an illusion or even as an obstacle in an attempt to elevate themselves or free their minds from the time-bound existence, but Bergson stood firm against this opinion, and actually encouraged getting back into duration instead. He believed that it isn't time that is an illusion but rather the representation of temporal phenomena as being spatial. In his book *Matter and Memory*, he actually says that we should stop giving matters a spatial

dimension and start giving them a temporal dimension instead (Massey, 2015) which is a clear statement that sums up his theory regarding time.

His initial major in math and physics ended up pulling him into facing the inevitable abstract questions that accompany science. So, it was a logical transition into philosophy, a discipline that aims to explain what science can't. The main distinctive addition to classic mathematics in the 19th century was the inclusion of time with the traditional spatial geometry as more scientists began to realize that life is actually a matter of time not space and that every visualization of a complex scientific notion is but the invention of our own minds in an attempt to rationalize and materialize vague concepts. Contrary to what one might think, Henri Bergson was quite the star in the field of philosophy in the early twentieth century and he always had what one might call an inclination towards the concept of time along with all the notions it involves.

Some would say that philosophy is a bridge between science and spirituality, between the abstract and the concrete, as philosophy happens to address the questions that science doesn't seem to answer. It also presents us with explanations of human behavior on a larger scale than let's say biology or physics. It delves into psychology and sociology to try and reconcile these disciplines in a way where they complement and complement each other. Others would say that philosophy is rather the outcome of science's shortcomings or inability to answer all the human questions that man tends to ask, questions that can't be explained through a mathematical equation or a physics rule. But whether it is a connector or an extension, philosophy is without doubt one of the most important disciplines that both ask questions and attempt to answer them at the same time.

And thus, it is as mentioned before, quite justifiable for Henri Bergson to make that jump from a purely scientific career in mathematics and physics to a more flexible yet somehow more complicated career in philosophy. The way his career took a turn to the better after he embraced philosophy is a clear indication that he was always destined to shine as a thinker, a philosopher rather than a mathematician in a classic way; his transition reinforces in some way the idea that reaching a certain high level of knowledge leads us to become skeptics. According to (Durant, 2009), Bergson's study of the physical mechanism of being led him to distinguish and take a closer look at 3 main contrasts: body and mind, matter and life, choice, and destiny. And because the human

mind tends to think in terms of visualization, giving a physical form to all concepts, it is easier for man to think of space rather than time, it is easier to comprehend the tangible than it is to even think about the hypothetical.

The approach has indeed changed. Instead of trying to explain spiritual concepts using scientific methods, philosophy tries to do the opposite, which is approaching scientific facts and viewing them from a more spiritual angle to shed the light of possibility on them. And it is maybe why Bergson rose to fame so quickly, he used this reversed method, whereas other philosophers tried to upgrade from a thought to a fact, he tried to breakdown a fact and explain it in terms of abstract capacity, stripping the notion of time, considered for so long as a mathematical value, of its accurate depiction and scientific definition and bestowing it with a different kind of definition, once based on concepts that man at that time were trying to shed.

Henri focused on this notion and argued that time is duration, because both of them are a continuous accumulation that extends from the past and into the future, which means that we cannot possibly tear the past and the future away from each other, as the former snowballs its way into the latter, nor can we claim that even part of the past is lost as the past endures, it resists and persists and accumulates to become part of a future whole which, in its turn, becomes a past after a while, and the cycle of buildup continues. The desires and intentions that create the future are conceived in the past. Furthermore, the likelihood of the future being the same as the past can be excluded because an accumulation is by definition a growth, or a buildup and thus a change that prevents the theory from becoming true. For all conscious beings, to grow is an endless change in search for the ultimate version of one's self.

After defining time, memory comes into play, because time rolls and is transported from the past into the future, then surely it must need some kind of vehicle and according to Bergson, that vehicle is memory. However, Bergson's idea of consciousness is also closely tied to time and memory. For Bergson, consciousness is that response that our mind learns over time and the reaction with which it faces each new situation. This response is not random of course, but it is an intuitive reflex acquired using the accumulation of past experiences and memories. The mind starts to use previous data amassed from the past to help create a virtual image of what each decision could lead to in the future and by this process, it creates a careful consideration

mechanism that is called consciousness built upon recollection, projection, and imagination. This creative evolution elevates man from a mere passive being that just goes with the flow of predetermined "destiny". In plainer words, through memory, a man makes a comparison between the current situation and previous similar situation, between current action plans and previous decisions, then weighs the pros, cons and eventual outcomes of each action plan to come to a "conscious" decision about what the right choice could be. This idea also cancels a precedent thought that man follows some sort of preplanned pathway, but rather attributes man with the quality of creative evolution and freedom of choice. This same freedom means that memory is not mere recollection of past events, it is actually far beyond and far more powerful than that; memory becomes a measuring tool used to assess a man's power of action. The next two concepts one might be confused about are memory and consciousness. The distinction is of course quite subtle but so crucial. Memory according to Bergson is the accumulation of past events, a structure of images in a chronological order with the outcome of their succession. Whereas consciousness is the use of this structure, this data, to analyze, choose and execute.

This distinction can also be compared to the one between matter and energy, inside all matter there is energy, but as humans generally, we tend to find it easier to understand matter than it is to grasp the notion of energy, as its meaning cannot be explained in plain tangible reasonable ways. After the introduction of motion and time into mathematical equations, and after the updates in the scientific field in the past century, one cannot help but be skeptical of whether exact science is actually exact or just an approximation, because it isn't hard to see how uncomfortable the concepts of physics are in the realm of the mind. Life itself is not compatible with these solid notions. Once man distances himself from the fields and views of mathematics and physics, he opens himself up for new interpretation or new ways of looking at the same matter, life thus, demands more of us than just a mere solid knowledge of its mechanical functionalities but a deeper understanding that can only be achieved through combining science with the hidden talents of the mind.

Psychology came in the 20th century to do just that, explore the depths of human consciousness, and try to rationalize philosophy. Bergson's theory of memory and time can also contribute in explaining the phenomenon of instinct, that can very well be

considered the direct result of yet again the accumulation of past experiences, life is indeed more than just its machinery. After defining time, memory comes into play, because time rolls and is transported from the past into the future, then surely it must need some kind of vehicle and according to Bergson, that vehicle is memory. However, Bergson's idea of consciousness is also closely tied to time and memory. For Bergson, consciousness is that response that our mind has towards each situation using the accumulation of past experiences and memories. The mind starts to use previous data amassed from the past to help create a virtual image of what each decision could lead to in the future and by this process, it creates a careful consideration mechanism that is called consciousness built upon recollection, projection, and imagination.

This creative evolution elevates man from a mere passive being that just goes with the flow of predetermined "destiny". So, if we follow this logic, Bergson views memory as a scale or some kind of similar tool that links the circumstances leading to a decision to the results of the decision and catalogs this process to use as a reference in future decision-making operations. Consciousness can therefore be defined as the recollection of past events and their help in the making of future choices. Henri Bergson tried to come up with the right imagery that would represent and explain what his idea of duration is but by his own confession and as Harris (2011) points out, all his attempts ended in failure. Harris also states that the ideal model to represent Bergson's perception of duration and non-quantifiable multiplicity is an image reflecting both a constant inside out, outside in shift, but without the spatial pointers that represent a beginning and an end.

For many, World War I was also a huge turning point for the world, a marker of some sort that caused a global shift but pinpointing any moment in history as the defining moment of change is a bit controversial especially based on Bergson's theory that promotes continuous growth rather than sudden change. If perceived this way, WWI is not actually a huge social, cultural historical indicator; it's more like the result of a series of smaller incidents that combined into this

seemingly life altering event. Therefore, we cannot disregard the effect of conflict and violence on the modernist perspective, and the emotional, group trauma of these events cannot be ignored. In 1922, a debate took place between Henri Bergson and Albert Einstein, because contrary to what many people might think, Henri Bergson was

a big deal, in fact he was huge at the beginning of the 20th century. Some of the biggest, most famous people in the world respected him, wrote about him, whether it be to praise him or to criticize his ideas. French philosopher Etienne Gilson called the 20th century the age of Bergson, while fellow philosopher Jean Wahl placed Bergson among the top 4 greatest philosophers in the world, alongside Socrates, Plato, Descartes and Kant, which is by all standards, a very high level of praise. Even non-French high-profile people like Lord Balfour and Theodore Roosevelt wrote of Bergson, which only goes to show how far his name had gone.

According to (Jimena Canales, 2017), the 1922 debate about the nature of time was so huge that it basically changed our perception of time completely. And how could it not, Einstein and Bergson are some of the biggest names in their respective fields who weirdly just happen to be both Jewish. For Bergson, one of the main problems in the purely scientific approach that Einstein used to tackle time, is that it wasn't purely scientific at all, but indeed a mix of fact and fiction or facts based on fiction. This approach wasn't made towards Einstein alone but to the whole scientific community that dealt with the notion of time at that point, including Paul Langevin. So technically, the Einstein vs. Bergson debate started long before 1922, but what really triggered the actual public discussion between them was Einstein's stating that the time of philosophers did not exist. Bergson was adamant on explaining how time cannot be as simply interpreted or even measured by mere clocks, that the notion is so much wider than that and that it has more than the scientific dimension that physics attributed to it.

The clock as a clock represents nothing more than an instrument, useless to the core if men didn't have a pre- existent understanding of time that later on gave birth to the need to measure it. So basically, Bergson offered a more reliable explanation of duration, an explanation that included all the now and how they relate to each other and thus all the durations too in a big motion of infinite accumulations. That's the complete opposite of what Einstein believed time to be, he believed that time is just a big block of pre-existent, predictable events. Einstein was convinced that the flow of time and our sense of duration was but an illusion or a flaw in our senses which fooled us into thinking that time was passing by when in fact, everything was trapped in a box-shaped universe.

1.2. YEATS

It is said that a person is not just a creation, that being born into the world isn't the final product, but instead, a person as a whole as an entity is but the sum of his experiences, and this little theory though a bit non-scientific in nature, goes well with the perception of Bergson. This same theory could very much apply to Yeats as a person first then as a writer or poet second. Yeats' life is a good example for this, his career went through some major changes and it made him the versatile icon of literature that he is known for. It's not just his works that elevate him to this status but also the process through which he went to emerge as the literary pioneer he was. One of the main characteristics of Yeats' poetry is how versatile it is, the themes he discussed ranged from the most romantic ones like love and history to the more modern concepts like politics, but all throughout his writings, he was adamant on using mythology, especially Irish mythology and he gave his poems a folkloric flare that both represented and tied him to his roots but also distinguished him from other poets of his era.

This mixture of new and old, history and modernity and the contrast between light and dark themes gave him the authenticity and distinction to be named one of the most respected poets in the world. His artistic career lasted over 50 years and this whole time he was just constantly evolving and changing but also keeping the core essence of who he is, showing clear attachment to his Irishness and a strong bond with what pushed him towards writing to begin with. The flow of his career was exactly that, a flow, constant and continuous but stable with no sudden breaks or shifts. Another feature that really set him apart from the rest is his determination to include his national identity in his work; his poems have a very dominant mythical vibe that he created based on Irish folklore and Irish traditional culture.

This trait was strongly invoked but the tense atmosphere between Ireland and England at that time, Yeats felt that including his culture in his work was a way for him to showcase his allegiance to his nation and his commitment to the cause of freedom. This freedom was also symbolically represented in his poems through symbolism and beautifully lyrical imagery hence the use of myths checks both cases, it's a clear show of loyalty and a great way to employ the romantic movement to serve his style. Slowly but steadily, Yeats started branching out into modernism with a more of a realistic touch. This change, though smooth, did create a clear contrast between his earlier romantic

works defined by softness and his newly found inclination towards focusing on the depth and realism of the themes. This doesn't mean that the quality of his poems changed, which is one more distinctive feature of Yeats. Indeed the uniformity of quality of his works is particularly impressive and not a feat many can claim to have accomplished. To go through transition, to deal with change and to be able to keep up the same caliber of productivity is a clear indication of talent and endowment.

However, this mixture of romanticism and modernism also brought on a lot of clashing contrasts in Yeats' works. How can we expect a movement almost solely based on lyrical spiritualism and another movement very much attached to mature realism to not collide at some point or another, especially when the latter came as the actual rebellion against the former? One of Yeats' most known features might very well be his use of symbolism which was also impacted by the flow of time, not only did his use of symbols get better, it also became more and more complex as it started reflecting his own personal state of mind and began to form a more intimate bond, extracting symbols from his own personal life. Yeats was capable of finding analogies that link the past and the present with a touch of mysticism. Indeed his poems had a slight flare of intentional opacity caused by his artistic authenticity and bluntness.

For a poet who transitioned into modernism and who lived through the industrial progress that happened in the late 19th century to the early 20th century, we can notice a clear lack of reference to inventions or anything having to do with the industrial scene, Yeats avoided incorporating this side of life into his works maybe due to his unflinching, ever-present romantic nature, or maybe simply because he didn't perceive it to be necessary to the overall ideas that he wants to convey to his readers. Either way his indifference towards the aspects of modern life also distinguished him from the other contemporary poets and didn't go unnoticed by the critics.

His old age isolation also contributed to dehumanizing his poetry as he showed an obvious rejection of the aspects of modern life all the while embracing the modernist literary markers. As time passed and towards the end of his life, Yeats exhibited more and more signs of obscurity and darkness in his works, no longer trying to decorate the reality and the kind of nihilistic mindset that took over him at that point, this shift did nothing but add to the versatility of his works and the fascinating journey of his career, clearly adding to the maturity he gained as a modernist and the depth he showcased as

an older man. Yeats begins as a romantic visionary but under the political and social crisis he breaks up with his initial rhetoric of being a free spirited artist submerged in pre Raphaelite aesthetics and very far away from any form of modernism, but this original the form of Yeats is of huge importance in the creation of the newer version of Yeats, the Yeats who embraced modernism. His identity as a poet lies within the heroes, he writes about either as some sort of surrogate (like King Goll) or just versions of Yeats, individual sides of him that each play a specific role in his life. This kind of identification through characters from poems isn't a habit that Yeats abandoned when he sailed into modernism, rather a form of self-expression that he embraced through all the phases of his life.

This habit of his wasn't just self-inflicted; he also very famously got inspired by his lover Maude Gonne for the role of Helen of Troy, and that's just one example of the many instances where Yeats showed the true genius of his myth making imaginative abilities. There is a certain touch of autobiographical flair to Yeats poetry, but the amount of mystic elements cover up for this fact and makes almost all comparisons with his life unlikely. He took what is seemingly a personal experience and generalized it in a way where it would fit with a myth, which is basically finding similarities, as small as they may be, between the events in his own life and events found in myths and legends. This could also very well be the result of some sort of self-given importance, that he'd think his life as an Irish man born in the 19th century can be compared in any way to the lives of heroes from ancient times, engraved in the pages of history. Furthermore, this type of generalization can mean that Yeats categorized people into types with a number of generic traits that reoccur through time with slight changes that give each person individualism and uniqueness that separate them from the rest of the characters in the same type.

It's as if a character travels across time, keeping the core elements of what makes his personality but shifts just enough to create a distinct difference between his present and his past identities. Based on this idea, did Yeats think of himself as king Goll? Does it mean that he identified with the character? The thought doesn't seem all that crazy if we look at all the similarities between Yeats and this legendary character that he associated himself with. Yeats expresses his desire to embody his Irish identity in his early years, he draws in an English audience all while proudly representing his Irishness,

like some kind of double play, where he is uniquely predisposed to both take over the literary scene in the English speaking world but also doing it because and despite his nationality and nationalism. if we go back to the example of king Goll, we can also draw a certain contrast there, between how a king strayed away from battle and into the Irish woods and the fact that Yeats was led away from his initial inclination towards a political involvement by the romantic elements of his poetry mainly the Irish mythical aspect of it.

The destruction of the king's instruments, on the other hand, might not be a direct borrow from Yeats' life but a self warning that Yeats gave himself, to not get so immersed in the symbolic world that he would forget his initial intention and his ultimate goal, as if abandoning his national cause is the exact equivalent of going mad. Yeats early poetry seems to not only pick characters, but also decors, he chose places that give off vibes of private mystery such as woods, or even islands, secluded and closed off to the world, blocking out all the social "noise" that might disturb this ideal romantic setting that Yeats built to symbolize his own desire for poetic autonomy. He not only created these imaginative worlds, he also inhabited them, such is the case in poems like "the lake isle of Innisfree" or " the hosting of the Sidhe ". we can never forget that all these works were published and read by 2 kinds of audiences, the first one is an Irish audience that would draw inspiration and moral strength from this public display of national pride and nationalism and the second is the non-Irish audience to whom Yeats wants to convey this same national pride in an attempt to demonstrate mental strength and strong commitment to the cause of freedom. One of the best examples for Yeats' early style and romantic flair is the poem "the song of wandering Aengus", the natural scenery mentioned in this poem is so beautifully described.

The woods, the stream, the sun and the moon, Yeats spared no effort in the creation of this world, so very close to a fairytale setting especially for the mention of metamorphosis and the addition of the supernatural elements. The poem is so smooth and simple that it reminds the reader of old folk tales in a way that enchants them just like the main character Aengus was enchanted in the poem. The dominant theme is, of course, love or desire, the love that the hero feels towards a fairy. But the undertones or the idea behind the poem is, once again, Yeats slipping into the skin of a character to tell the tale of his own experience, his love for a being or a thing that is in his eyes magical,

his love for poetry. he tries to convey his enchantment and share it with the readers. One very defining moment in the poem is when the fairy calls Aengus by his name, or as we can see it now, the moment when Yeats became Yeats, discovering vocation and following his calling. And again, just like king Goll, the main character (Yeats) wanders away into the woods, away from his initial plan. Yeats' style changes, his works exhibit a clear but gentle shift in style and theme, which is why he is considered one of the most famous modern poets.

Bergson and Yeats are an odd pair, but a very compatible pair. Their lives and their visions though seemingly quite different, are in reality quite consistent. As a start, both of them promoted concepts that were considered unique at the time and both of them tried to convey ideas that sometimes went against the commonly agreed upon opinion.

But besides the general similarities, Bergson and Yeats danced around the same notion, the notion of time, except that Bergson was explaining it and revolutionizing it and Yeats was using it and living it.

2. BERGSON, YEATS AND THE GYRES

According to the Cambridge dictionary, a gyre is “a circular movement in which each circle is above, below, or wider than the one before”. By definition, a gyre is a repetitive movement going back and forth between two peaks. Yeats used the symbolic value of the gyres and built a whole philosophy around it and with it.

Basically, Yeats came to believe that time has a pattern, an unbreakable cycle of the same events coming and going again and again, changing the details, the eras and the specific occurrences but keeping the core basic elements of the cycles, the ups and downs and the rise and fall movements.

Yeats seems to adopt an accepting attitude towards this perception of the world, he seems to, sometimes, even delight in the tragic fate that he believes in. The imagery of the gyres has been mentioned or hinted at in many of Yeats poems that we will come to discuss later on in this study.

Although Yeats seems rather traditional, his works have a depth and a multitude of dimensions that prevent us from associating him to any one single literary movement, his works show an impressive evolution and he embraces each new “era” with the same creativity and flow of inspiration. According to (Holdeman & Levitas, 2010), Yeats seems to oddly but perfectly fit into the modernist era as they, Yeats and the movement, both have deep roots in conflict and thrive on paradoxical inconsistencies.

However, aside from his poems, Yeats has other works where he uses gyres and explains his point of view more clearly. In his text “a vision”, Yeats gives us a peek into how difficult and unusually tense and dense his philosophy and view of the world is; he employs and works with the concept of the gyres and builds upon it to recreate and convey his perceptions.

According to (Minahen, 1992), the imagery of whirlpool is a symbol that represents a difficult power struggle between destruction and creation, the image itself is rather “generative and creative”. However, the even more fascinating side of the gyre imagery in Yeats’ work is his usage of the double gyre. Yeats paints the image of two cones that move in contrasting harmony, and opposite flows. When one cone is wide the other is not, which makes this image a constant reciprocal parallelism. This image

depicted in “a vision” is not originally but is surprisingly Bergsonian. Henri Bergson writes:

“This inner life may be compared to the unrolling of a coil, for there is no living being who does not feel himself coming gradually to the end of his role; and to live is to grow old. But it may just as well be compared to a continual rolling up, like that of a thread on a ball, for our past follows us, it swells incessantly with the present that it picks up on its way; and consciousness means memory” (Bergson, 1999).

Bergson does end up admitting that language cannot possibly explain or accurately describe the concept of time, as close as it can come to it. Bergson seems to want the coil to go both ways simultaneously, the ball should be both winding and unwinding at the same time, to convey time accumulation and human finitude (Harris, 2011).

According to (Bedient, 2009), Bergson’s and Yeats’ styles of writing can both be described as a flow or a dynamic and tornadic flux. So for the sake of a healthy study of Yeats’ work, Barbara Croft suggests that the right way to approach an analysis, there needs to be a certain leniency in the usage of intuition along with intellect (Croft, 1987), especially in “a vision”, as Yeats reaches no conclusions nor does he give actual answers.

3. HENRI BERGSON IN W.B YEATS

3.1. The Indian Upon God

“The Indian upon God” is a poem written by William Butler Yeats in the late 19th century. The poem was obviously mainly inspired by the Indian spiritual culture and its perception of the divine, probably because of the diverse religious beliefs in the ancient and new Indian subcontinent. The use of non-human creatures and their personification is also an added hint at the fact that the poet was inspired by their spiritual culture to write this poem. The poet begins by a flowy walk through the exploration of the divine then goes on to investigate the many manifestations of divinity in the Indian culture by letting different creatures give their own interpretation of God.

Yeats concludes the poem by confirming the importance of delving into the concept of existence of God and the universe through as many angles as possible to ensure a better, more comprehensive understanding of these concepts. Yeats also uses the poem to highlight the importance of contemplation to achieve a deeper appreciation and grasp over the different philosophical and cultural aspects of other people's visions of God, divinity and existence.

Yeats' tone and way of describing this spiritual journey also tells us about the general ambience that should accompany it, an aura of calm, thoughtfulness, respect and open mindedness. Only under these conditions can a man come to the right conclusions and go through a sound, reasonable, productive chain of thoughts.

The poem “the Indian upon God”, though short and frankly quite simple, is rich in themes and concepts. At first reading, one might be too distracted by the talking animals and plants, the beautiful imagery and the strong focus on the divine to notice the concepts of time and memory. Since the beginning of the poem, the speaker talks of time as an unstoppable force that drives and shapes existence, he creates some sort of contrast between the normal passage of time and his own slow motion as he moves through the space he is in. he specifically uses this double paced imagery to further delineate how strong the notion of time is and how all powerful and uncontrollable it is. This serves to relay to us the idea that humans are driven and controlled by forces far greater than they can fathom. This same idea is further elaborated as the speaker moves

on to ponder and talk about God and his presence, and how as complicated as the idea of time is, the idea of a divine being having the ultimate power over humans, is even harder to grasp. This leaves the Indian in a state of confusion and unease as he walks on, trying to reconcile in his head the idea of the flow of time and the existence of all mighty divinity. This struggle is obviously not exclusive to the Indian; Yeats was clearly using this one man to paint the mental image of all men capable of deep thought and soul searching in their intellectual journey from oblivion to enlightenment.

We notice that the concept of time here was a goal and a stepping stone. Yeats first began by establishing its all encompassing nature then using it to reach into the realm of divinity. Eventually, the Indian comes to realize that God exists outside of time and that his presence does not abide by the rules of the universe that the human brain can comprehend. He makes sure to express the notion that time controls all things but the divine.

In the poem, Yeats also explores and uses the concept of memory. By reflecting on his own memories and using them to come to conclusions, the speaker shows us that memory is as strong as time when it comes to shaping the human understanding of other larger and more complex concepts. The speaker makes sure to point out that his own memories, along with memories in general, are subject to change and progress, and thus they are subject to the passage of time and its impact. This constantly evolving fluidity attributed to memory serves to shed light and point towards the ever changing nature of thought and our own understanding of the universe.

The Indian also comes to the conclusion that as hard as it is to understand the idea of God, it is also just as hard to agree on one interpretation of him. Since our awareness of God is, in a large part, based on personal experiences, personal memories and personal analysis, it is only logical that we would all have slightly, if not completely different grasps on the idea of God and the universe.

Ultimately, this division or distinction can only mean that our understanding of God is but a fragment among many, a fragment that, if compiled with others, can form a larger, clearer picture of the universe. This also brings us to the realization that no matter how strong the concept of memory is and no matter how much impact it has on our lives, thoughts, understandings as individuals, it still falls short when it comes to

competing against the much larger, much more complex, and much less customizable idea of a divine God.

Throughout "The Indian upon God," the concepts of time and memory are used to reinforce larger themes of divinity and spirituality. Yeats tackled these concepts in a way that showed how he feels about God and how he perceives the universe; he used time and memory as lenses through which we can look at the world and understand it while also keeping in mind that these lenses are personalized and not in any way complete or whole. This realization or convictions aims to push us towards constant pondering and thus constant evolving, in a way where the goal would be to look at the universe through as many eyes as possible and from as many angles as possible. The poem also serves as a reminder that time is powerful and unstoppable, it shapes our memories and molds our understanding of life. The flow of time is constant and so is the progress that can be achieved on the intellectual, spiritual level to reach the unexplored limits of human knowledge.

Ultimately, "the Indian upon God" can be perceived as some sort of meditation about God, humanity and the universe through the usage of time as a contrastive meter and a driving force that fuels and enriches this spiritual journey of man.

William Yeats' vision of time is very compatible with Henri Bergson's own perception of it. As we said before, Bergson sees time as uninterrupted, a chain, a snowball, and that is exactly how Yeats interpreted it in this poem. He made sure to not cut the chain of memories that constitute time and he clearly delineated through the speaker that he envisioned time as a long fluid accumulation that turns into memories.

The poem also agrees with Bergson on the fact that the self is not a fixed entity but rather an ever evolving process that uses memories and personal experiences to build and form itself, and so by invoking all of the other entities, Yeats seems to hint at the importance of stepping out of the box. As cliché as this concept might be, exploring an idea as vast as time and divinity and the universe would not be complete without a thorough analysis from different stand views.

Though the poem is not centered around the idea of time and much less the concept of Yeatsian gyres, we can sense some of that influence in some verses.

Yeats (1938) shows a sort of juxtaposition that reflects the image of back to back events creating the Bergsonian continuation.

“I passed along the water's edge below the humid trees,... I passed a little further on and heard a lotus talk:... I passed a little further on and heard a peacock say”(lines 1, 9, 17)

3.2. The Wild Swans at Coole

“The wild swans at Coole” is a poem written in 1916 by William Butler Yeats. This poem is the perfect example of Yeats' obsession with time, it delves into the themes of aging, mortality and passage of time. This time, the poem has a real life spatial setting, the home of Yeats' friend, lady Gregory.

At the beginning of the poem, Yeats wonders at the sight of the swans, noble creatures that seem to signify youth and vitality for the 50 years old Yeats. He looks at them while they are on the lake and describes their beauty. Yeats, then, starts really emphasizing the theme of time by noting the changing seasons, mentioning that the leaves have changed color from green to gold which clearly indicates that time has not only passed, but it has moved from young green spring to brown older fall. This time evolution can also be seen in the swans, as they themselves have become majestic, fully grown birds.

The same change that transformed the scenery and the swans, also affected the people. They have become older, more tired rather than younger and full of life, but according to Yeats, the time added to their lives does not equal wisdom added to their minds. The changing humans are still more foolish than the swans.

Yeats then turns to himself, he notices his own aging and wonders about the future, how he would grow old and eventually die and whether he would be remembered when it happens. He expresses resigned conviction that all things must come to an end.

The strongest symbol in this poem is obviously the swans, representing youth and vigor, grace and beauty, elegance at its prime. The poem is basically a contemplation of the human condition, man's mortality and his journey through time. The imagery used in the poem serves to evoke melancholy and thus relay the poet's own feeling about the unstoppable flow of time, a feeling of sad acceptance and compliance.

The concept of time is central in this poem, Yeats made sure to convey his understanding of time as best as he could in a very lyrical but quite ingenious way. He used contrast: old and young, peaking and plummeting and most importantly, aging and timelessness. He used the swans not only as a symbol of youth but also as a fixed point that allows the reader to visually notice the impact that time has on the surrounding elements. By making the swans timeless, he further emphasized the speed by which everything else, himself included, changed and aged. He made the swans a point of reference for the passage of time and the speed by which everything else is changing, namely the seasons, the scenery, the colors and the people.

By showing the swans as unaging, he also sheds light on the deadly strength of time, the way it ruins human life in the most gracious, uncontrollable, inevitable way. As the swans keep their elegance and fresh beauty, everything around them experiences the opposite effect, decay, deterioration and eventually death. And so, Yeats not only succeeds at representing the passage of time, he also conjures the reader's sense of consciousness when it comes to aging and mortality along with the feeling of awe in regards to the swans. He combines both a celebration of the swan's stunning majesty and awe of their timeless beauty with a sad, melancholic, acute awareness of his own lack thereof. In a way, Yeats also laments the fleeting nature of youth and its undoubtable, undeniable, eventual ending, gently but very resolutely reminding the readers of the inevitability of change and death. This reminder was aimed at himself before it was aimed at the readers, as Yeats first reflected on his own state of aging and inescapable passing, with one main concern about being remembered. Indeed the poet showed obvious apprehension to the matter of memory and his struggle to grasp the idea of eventual non-existence.

The realization and conviction of future passing pushed the poet to consider the importance of art and beauty as he wondered if what he has accomplished so far in life would be of any significance to others, which means that he attached great importance to his work as an artist and consequently to art itself. His celebration of beauty also serves to stress this very same point, that beauty and art is what gives value to time. He measured his achievements by the amount of beauty he would leave behind and he wondered whether he would be remembered, not for any personal trait, but for the works he would leave behind to people after him to judge, evaluate and hopefully value. Based

on this, we could probably say that Yeats thought of memory as the results of time but also as a notion that goes beyond time and transcends it, memory remains when all else disappears, memory gives value when all else loses it and memory preserves when time tries to erase all trace of the past, so time is brings mortality but memory remains immortal.

Henri Bergson's theory of time is particularly clear in "wild swans at Coole ", as Yeats obviously views time exactly as Bergson does: an unmeasurable flow that brings change and that is shaped mainly by personal experiences and memories. Bergson's whole idea of time is that it is based on the man's ability to remember the past and visualize it into the future, which exactly what Yeats used to demonstrate his own point of view, remembering the past through the symbol of the swans and using these memories to project himself into the future and envision what will be.

Bergson was also firm in arguing that the perception of time is not uniform and objective but rather it is very subjective and based on individual experiences. In the poem we can very easily pick up on the personal side of Yeats experience with the swans, his perception of them and his own approach to their significance influenced the implication and meaning he has attached to them, the swans as he views them might have nothing to do with someone else's view of them, even in the same space, even in the same period of time. We can say that Henri Bergson's theory of time has provided a strong framework to analyze and interpret Yeats' aim and his vision in this poem. His usage of memory as a way to forge a strong base of timelessness and consistency and the contrast he created to paint an image of progress and change, have established his personal view on the matter of time and its relationship with memory, in a structured frame of meditation and reflection that eventually led to him coming to terms and embracing, rather melancholically, his mortality and inevitable fate.

The whole poem is basically full of symbolism and imagery that depict both the passage of time and the cyclical nature of time, for example according to (Yeats, 2017):

" The trees are in their autumn beauty,... Under the October twilight the water... The nineteenth autumn has come upon me... Passion or conquest, wander where they will... Delight men's eyes when I awake some day"Lines (1, 3, 7, 23, 29)

The idea of time progressing and changing is very clear, Yeats shows his obvious conscience of the passage of time and his dread too, in the seventh line of the poem, his mention of how many autumns have passed clashes with the agelessness of the swans

and constitutes what could be interpreted as a mini double gyres, as both lives of the poet and the swan are in motion, intertwined but also independent and with different rhythms, paces and destinations.

3.3. Easter 1916

As the title suggests, “Easter 1916” is a poem written by William Butler Yeats as a response to the Easter rising that occurred in Dublin on April 24th, 1916. The poem is a beautiful mixture of so many themes ranging from the concept and people's understanding of heroism to the changing power of political events, namely revolutions.

The structure of the poem itself is a nod at the historical event that happened, as each of the 4 stanzas of the poem consist of 16 lines. Yeats start the poem by describing the people who participated in the Easter rising and portraying them as both normal individuals and greatly motivated by their sense of idealism and eager yearning for change, he also implies that their actions or the event itself has given them a new identity, not completely different from their initial self but more like an added layer to who they are as people.

After this generalization, Yeats goes more into specifics as he introduces the leaders of the revolution by names, as a eulogy no doubt, as they were executed by the British authorities for their role in the uprising but also as a way of immortalizing them. Though he does depict them as somewhat ignorant, passionate idealists, he does not deny that their hearts were in the right place, that their actions and consequent end came from a place of deep nationalism and intense desire for a long awaited freedom. In this part, Yeats really emphasizes the transformative power of this political event and how these peoples' sacrifice gave them a new identity, an extension to their old self but with an extra layer of purpose and dignity.

Yeats goes on to do some self reflection of his own, focusing on his own state of confusion. He implies that he is incapable of producing an appropriate response to the event. Even though it touches him on the most personal level, Yeats finds himself immobilized by uncertainty and confined by his inability to make sense of the event, with clashing views and opposing thoughts. He compares himself to a stone, stagnant among the fuss and unmoved by the fray. However, Yeats soon expresses how he would

have dealt with the situation differently, urging for a show of indifference, faith and rejection of any violent political action that seems to be, eventually, not only useless but actually harmful. Yeats finds that the best way to handle this old as age conflict is with detachment and disengagement, showing once more his broader vision of life and death and the powerful transformation that they bring with or without human intervention.

Overall , “Easter 1916” is a call to reevaluate the necessity of violence, action and human interference, a call to embrace the deeper belief in natural denouement aided by forces beyond human reach.

As apparently all Yeats poems are, “Easter 1916” is a meditation, and a complex self evaluation and a reflection into events that most people might perceive as heroic. Yeats actually took a very careful approach in describing the actions of the martyrs, never fully agreeing or disagreeing, which shows both his hesitation and his confusion, as he himself hasn't come to terms with the nature of the event yet. He considered this historical event more of a transformative experience for the participants than a revolutionary act of sacrifice, this transformation was not entirely positive nor was it entirely negative, which is exactly one of the main reasons that caused the poet such great confusion and uncertainty. In his head he struggled to accept and eventually didn't actually accept the fact that some change cannot happen without willful action and active attempts even when the attempt involves violence, and eventually death.

Besides the event itself, the other major transformative element or rather the real transformative element is time. As time passed and changed, many parts of life did, especially after the rebellion ended and all the heroes were executed by the British authorities. This transformation occurred because of time and with time. It left only memories behind, memories of existence, memories of the coup and finally memories of death. Thus the change brought by time was one of destructive nature, one that couldn't have been stopped and one that couldn't have been reversed, while memory was the witness to all of this chaos. The use of the phrase “a terrible beauty is born” only goes to confirm this theory, that Yeats found terrifying, fascinating beauty in the series of events through and after the Easter rising, and no change as deep and as radical as death can have a bigger impact on a man's identity and by proxy on the identity of the society he belongs or belonged in.

By the end of the poem, Yeats seems to have come to a fairly satisfactory conclusion, that not all action is good action and not all change is good change, no matter how noble the intentions behind it are, sometimes the best solution is to just wait, to turn a blind eye and yet again to let time handle it, change it, alter it in the least damaging way possible. This absolutely supports Bergson's own perception and point of view on the matter. Indeed, Bergson's theory of time is centered around the idea of duration which is of course a completely subjective and customizable experience, as it cannot be measured objectively but rather experienced and shaped by perception and memory, this shows us that at its core, Bergson's theory on time goes hand in hand with the way that Yeats represents it in this poem, giving it much bigger depth than just action leading to reaction then consequence and scaling it in a much more complex dimension that takes it beyond the linear sequence of events, viewed the same way by anyone and everyone.

The poem "Easter 1916" has a much wider take on the event of the rising, the poet doesn't treat it as a singular, individual, separate occurrence but rather as a sequel to many past episodes and a prequel to many more to come, he urges not to view it as isolated but more like an extension to be extended. Indeed every action does have a reaction and ultimately has consequences too, which is why an act of impulsive heroism at the time could turn into a violent trigger to many more acts of violence and rebellion for example.

The Easter rising takes from previous history and gives to future history, like a single loop or link in a long chain connecting history to the near and far future. The poem also maintains the idea that one situation can be and most definitely should be viewed from different points of view before giving the final or semi final personal judgment on it. This was the case for how the acts of heroism were viewed. By some they were the actions of brave men who sought freedom and dignity and by others, those actions were impulsive, destructive and to some extent, quite useless.

Yeats' words and the way he described the rebellion makes it seem as though the events of the Easter Rising have altered time itself, causing a rapid and profound change in Irish history, a rift if you may, or a sudden troublesome crack in the wall of history. Bergson might contend that this feeling of upheaval is a subjective experience that is influenced by memory and perception rather than just an issue of objective historical fact, in other words, Bergson might see Yeats perception of this event as a natural

reaction or a mere reflection of the poet's past life experiences on this level. Ultimately, this also supports our philosophical theory that no event is completely unphased and no perception of man is totally unbiased, every situation we go through or witness gives us mental material to apply, intentionally and unintentionally, to future similar situations, this material is stored in memory and brought out whenever our minds feel there is a need for it or a similar case that could use it as input.

Yeats calls the Easter Rising rebels "ignorant good-will" and "fumbling in a greasy till" later in the poem. This sense of futility and meaninglessness in the rebels' activities is suggested by these sentences, which may be why Yeats initially opposed the Rising. However, Yeats' perspective on the rebels changes as the poem goes on, and he begins to regard them as heroic individuals who, through their sacrifice, have attained a sort of immortality.

Bergson's theory of memory, which emphasizes the importance of subjective experience in forming our perception of the past, might be applied to this change in viewpoint. According to Bergson, memory is a process of subjective interpretation and not only a matter of retrieving factual facts, it allows us to analyze a situation not based on reality but based on stored data, similar to the situation we face, as some sort of continuation of the past through a learning, projecting and applying process.

Overall, "Easter 1916" might be interpreted as an investigation into the subjective nature of time and memory, as well as the intricate and frequently conflicting feelings that are triggered by historical events, as no event in history is completely unique and unprecedented. In the first line of the poem, Yeats was already hinting at the passage of time, (Yeats & Finneran, 1989)says:

“ I have met them at close of day” (line 1). This line alone sets the poem in the past and indicates that what will follow is a recollection, a memory of past events and that since then, time has gone by. Later on in the poem (Yeats & Finneran, 1989) continues his retelling of the story by saying: “All changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty is born”, (line 15-16); this suggests that a huge shift has occurred and something has emerged to change the course of history to be both the end of an era and the start of another.

These are, of course, just a few examples of Yeats' usage of language and symbols to represent all aspects of the concept of time, its passage and its changes

3.4. Sailing To Byzantium

For a poem so rich in language, imagery and themes, "sailing to Byzantium" is a rather short poem. Its size probably adds to the complexity and the density of the ideas behind it. In this poem, William Butler Yeats discusses the concepts of age and time and takes a closer look into the state of mortality and the constant search for immortality. The search for immortality, age, and mortality are all topics that the poet examines. The speaker seeks a means to transcend his own mortality since he is keenly aware of it. He longs to set sail for Byzantium, an old city he perceives as being rich in culture, art, and refinement. The poem's title itself makes reference to this historic city. The poem's vocabulary is intricate and sophisticated, with numerous connections to literature, art, and mythology.

Rich imagery that draws from mythology, the natural world, and art is also present. The speaker's wish to sail to a location where he might experience a feeling of permanence and transcendence is expressed in the poem's opening words. A sense of beauty, workmanship, and the natural world are also evoked by the poem's use of imagery of birds and other creatures. A powerful picture of a bird appears in the last verse, and it gives a sense of majesty or the aura of nobility to the poem. In the poem, the conflict between tradition and modernity is also discussed. Yeats tries to balance his feeling of cultural legacy with how quickly things are changing in the world. The poem may be interpreted as a response to the difficulties of modernity and technological advancement since the speaker is drawn to the art and culture of Byzantium as a means of obtaining a type of immortality.

Yeats was extremely preoccupied with the subject of age and mortality when he composed "Sailing to Byzantium." When he penned the poem, in his sixties, he had lately experienced a string of personal losses, including the passing of his friend Lady Gregory and the leaving of his wife for France. In addition, Yeats lived in a society that was undergoing fast change, one in which modernism and technical advancement were challenging old values and cultural conventions. The poem might be interpreted as Yeats' answer to these difficulties as he looks for a method to transcend mortality and discover a feeling of permanence in a world that is always changing.

One major theme in the poem is the quest for the search for immortality, triggered by the natural, most basic human instinct, the instinct to live and survive. And since the poet is so anxious about the idea of death and so distressed by the eventuality of his mortality, he seeks whatever way to push the inevitable. His mind automatically wonders and seeks refuge in what he believes is the perfect representation of immortality, that is the city of Byzantium, a place of transcendence and greatness, where art, intellect and culture are gloriously eternal. Yeats even suggests that the aspects of art and culture in Byzantium go beyond the physical constraints of its natural attributes. In his mind, the only way to seek, achieve and ensure immortality is through manmade art, as it is guaranteed to overcome the test of time and remain when all else disappears.

The speaker describes the natural environment in great detail throughout the whole poem. He uses terms like "salmon-falls" and "mackerel-crowded seas" to convey a feeling of richness and plentiness. However, when the speaker compares the natural world to "fish, flesh, or fowl," these imagery are also linked to rot and death.

The speaker makes a clear distinction between the fickle nature of the world and the durability and transcendence of Byzantium's art and culture. He suggests that the art and culture generated in the city are timeless and unchangeable by describing it as a place where "monuments of unageing intellect" are formed. In order to escape the constraints of the natural world, the speaker is drawn to this type of art and culture.

We can look at this parallelism between mortality and immortality as a contrast between another 2 notions that are modernity and tradition. The poet seems just as eager to preserve tradition and protect what is left of the historical heritage, as he was with attaining immortality. His mesmerized description and his dwelling on the glorification of Byzantium can certainly show us how much he cares about it and what it represents and how much he wants to preserve this hope filled illusion that his mind concocted.

For the speaker, art and culture are not just the goal, but they are also a means to an end, a vehicle that has the power to link the present to the past, the new to the old and consequently, it has the power to safeguard tradition and build around it without tearing it down. In a way, preserving art helps us preserve our past identity, it is a window into who we were and eventually and who we will be, as no identity is whole without origins and roots. Art is also an escape for Yeats, he perceived it as a safe haven, calm, familiar and comfortable, away from the fast paced turmoil of industrial development that hit the

world in the early decades of 20th century. It is with a lot of hesitation and apprehension that Yeats came to discover and probe this new age, an age that didn't fit with his personality or style but an age that he needed to accept and embrace for there was no going back to the old ways. And thus, as all humans do, Yeats followed his instinct and his instinct wanted to go home, but home wasn't an option because home was years behind him, so he created his own virtual home, with imagination and some excellent visualization genius. He made something pleasantly snug and timeless in the middle of unrest and unfamiliar chaos, which only serves to further maintain and reaffirm his deep desire to stay connected with past tradition.

It is also quite fascinating to me how Yeats managed to portray Byzantium as a symbol of eternal youth as well as a representation of roots and tradition. This ability to show both sides of this coin and still make them completely match shows the extent of his literary genius. He managed to make tradition and youth, 2 concepts that are usually on opposite sides and fending for opposite points of view, he managed to make them seem like 2 of the most compatible qualities that could actually go exclusively hand in hand.

The way Yeats speaks of time is also very telling and surprisingly double sided. On one hand, he is trying to escape it, run from it, he fears it and dreads the effect that time will have on him and on the world in general. Yeats' main concern was to avoid the irreversible damage of time, his fear of aging was most likely the result of his own self reflection, considering that he was in his sixties when he wrote this poem, it is only reasonable that at that age he would be alert and anxious about what the future holds for him, and he would be forced to look back and wonder about his life, his role and his place in the universe. However, Yeats also looks beyond the destructive power of time, he looks at it as something to be treasured and preserved. He wants to protect the previous creations of time and guard them as part of his identity; he is both terrified and fascinated by time, both full of angst and protective of it.

The role of time also changes depending on the place. In Byzantium, Yeats considers time an ally that promotes eternal youth and happiness. In Byzantium, time is an element to be embraced, an element that brings added value, stability and comfort to the speaker, but in the real world where Yeats lives, time is the enemy, it's the opponent

in the race of age. In real life, Yeats dreads time and fears its effect; he views time as a disruptive element that could bulldoze Yeats' life.

"Sailing to Byzantium " is also full of religious imagery, Christian and pagan. True to his Yeatsian identity, Yeats cannot help but use mythology, which shouldn't surprise anyone; this is after all, a poem about preserving tradition and celebrating the past. The main point of using mythology and religious references is to convey one central idea: that time is not only a destructive force but also a force that can serve rebuilding, preserving and transformation. The speaker thinks that the only way to transcend time and work around its disastrous consequences is to use art, because art, according to Yeats, goes beyond the limitations of reality and the boundaries imposed by time, art and literature cross the borders of nature and approach the edges of immortality.

There are many reasons that make Byzantium the subject of so much amazement, in fact Byzantium was at some point one of the most beautiful cities on earth. First there was its strategic location, located right on the Bosphorus linking the Mediterranean sea to the black sea, it promoted trade, commerce and travel of all kind, not to mention how strategically located it is from a military point of view, it was both an excellent attack point and an easily defensible area.

Then there is the rich cultural heritage it possessed, indeed Byzantium was the perfect melting pot of many major civilizations at the time. Byzantium contained elements from both the Greek and the Roman civilizations, which made the city the destination for artists, writers, painters and sculptors, they came from all over the world to wander and wonder, to witness and express, to give and get inspired. One of the main artistic aspects of the city and probably one of the most noticeable ones in it is architecture. Yes Byzantine architecture and even its remains to this day, is absolutely jaw droppingly gorgeous. The city was home to many magical public buildings, some of them with religious significance, and this made the architectural scenery amazingly unique and beautiful.

All of these elements gave Byzantium huge historical and political weight, as the city was the capital of the thousand years of the Byzantine Empire and a major player in the geopolitical dynamics of that time. But knowing Yeats, his choice of Byzantium was based on how big the Byzantine army was or how pretty Hagia Sophia is. His choice

was probably based on the spiritual and mystical significance of these elements; Yeats was attracted to the odd, mysterious practices and traditions of the city, as it was located right in the center of so many cultures and religions, surely this diversity would have created a very interesting combination of folk tale and legends, and would have been rich with historical significance and potential, a real shrine that ensures continuity and the immortalization of the cultures that it englobes.

Yeats was also so taken by the beautiful architecture of the city, mainly the golden mosaics on the churches' walls, which he saw as one form of transcending time and remaining relevant for eternity. Especially considering the fact that churches are normally linked with spiritual elevation, religious piety and divine beauty. But most of all, Yeats probably chose Byzantium after having visited it in the early 20s of the 20th century.

So now, does a 20th century poem by an Irish romantic poet about an ancient Byzantine city symbolizing eternal youth and immortality perfectly embody a revolutionary theory by a French philosopher about the concept of time and its significance? Yes.

“Sailing to Byzantium” references and illustrates the Bergsonian theory on time as it tells a story of uninterrupted journey to a city that perfectly symbolizes the ideal timelessness that both Bergson and Yeats tried to explain. In the poem, the speaker expresses his unhappiness with the current material world he lives in and his wish to leave it and find refuge in the continuity and durability. These two qualities that Yeats seeks in Byzantium are exactly the same ones that Bergson has attributed to time, the exact same that he argued for as the main features of time in his theory.

Aside from time or maybe alongside time, Yeats explored and engaged the concept of duration, a concept that not only preoccupied Bergson but also made him the icon of philosophy that he is. Yeats, much like Bergson, used duration as a way to describe time, not as an intermittent sequence but more like a flow. This could be evident in Yeats' use of nature imagery, to symbolize that continuous flowy movement present in nature. On the other hand, or as a parallel, Yeats also embraces Bergson's idea of memory, as not just a tool to remember past experiences, but rather as an integral part of the present. His emphasis on the immortal power of art is clear evidence of how high he holds memory. He believes that art, quite literally the real life, material reproduction

and the direct result of human memory; art is what commemorates the human experience.

Furthermore, we can also reference Bergson's theory of creative thinking too, first and foremost because it obviously takes creativity to create art, creativity that only the human mind can possess and produce, but also because this creativity is also the result of memory, in a way where the human source of inspiration and sense of originality is but the fruit of experience. Man cannot reproduce what he has never experienced, man cannot create what he has never imagined, and imagination is the direct production of creative thinking combined with memory.

In the third line of this poem, Yeats (1926) expresses the passage of time and its effects by saying:

“—Those dying generations—at their song” (Line 3).

The words he used “dying generations” highlights the inevitable cycle of start and end of human life and its transient nature. And later on in the poem, Yeats also gives a clear hint at the contrast between humans and monuments, as the latter last and withstand the test of time:

“Monuments of unageing intellect” (Yeats, 1989, line 8).

In this line, the poet shows his clear point of view on the immortality of the city as opposed to the inescapable fate of humanity, death.

3.5. The Second Coming

Written in 1919, “the second coming” is one of the poems that can best prove the genius of William Butler Yeats. Written in the midst of great political unrest and complete social chaos, this poem has been analyzed, discussed and interpreted in so many ways by readers and scholars alike.

Like most of Yeats poems, “the second coming” is a meditation, a pondering look into dimension that only a poet as great as Yeats can delineate. He uses breath taking metaphors and imagery to explain and express the core idea of his poem.

In the first stanza, Yeats uses the image of a falcon that has lost his falconer to symbolize the idea of the state of turmoil that happens when an imbalance of power

occurs. The falcon, a symbol of power and freedom and what I believe to be man, loses the central authority that guides and supervises it.

The second stanza of the poem is an elaboration on the idea of chaos that was established in the first part. It references even harsher imagery of destruction, probably to show the depth of the poet's agony and worry as he mentions the drowning of the ceremony of innocence. With this specific vision, the poet is expressing the idea that every side of human life is being destroyed and all its innocent aspects are being tainted.

The poem reaches its peak in the final stanza when Yeats hints at a possible new beginning, a beginning that would rise through the ashes of the destruction. Though the poet uses the image of a beast, which some can interpret as a bad omen, the appearance of whatever new beginning also represents hope.

The aura of enigma in this poem adds to its charm and to the complexity of the themes it contains, it can either be analyzed and interpreted stanza by stanza or it can be interpreted as a whole. The falcon could symbolize the old, the gold, the traditional and the unknown beast could symbolize the new, the unfamiliar, and the mysterious future. The distinction would be the air of familiarity, loyalty and stability that the falcon gives off, as it signifies something safe and known to the human race, something natural and authentic that people have been using, ways that people have been living by and rules that have governed civilizations. On the other hand, the monster at the end of the poem, is not even natural, Yeats probably made it so to show how he views the future as unstable, unknown and most of all unnatural and inorganic. Of all the scary real life creatures to choose in order to symbolize fear and hesitation, Yeats chose a creature of imagination; a creature that comes from the depth of the human mind and a creature that can take any shape that the reader wishes it to take, signifying what? Maybe to show that the future can take any shape that the reader wants it to take, be it bright, positive and hopeful or be it dark, negative and ominous.

Other scholars would choose to focus not on the significance of the imagery based on the time they represent but based on who they represent. Indeed, why can't we personify the falcon and look at him through the eyes of the poet? The noble bird could very well be a noble artist, a poet at that, flying above the world, getting the best look upon the events of the world, being able to analyze and see the bigger picture of every debate, every war and be capable of looking at the past and the present together. We can

take into consideration the natural movement of the falcon in nature, a movement that is cyclical, spiral and unconstant.

Based on this analysis, we could very well break down the poem into 3 parts or 3 steps. The first part is mainly about the contextualization of the situation, meaning that the poet sets the tone for the rest of the poem and explains to us what's going on. He used the falcon that lost his falconer metaphor to depict how the traditional authorities lost control and how a new kind of chaos is gaining ground and overpowering the previous regime. The falcon, or the traditional system for us, is quite literally losing its “grip” over society, “The second coming” is such a deeply complex poem and Yeats is such a uniquely gifted and talented poet, that one cannot read without wondering if there are even deeper meanings that Yeats could have attached to his work.

If we look at the poem from a religious standpoint, we can view the falconer as Christianity and the falcon as society. Considering the period of time that this poem was written in, and considering all the turmoil, change and upheaval that the European societies were going through at the time, it can come as no surprise if Yeats used this poem to hint at some kind of religious calamity. After the state of confusion and turmoil, must come the denouement, or in this case the rise of the messiah, making the image representing it as mystical and occult as it should be to fit such an event. Yeats finds himself contemplating the fall and rise of a society, or rather the fall and rise of the higher power that controls said society. He seems hesitant to judge this newcomer, unable to assess him through the eyes of Christianity, without feeling some kind of disappointment, because the revelation he awaited was not the return of Christ but rather the rise of an unknown creature, with no way of making sure whether its rise will bring new hope to the world or just more chaos and calamity.

The poet uses the idea of the second coming in a metaphoric way, he uses it to symbolize some kind of unexpected disciplinary action against humanity, so instead of the second coming of Christ, humanity is surprised by the rise of something different, something scary and unpredictable, and instead of the savior of humankind, societies get an unexpected possible punishment for the sins they've committed.

Now, let's explore the association between Yeats “the second coming” and Henri Bergson's theory of time and memory. Indeed, there are elements in the poem that can be directly tied to Bergson's theory, as Yeats paints a gloomy, tumultuous image of the

future, a future that is actually the direct result of the past. As Bergson argued time and time again, time is continuous, the past, the present and the future cannot be separated and cannot be without each other. No action in the past can be isolated and no event in the future can be random and voluntary, just like in the poem, the actions or the sins of the past come back to haunt the future of society. The poem famously says, "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold." but where is the center located? If we were to judge, the center would be the moment or the source of the events occurring in the future, the center is the cause of the falling apart and thus it must be in the past, influencing and controlling the events of the future.

The fact that the poem ends with a question, a question about the future, is quite telling. It tells us that as much as Yeats wants to show us that the future is a direct result of the past and present and that all the turmoil and chaos going on is but the right outcome of present and past actions, there is still hope as the future is unknown and the path towards it can still be redirected and altered. Which is why the imagery he used to symbolize future events is draped in mystery. The future is still being created, by the before and by the now too, every action taken, every passing moment is an opportunity to change the future, as time is a flow and flows can be redirected.

Henri Bergson's theory on memory can also be observed in "the second coming", as the poem as a whole fits in Bergson's idea that memory is not boxed into past experiences but is meant to be lived and relieved, contextualized, and reinterpreted. Indeed, the poem can be viewed in so many lights and from so many angles, all depending on the personal experiences and convictions of the reader. The most obvious aspect of the Bergsonian memory in the poem is how it referenced themes, stories and ideas from past civilizations and past mythologies. Here Yeats, just like Bergson, acknowledges that memory can be based on personal individual past experiences and that it can also be based on a collective past, where a whole society of civilization shared fate, imagination and creative beliefs, and that this common memory, as old as it is and as incredibly unreal as it might be, can be reused, reinterpreted and recontextualized to fit into the modern world, not only as a fit of imagination but also as a symbolic representation of the cyclical nature of history. In other words, collective memory can be reused to establish and demonstrate that history does indeed repeat itself.

In the poem, some words or lines also hint at the Bergsonian hypothesis. The use of words like “gyre” for example, suggests that Yeats was more than aware of the cyclical nature of time, not only that, but Yeats agreed to and endorsed this theory, using it to express his thoughts and reflect the state of mind he was in at the time. Yeats, then, also viewed time as circular not as linear, a *va et vient* if you may, a snowball that gets bigger and fatter the more it rolls down the hill and that always circles back on itself.

The separation that Yeats establishes later on in the poem, can also mean the separation that he believes was happening between the past and the future, a separation between the old, traditional that's getting weaker and the new modern that's spreading chaos, and finally a separation between memory and perception. This can be a reflection of Bergson's theory, as Yeats would also be viewing memory as a process that is based on the interpretation and thus on the perception, so any kind of disconnection between memory and perception can result in a confusion and the state of turmoil that he describes in the poem.

Right from the beginning of the poem, we can already tell that Yeats is going to use his theory of gyres in “the second coming” as he says in the very first line:

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre” (Yeats & Finneran, 1989, line 1).

Just the mere mention of this word can already guarantee that Yeats will use the concept of time as a main theme in the poem, and indeed, he continues to use related imagery like in the fifth line when he says:

“The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere” (Yeats & Finneran, 1989, line 5).

Here, the use of the word “tide” correlates directly to the theme of gyre and thus it furthermore highlights Yeats’ emphasis on his own visualization of life and time in the form of gyres. Not only does the turning of the gyre signify and amplify Yeats’ theory, it also puts forward the cyclical nature of every civilization.

3.6. Under Ben Bulben

The main themes reflected in the poem *Under Benbulbin* by William B. Yeats are Irish history, mythology, spirituality, and mortality. Yeats gives an overview of his Irish identity, and his own understanding of life and death, during his last years.

Yeats' belief that myth plays a huge part in Irish culture and identity is reflected in the theme of mythology. Yeats starts the poem by using expressive language and images to describe the landscape of County Sligo, where Yeats spent much of his life. He continues exploring this theme by using images of the moon and stars that have been connected to myth and mystery since old times.

Yeats also mentions the Sidhe, also known as the fairy folks, as well as other mythological figures such as the Four Masters and the Fianna the legendary warriors to indicate the influence of myth in Irish history and identity.

One of the major themes in the poem is history; Yeats delves into this theme by referencing specific individuals such as the great men of Ireland buried in Sligo, Conchobar the warrior King of Ulster from the Ulster Cycle of Irish mythology, as well as himself as he connects himself to these figures. Yeats uses vivid images by referring to the characters and events in Irish folklore such as the Sidhe, making its history deeper and richer.

Moreover, Yeats recognizes the role of internal and external factors in the making of Ireland's history more complex by referencing the "ancient Irish kings" and the "Norman warrior" that both influenced Irish history and culture.

In general, Yeats exploration of the theme of history in this poem focuses on the importance of the past in the Irish identity; and the influence of multiple historical and mythological characters and events in the shaping of Ireland, Yeats thus strengthens the idea that Irish people are part of a much bigger historical narrative by creating a feel of historical continuity and depth.

Another theme in "Under Benbulbin" is spirituality. Yeats takes from Christianity and Irish mythology to find a deeper understanding and meaning to life beyond the physical world. In the poem, Yeats mentions the "Blessed" and the "Holy Ghost", both Christian concepts that advocate believing in a divine existence. Thus, suggesting the presence of a spiritual dimension to life that is beyond anything that's visible and measurable. Furthermore, Yeats also references Irish mythology by mentioning the Sidhe, a part of Irish folklore. Hence advocating for the existence of work in the world that is beyond human comprehension. In addition to that, Yeats uses language and images of light and darkness to convey a sense of spiritual depth and

mystery, by describing the "shadowy" figures representing death, and referring to the "great light," as an idea of enlightenment or spiritual awakening.

Finally, the theme of mortality, one of the main themes in this poem. Yeats explores this theme by reflecting on the ephemerality of life, the lessons learned and the inevitability of death. Yeats reflects on mortality by imagining himself buried under Benbulbin with the other historical and mythological characters and referencing the burial place of the great men in Sligo. And therefore, by connecting himself to these figures Yeats believes his legacy will go on after his death, signifying his need to believe that time is continuous and not just one isolated moment after the other. In the poem, Yeats describes death as a shadowy being looming around. His use of the "great light" indicates the existence of a spiritual dimension after death, giving the latter a feel of mystery and finality. He also stresses this idea of inevitability of death and the end of life by contemplating on the passage of time. Yeats mentions the time passed since Christ was born to reference this passage and to indicate that life is transient. And as Yeats was in his seventies when he wrote *Under Ben Bulbin*, he ponders on his own growing age referring to himself as an old man near the end of his life.

Bergson's concept of time is based on his belief that time is not objective but rather subjective and relies on personal experiences. To Bergson, "clock time" is measured by the ticking of a clock and is used in everyday life, and "subjective time," is experiencing the passage of time. In "*Under Ben Bulbin*," Yeats emphasizes the connection of all things, the past and the present and cyclical nature of history by using expressive language and vivid images in order to give a subjective sense of time.

Yeats criticizes contemporary society's focus on the future and efficiency and calls for the return to past values, emphasizing the importance of tradition, memory, and spiritual gratification in the face of modern society. Yeats describes society in his poem as mechanical and having a narrow vision, suggesting the loss of touch with the subjective and human experience and the loss of connection with the past in the search for efficiency. While Bergson argues likewise that society's focus on progress made the understanding of time defective, and memory and tradition underappreciated.

Furthermore, Yeats calls out to the Irish poets to return to tradition and focus on making works that are well crafted, more creative, and more in line with subjective and personal experience. This aligns with Bergson's theory of time as an ever changing and

continuous process that appreciates the present and celebrates the richness of subjective experience.

In addition, Bergson also believed time to be strongly connected with memory. In his poem, Yeats puts emphasis on the importance of remembering the past and the role of art in preserving cultural heritage. Yeats' burial place under the mountain of Benbulbin is a reminder of his achievements and contributions to Irish history and literature. Yeats points out the connection between the past and the present and how the former helps shape the latter. The poem itself is a testament to the ability of memory to transcend time and generate a sense of continuity. This goes along with Bergson's theory of time being a changing and evolving concept, rather than a linear progression.

Finally, the poem *Underbulbin* by William B. Yeats is a reflection of Bergsonian philosophy and specifically Bergson's time theory, that suggests that time is a continuous flow and the role of memory in understanding time, it also emphasizes the importance of following tradition and the effect the past has on the present.

3.7. The Stolen Child

Written in 1886 and published in 1895, "the stolen child" is a poem that tells the story of a journey where fairies lure a child away into their enchanted land. As one of the earliest works of Yeats, it shows us his genius in all its glory. The lyrical style, the vivid imagery and Yeats beautiful description takes us, as readers, to a land far beyond what we know, a land that enchants us and mesmerizes our senses.

The poem starts with context, Yeats describes an island in a lake and cheeky fairies trying to entice the child into following them, with the promise of a happier world, full of wonders and magic. The poet continues to describe the land of the fairies, seducing the readers with his words the same way the fairies seduce the child with theirs. They even go as far as to use dancing to achieve their goal, their attempt to lure the child never ceases, it takes verbal and physical forms as they continue inviting him to accompany them to the waters and the wild.

The third stanza of the poem takes an even more mystical aura, with a change of scenery; we follow the fairies as they whisper in the ears of trouts, but never interrupting their constant effort to try and lure the child and convince him to join them in the waters

and the wild. Finally, the child gives in, and follows the fairies into their world, a world far from ours, a world where he cannot be bothered by the troubles of ours.

This poem fills us with many different emotions; some of them could even be contradictory. One of the most dominant emotions is longing, the poem expresses and conveys such a deep feeling of yearning, that the reader cannot help but be touched by it or even embrace it. The poem also beautifully portrays Yeats style of writing, amazingly captivating with the use of Irish folklore and mythology, the poem is basically a beautiful spell that Yeats casts on us to lure us into his own world.

The scenery described and the imagery in the poem are absolutely breathtaking, vivid, and rich in creativity and wonder, it tickles our imagination and plants in us a sense of pining for a world we never knew existed. Every detail about the island, colors, the surroundings, the water, the moonlight, and the ferns, just adds to the wonder and sense of being transported as if in a trance to a world where fairies do exist, as fairies do actually represent just that : a world created in our imagination, by Yeats' imagination to pull us into the realm of imagination. The fairies are depicted to be seductive, alluring and quite fascinating which just goes to show how enticing the unknown is. Indeed, as pretty and innocent looking fairies are, they still represent a world stranger to ours, full of mystery and unexplored by us. This world holds a strong sense of allure, originating both from the wonders it presents but also the secrets it still hides, evoking fascination, curiosity, and a sense of skeptic anticipation. But through the poem, we can conclude that the appeal of the unknown is way stronger than dread and skepticism, or so the poet believes.

If we remove the mystical aspect from the poem, we are left with basically a great description of nature and natural scenery. The poet included really beautiful visions of nature and painted an image of landscapes that are absolutely full of grace and stunning elements. Furthermore, with the addition of the fairies, the visuals of the poem become all the more fascinating. Indeed, fairies, though unreal, are written as part of nature, deriving their charm and magic from the real world, and giving it their own touch of magic. Throughout the poem, the child is promised things by the fairies, not material things, not riches, not wealth, but he is promised harmony, peace, and freedom from the limitations of human societies. This harmony can only be achieved through and with nature, which is why the poet gave the task of luring the child to creatures that represent

the perfect balance between natural and supernatural, magic and reality, innocence, and seduction. The poem is a celebration of the power of nature and the promises it still holds, promises of magic and wonders.

In the poem, we can feel a little contrast between the 2 main parties. On one hand we have the child, the real life representation of innocence and purity, on the other hand we have the fairies, though beautiful and magical, they are portrayed with some level of cunning and danger. So, the fact that by the end of the poem, the child actually decides to leave our world and follow the fairies can be interpreted as innocence slipping away, as he leaves behind his vulnerability and walks away into the arms of seduction and allure. By leaving the troubles of the human world, the child also gives in to the carefree lifestyle that ironically leads him away from the safety of his homeland and the bittersweet comfort of his home.

The theme or the concept of time is brought up in several ways in the poem, firstly in the setting of it. Indeed, the poem is set in a timeless dimension, and it is depicted in a way that exists outside of how we perceive time in the human world, especially with the use of fairies that are unreal creatures yes but also unageing and eternal. Their land also has the same characteristics, it is set in eternal summer, with flowers that never die and trees that never change colors, which stands to show a huge contrast with the human world, which is in a perpetual state of change and a constant cycle of death and rebirth. This obviously gives the poem a slight Bergsonian tone, as it embraces the continuous movement of time and the uninterrupted flow or its course. Now one other aspect that time was used for in the poem is in the theory that time can be taken away from us, removed from our lives, the same way it was removed from the child's life when he was taken away from the real world.

The idea of time is only present and only exists in the human world, so as soon as the child left the human world, he also escaped time and its ramifications, to join the realm of immortality and timelessness. Here, we can maybe conclude that time is given a few bad connotations, as by its removal, troubles, limitations, and the consequences of it are also removed. These consequences also include aging, or growing up, so the child giving up the consequences of time also means him giving up the opportunities that it presents for growth and maturity and the gain of human experiences, of the full range of emotions that result from living in a world where time actually exists and affects human

lives. Evidently, the poem observes that time affects all things, and that time is, as cliché as it might sound, a double edged sword. It creates happiness and sorrow, joy and melancholy and many more human experiences that make human life the bittersweet journey that it is.

Now, according to Bergson, the kind of escape that the fairies are offering the child is ultimately impossible, as time is an essential element for human existence, a world without the dimension of time is virtually unattainable. What the fairies are offering the child is to escape the very same theory that Bergson built his philosophy upon, the flow of time or the passage of time, which means that escaping it would be denying the flow, interrupting it and stripping it of the one characteristic that Bergson insists upon, the continuity of time. The state of timelessness in the fairies realm also denies the child the series of human experiences that create memory, and ultimately, they deny him the possibility of change, choice, and progress. All of these elements are what make the human experience rich and meaningful.

The whole point of Bergson's theory is the emphasis on the present moment and how it is continuously linked with the past and the present in an ever evolving cycle, but in the poem we notice that the fairies are promising the child a future that will surely bring him joy and happiness but that, in return, will require him to sacrifice his past and present in the hopes of attaining the long sought after future of timelessness. Bergson would most definitely disagree with this choice, as for him, the anticipation of what the future will be like is the core element of human experience.

Giving up time and mortality also means giving up the possibility of creating new memories. And thus, through this choice, the child is choosing to also give up experiencing the process of shaping his mind and tasting the flavor of individual perception, as memory for Bergson is subjective and is completely shaped by the person's ability to analyze and perceive situations from within himself.

3.8. The Madness of King Goll

Written by William Butler Yeats, in 1891, “the madness of king Goll” is a narrative poem that centers around how one king from the pre Christian Ireland’s descent into tyranny and madness.

As all narrative poems do, “the madness of king Goll” starts from when the reign of king Goll is peaceful then gradually moves through time as the king becomes more and more paranoid and unreasonable. The king descends into some sort of delusion that makes him see enemies where there are none and transgressions where there are none, this leads him to give out random, undeserved punishments to his subjects and consequently, his subjects start to fear him and resent his behavior whereas they used to love him and respect him before. The king's madness turns into obsession with a woman, Caolte, who he forces into marriage after killing the man she was in love with. Her initial obedience, though reluctant, turns into hate as she tries to find ways to escape him as he keeps making enemies by attacking neighboring countries and giving his wife, Caolte, ample reason to gather an army and go to war against him. She eventually does just that, and king Goll ends up being defeated and killed while the queen is hailed as a hero amongst the people for rebelling against and defeating the tyrannical erratic king.

Throughout the poem, Yeats makes sure to convey how insane the king is to the reader by using vivid imagery and clear vocabulary which emphasized the state of mind that the king was in and how the decline of his mental health showed clearly to those around him. The poem also presents the slow progress of the relationship between the king and his people, how this relationship grew to be strained and shaky, then full of resentment and grudge holding, then eventually complete detachment and hate. Now, the people's irritation with their ruler is not unwarranted, the poem contains a clear message about the intoxicating impact of power on both parties. Indeed, the resulting production of toxic power affects both the owner of the power, in this case the king, and the entourage, the subjects, those that the power can control.

It was one thing to acquire control of a country but to be able to keep this control and keep one's position of force, is a whole other deal. Some might say that king Goll's position was one of delicate balance, he could not have been able to hold his status if he showed weakness in his reign, but the way Yeats puts it, the hunger of the king and his obsessive need to not only keep total control over all things but to also exhibit the great power that he has, is what led to his eventual downfall. With time, all feelings got magnified, worry became obsession and resentment became hate. Power corrupted both the ruler and the ruled.

“The madness of king Goll ” also touches on the concept of love and obviously loyalty, as one of the main tropes of the poem is about the relationship between the king and the woman, he forced to be his queen. Caoite's attachment to the man that the king took from her and her loyalty towards what is right fueled her desire and her determination to end the reign of king Goll. In this specific situation, love played a double role, love strengthened the queen and inspired her to lead a rebellion but love also weakened the king and led to his demise. Desire is a strong incentive, maybe the strongest of all.

Now, time isn't the most obvious theme in this poem, but it certainly is one of the most important. By definition, a descent into madness requires time, so evidently time is the driving force behind this demise.

At the beginning of the poem, the power of time is presented as beneficial, natural, as a force that promotes harmony and is part of life and nature, but as the poem progresses, time becomes the enemy, not just of the people who will suffer because of it but also an enemy of the king who starts to feel anxious and restless due to his growing obsession with the woman. Eventually, the king loses all sense of time or rather duration, as his madness reaches its highest point, he seems to be oblivious to the passage of time and is no longer capable of distinguishing important events from trivial ones. But his loss of perception does not in any way mean that the rest of the world went down that same rabbit hole with him, as a matter of fact, his people probably felt the passage of time and saw how the events of the past are creating their future, therefore choosing to rebel and survive rather than wait. Collective experience or memory is probably one of the driving forces behind the rebellion, pushing people to take the decision of fighting rather than succumbing to the tyranny of the king.

3.9. Among School Children

Another poem, another masterpiece. Another masterpiece, another meditation, and another dive into the concept of time and human experience. Yeats is indeed one of the most fascinating poets to have ever lived, the way he manages to write about the same central themes over and over again without ever sounding repetitive or ever being boring, is in itself a stroke of genius. He is both capable of writing about what he loves,

using the tools he wants and still discussing these heavy topics in a way that makes them seem so personal and yet so foreign.

In this poem, Yeats observes a group of school children which makes him reflect on his own life, his own childhood and ultimately on his own journey through time. At the very beginning, Yeats observes how absorbed the children are in the moment, not really expressing any particular happiness or particular unhappiness. During this observation he reflects on his own childhood, back when he was a boy and laments the loss of his innocence as he grew up. This eventually leads Yeats to reflect on each stage of life, from youth until old age, he also observes how each stage was special, with its own ups and downs and its own joys and sorrows. Then he moves on to a rather glum note, observing that all of these stages with all the happiness they bring and all the sadness they impose eventually lead to nothing else but death.

Around the middle of the poem, the speaker moves on to talk about a very interesting concept, that is desire and how it somehow shapes and impacts the human experience, how each individual has some kind of deep desire for something specific, whether be it beauty or knowledge or love... etc., but he doesn't miss the chance to point out that eventually, desires are, for the most part, unreachable or unattainable. As with most beautiful things, desire also ends up fading away into decay and disappearing.

As the poem progresses, the speaker keeps focusing on himself, his flaws, his shortcomings, his failures, in short, his own personal life experiences. By doing this, he also admits to his own human nature, a nature that is imperfect as all others are, not allowing him to live up to his own values and ideals. This adult meditation brings his attention back to the children, still completely absorbed in the moment and unlike adults, who are deeply self conscious and acutely aware of their shortcomings and the world surrounding them, the kids are able to be entirely oblivious to their surroundings and submerge themselves in the present. This long introspective contemplation must have absolutely led the speaker to the conclusion that time is the driving force behind everything. Time moves unstoppable, imminent and most of all absolutely irreversible.

“Among school children” explores the depths of some infinitely fundamental concepts of life. Mortality, desire, the imperfection of the human race so obviously it has to also delve into the notion of time as it is linked to all other major elements of life.

As a matter of fact, the passage of time is a core factor that impacts or even controls the other themes present in the poem. Now let's dive into the concept of time in the poem.

In "Among school children", the speaker is very concerned with the relationship between time and the human experience, he seems to be sure that time is the element that shapes the human experience, and through his reflection and meditation he admits that the passage of time has the biggest impact on his life in particular and the human life in general. The speaker also seems so taken by the children's ability to detach the past from the present moment and the present moment from the future to come, which goes to show us how he views the passage of time and how he considers time a constant flow rather than a series of singular events. Additionally, the fact that the children could separate different moments in time and live through them without connecting them or being aware of the streamy nature of time shows us that as man grows he comes to view time more clearly, shedding the initial indifference and lack of observation and adopting a more constructive approach to understand this notion in a way that is more comprehensive and less narrow-minded.

Therefore, age plays a huge role in the understanding of time and in feeling its flow rather than just ignoring the elements that construct it. This is where our consciousness gets involved, to guide us through the process of analysis and observation and to help us wrap our brains around the notion of time and all the concepts that it entails, but consciousness is also shaped by our personal experiences which makes it rather subjective and that is why our understanding of time is so diversified, different life experiences equal different consciousnesses and consequently different ways of viewing and interpreting time. The simplest example of this is in the poem, based on the factor of age. Indeed, children and adults have different life experiences, whether it be on the level of how long they lasted or on the level of how they view the same situation and how they choose their own priorities. These differences result in a difference on the level of consciousness, and thus in a completely distinct interpretation of the passage of time, while kids take each moment separately and don't care about the moment before it or after it, adults look at things from a more of a bird's eye view, they observe the different stages of time as an undetachable and unbreakable sequence of moments.

Aging, that is in itself one of the consequences of the passage of time, results in a deeper and better grasp of the concept of time itself. It's like a loop. Age comes with

the passage of time and understanding the passage of time comes with age. So, this also goes to back up Henri Bergson's theory on time even more, because it emphasizes his belief that time is a continuous flow of experiences, it cannot be stopped, reversed or broken.

In the poem, there is also a clear hint at Bergson's belief that time cannot be measured objectively, nor can it be quantified. While the children are playing, they not only separate the present moment from the past and the future, but they also stop viewing time as duration or even as a passing dimension. This observation by the speaker reflects Yeats' stand view on the matter and it reveals that his perspective very closely matches that of Henri Bergson.

Through "Among school children", we can clearly see that Yeats agreed, embraced, and used Henri Bergson's theory on time and the notions that surround it. From aging to mortality, to the measurability of time, Yeats seems to share the same view as Bergson and seems to have come to these conclusions based on his own personal meditations and observations.

CONCLUSION

The initial aim of this thesis was to establish clearly how the works of Irish poet William Butler Yeats contained and were influenced by the ideas and theories of the great French philosopher Henri Bergson. Bergson's theories of time and memory were chosen because they seemed to fit the most into the works of Yeats who, using his own style, his own touch and while creating his own world, was able to use the essence of time to write what can be considered some of the most famous and best poems of the last two centuries.

At first, the connection between these two characters is not that obvious, in fact it is actually a bit unpredictable and unusual. Having lived in different places, taken interest in different tropics, and being specialized in different fields, Bergson and Yeats don't seem like the most likely pair. Even their educational backgrounds are different.

The nature of Yeats' works and the mythical, fantastic vibe they give off makes it very hard for anyone to picture him using the theories of an ex mathematician, turned philosopher and applying them to convey his poetic revolutionary ideas, but that's exactly what we managed to prove through the analysis of Yeats poetry and by spotting the elements where Yeats showed either directly or indirectly how he views the idea of time.

Besides the actual usage of Bergson's theory in each of Yeats' poems individually, it is also worthy to talk about the aspects of Bergson's theory throughout the life of Yeats. Was Yeats' life only a series of events that followed each other? Was his life a sequence of separate events? Or did Yeats' life follow a nonlinear time lapse? Did he at some point start over and cut ties with his old self?

As for all writers, Yeats showed his personality through his work and put a piece of himself in his poems. Yeats had no problem using his own life experiences as a source of inspiration for his art, he used his joys and his struggles, his sadness and his confusion and he put all of these feelings on paper, which allows us to have a pretty clear idea about the mindset he was in through each poem. He was adamant to add the elements of mythology and history but that didn't stop him from addressing contemporary issues and to give his own take on what was happening in the world back then. This constant

parallelism that he created between the old and the new or the past and the present proves how he never perceived time as a linear, objective notion, as he used time in a way that seems fluid and flexible, mixing eras, beliefs, cultures, and symbols. A poet who views time as a straight line going forward and who uses conventional narrative structures can never be able or be willing to use time as a vessel to travel through time and give all kinds of analogies that not only link the past and the present but also interchanges them in some cases to show the true meaning of the expression “time repeats itself”. Yeats tried and succeeded to represent time as a transitional force to help men navigate through life and that can be impacted by each person's life experiences. We can add memory here and say that memory shapes life experiences and life experiences shape our perception of time.

Throughout his career, Yeats' style changed but also kept a steady flow, it reflected the political and cultural changes that he lived through while also keeping the core element of who he is as a writer. His early poetry focused a lot on the natural, the supernatural and the mythical, but as he aged or rather gained more maturity, he started implementing and using his life experiences in his poems, he started getting inspired by real life events especially and mainly the ones happening in Ireland. His style continued to evolve and show signs of change even in his later years, during the 20s and 30s of the 20th centuries, his poems gained a reflective and meditational dimension, he started using his art as a way of immortalizing his memories, and using his memories as a way of reanalyzing the past, reliving it and reassessing his former perceptions of past events. With this era of introspection came a heavy vibe of nostalgia and longing for youth and consequently, a desire to break the limitations of time and challenge the restraints it imposes on man.

Throughout all of these changes, Yeats' poetry kept and maintained the yeatsian elements, a mix of mythology, symbolism with a pinch of supernatural to keep and strengthen his bond with the Irish historical and folkloric culture.

So, overall, Yeats' career was not just a sequence of poems or plays, nor was it a string of unrelated works that have very little in common, but in fact, his career was a long flow of creative genius, marrying many eras of time, using memory to transport the readers in different dimensions and make them look at life experiences through different angles. Indeed, Bergson's theory of time fluidity seems to work even when not applied

to literary works, it seems to fit even with the life flow of Yeats who kept the core of who he is and only added and accumulated knowledge to form a bigger stronger continuance of style and themes.

Yeats also used the theory of memory rather freely, he used 2 kinds of memories actually. The first being his own, he used his own memories of youth, childhood, and old days to express his deep attachment to the past and the bit of nostalgia he feels for it. But furthermore, Yeats used collective memory, the memory of his people, the memory of his origins. Indeed, Yeats was so adamant on including Irish mythology and establishing how comprehensively symbolic it is, how for each situation we face in real life, we could find a suitable tale or imagery in Irish mythology to represent it. This constant trip down memory lane is what made Yeats so special, and what made his works so identifiable, his genius use of memory allowed him enough flexibility to spread the wings of his creativity, but it also did not damage his writing in any way, which only goes to support Bergson's theory even more, his theory turned out to be the secret key to unlock the artistic gift of many romantics and modernists.

Suggesting that time is subjective to individual human experience and that the perception of duration shouldn't be linear and stiff, is an absolute stroke of genius. Bergson brilliantly gave writers the artistic freedom to travel through time and create their own pattern, which consequently, allowed the writers to be as creative as they can and to view time not as the one way progression stream that the world thought it to be, but as a malleable chunk of clay that they can shape, however they want, build upon and travel with, in order to convey their ideas.

In all of the poems we tried to analyze in this thesis, we found a trace of Bergson's theory, proof that time is indeed flowy and unconventional. Yeats used beautiful symbolic imagery to represent the passage of time, to lament the passage of time and to emphasize the importance of memory in the process of preservation and creation of legacies. Yeats and Bergson died, but their memories and legacies will live forever.

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