

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS AND MYSTICISM: A NEO-PLATONIC  
APPROACH TO HIS POETRY

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## ABSTRACT

### WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS AND MYSTICISM: A NEO-PLATONIC APPROACH TO HIS POETRY

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Finding the truth about the universe is the way of the mystic. Mystics try to achieve union with a transcendental power through a search within themselves and through the divine reflected on earth. The Irish poet William Butler Yeats (1865 – 1939) was under the influence of different understandings of mysticism throughout his career. This study aims to explore how Yeats' poetry reflects this mystical influence. The focus of the study is on Yeats' late period when he was highly influenced by Neo-platonism and particularly by Plotinus. In analysing Yeats' late poetry from this perspective, this thesis argues that Yeats aestheticized Plotinus' mystical world in his poetry and that Plotinus' ideas were transcribed in Yeats' second edition of *A Vision*. However, Yeats was not content with Plotinus' philosophy altogether. While the foundation of Yeats' own mystical philosophy is built on Plotinus' theories, he modifies them to his own preferences and gives more importance to the earthly aspect of mystical theory by transposing the transcendent into the poetic space, hence reconciling art and philosophy, and the concepts of Becoming and Being.

**Keywords:** Neo-platonism, mysticism, William Butler Yeats, Plotinus, philosophy.

## ÖZ

### WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS VE MİSTİSİZM: NEO-PLATONCU BİR YAKLAŞIM İLE ŞİİRLERİ

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Evren hakkındaki gerçeği bulmak mistiğin yoludur. Mistikler, kendileri içinde bir arayış ve yeryüzünde ilahi gücün yansımaları aracılığı ile bu ilahi güç ile bir olmaya çalışırlar. İrlandalı şair William Butler Yeats (1865 - 1939), kariyeri süresince farklı mistisizm anlayışlarının etkisi altındaydı. Bu çalışma Yeats'in şiirinin bu mistik etkiyi nasıl yansıttığını araştırmayı amaçlıyor. Araştırmanın odağı Neo-platonizm ve özellikle Plotinus'dan oldukça etkilendiği Yeats'in son dönemidir. Yeats'in son dönem şiirlerini bu perspektiften analiz ederken, bu tez, Yeats'in *A Vision* eserinin ikinci baskısında Plotinus'un fikirlerini uyarlayarak şiirinde Plotinus'un mistik dünyasını estetize ettiğini iddia ediyor. Fakat Yeats Plotinus'un felsefesiyle tamamen tatmin olmamıştır. Yeats'in kendi mistik felsefesinin temeli Plotinus'un teorilerine dayansa da, kendi fikirleri doğrultusunda uyarladığı mistik görüş ile Yeats mistik teorisinin dünyevi yönünün önemini vurgulamak suretiyle aşkınsallığı şiirsel düzleme taşımış ve böylece sanat ve felsefeyi, Varlık ve Oluşum konseptlerini uzlaştırmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Neo-platonizm, mistisizm, William Butler Yeats, Plotinus, felsefe.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to explore how the Irish writer and poet William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) transcribes Plotinus' mystical philosophy in his poetry. The study aims to look into how Yeats' late poetry blurs the boundary between philosophy and art and achieves Neo-platonic unity in the artistic space by translocating the transcendent in the empirical world. It is well-known that William Butler Yeats lived a turbulent life, and despite different interests he took up in politics and his concern with Irish nationalism, his main focus was always on the mystical life. His interest became more permanent especially after he became a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn on March 7, 1890. The order supplied Yeats with a rich source of symbols to be used in his poetry.<sup>1</sup> In a letter to John O'Leary, a stout defender of Irish nationalism who encouraged Yeats to join Young Ireland Society, Yeats defended his mystical thought as follows:

The mystical life is the centre of all that I do & all that I think & all that I write. It holds to my work the same relation that the philosophy of Godwin held to the work of Shelley & I have always [*sic.*] considered my self [*sic.*] a voice of what I believe to be greater renaissance [*sic.*] – the revolt of soul against the intellect – now beginning in the world. (qtd. in Ross 9)

Yeats' interest in the Romantics reveals itself in this letter. As he puts it, this “revolt” is against reason, and he focuses on the inner self or the soul of the individual. However, Yeats' father, a Protestant ecclesiastic and a well-known landowner, was unhappy about his son's activities and in a letter to William Butler Yeats, he stated his disapproval of Yeats' activities: “I am sorry you are returning to mysticism.

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<sup>1</sup> Bibliographical information on Yeats' life is taken from Ross, David A. *Critical Companion to William Butler Yeats: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. Infobase Publishing, 2009.

Mysticism means a relaxed intellect” (qtd. in Finneran et al. 348). Yeats, however, did not step back and continued to defend his ideas. It was as though his father’s attitude led him even more towards mysticism rather than pushing him off the topic. Therefore, distancing himself from his father, Yeats kept on studying the topic (Hickman 215). This rebellion against his father, who was a man of reason and a sceptic, deemed occultism a critical aspect of Yeats’ life so much “that he dated his break from that [his father’s] influence from the time he began to study ‘psychical research and mystical philosophy’” (Materer 25).

Another reason that led Yeats towards mysticism was the social situation of his time. In the aftermath of World War I, there was a general sense of a loss of hope and faith in progress and stability. Industry, science and consequently, an age of the intellect were on the rise during this period in which modernism was born. As Surette indicates, “[a]lthough the term ‘modern’ has been current in English with its present meaning since at least the seventeenth century, no school of philosophy or artistic movement took the term as a label before this century [20<sup>th</sup> century]” (3-4). Although modernism is used as an umbrella term, as a sweeping generalization in British literature, in fact, the modernism of each poet or writer is different. The issue of finding a steady ground on which Yeats’ modernism is placed is also related to the problematic account of the term “modernism.” In the same line of thinking, Anne Fogarty states that the “problem of locating Yeats within modernism is, to some degree, symptomatic of the notorious slipperiness and imprecision of this term” (127). Despite the differences, all the modernists set out to defy the legacy of modernity, therefore the movement can be taken as a protest against the realism of Enlightenment epistemology, which was based on the empiricism of Locke, Newton and Descartes. As Fogarty states, “studies of individual authors have revealed that modernism is not a matter of an undeviating espousal of a radical aesthetic or credo but rather a spectrum of fluctuating styles, stances” and the altering ideological stands of the individual writers (128). Yeats’ involvement in occult practices and his association with different societies as well as the Irish literary restoration set him apart from his peers. Furthermore, Yeats did not approve of the fragmented and

deconstructed style of modernist poetry and this school's constant criticism of the Romantic understanding of poetry as an expression of beauty and truth.

Yeats' modernist aspect, however, is the result of his involvement with the "Irish literary revival, on the one hand, and with aspects of international and regional poetic communities, on the other hand, as mediated by his relationship with Pound in particular but also with the Rhymers' Club and the Symbolists" (Fogarty 128). Yeats is considered a modernist writer. He stands against modernity and Enlightenment empiricism. Furthermore, Yeats stands against Lockean ideas on knowledge and how it is attained. Lockean theory asserts that "knowledge arises from experience" (Surette 61). Thus, it is a theory which puts emphasis on the empirical world and leaves out anything beyond. The idea of a universal truth that can be achieved in a transcendental realm is outside the understanding of this theory. Leon Surette states that

A Lockean cultural theory would assign similarities of cultures around the world to constants in the terrestrial environment and in the biological endowment of human beings. Local differences would be explained by variations in these two factors – environment and genetics – plus the accidents of history. There is no need to assume some ancient origin as an explanation of widely disseminated cultural practices and beliefs or of myths and legends. (61)

Yeats' way out of the impasse reached by this epistemology was looking for transcendence in empirical reality either through different forms of mysticism or through a transhistorical frame. Basically, it can be said that it was his way of challenging the representational potential of realism. Through mysticism and a recourse to mythical past, he tried to re-signify, thus, to revitalize poetic discourse. This was also dismantling the tight connection established between senses and truth, reality and language, signified and signifier. By locating the signified in transcendence, he was dealing a deadly blow to the language of representation. Yeats was against such an empirical understanding of the universe. He focused his studies on occultism, which can be traced back to ancient times. In his early years, Yeats

studied the Romantics, Blake and Shelley, and later he discovered Plotinus. Surette asserts that “the modernists presented themselves as sceptical relativists implacably hostile to the credulity and ‘romantic’ mysticism of their immediate predecessors” (206). Yeats’ focus on mysticism was due to the loss of faith during his time. As Timothy Materer states, “W. B. Yeats is a classic case of a writer who turns to occultism as a compensation for a lost traditional faith” (25). Standing against ideas leaving out the idea of the transcendental, Yeats welcomed spiritualism with open arms:

When Yeats was a boy and a young man, the social world he knew was saturated with crises in faith. Profound changes in European society, coming in the wake of scientific discoveries and technological advances, had disturbed foundational beliefs in God as well as materialist paradigms, and in such divergent concepts as progress and tradition, social position and individual identity. (Harper 153)

For this reason, Yeats differs from other modernist writers. The occult was the topic that excited Yeats the most. This eventually led him to Helena Blavatsky, who was one of the founders and mystical leaders of Theosophical Society (Ross 9). Helena Blavatsky and her ideas influenced Yeats significantly. Leon Surette indicates that “Yeats copied Blavatsky’s form of revelation from discarnate masters for *A Vision*” (25).

Yeats’ distaste for London was yet another reason that shaped his mind towards mysticism. As David Holdeman indicates, “Yeats associated England with everything he loathed about the modern world: with imperialism, with vulgar, godless materialism” (6). He felt homesick for Sligo and Ireland, where he and his family had lived for a while. Ross explains Yeats’ life in Sligo as a milestone because “[f]or the rest of his life, Yeats associated Sligo with childhood happiness, with family stability and tradition, and with folk-life of rural Ireland” (Ross 4). Holdeman states that “Yeats was searching for the answers to his spiritual . . . questions in the folk beliefs of Ireland’s western country people and in the heroic myths of the whole island’s ancient Gaelic culture” (7). He could enjoy a life of

solitude in nature back in Sligo. However, “London was a misery to Yeats, and he sometimes shed tears of longing for Sligo” (Ross 4). He enjoyed the rural area of Sligo and he would listen to fairy tales told by the local people, which later in his life played an important role in shaping his thoughts (Ross 4). As Holdeman indicates, Yeats thought Irish and Gaelic “traditions preserved satisfying ways of life and eternal spiritual truths that had been forgotten in modernized places like England” (7).

As suggested above, Yeats’ interest in mysticism also had its source in his interest in the Romantics who offered the first challenge to the epistemology engineered by the Enlightenment. Early in his life, Yeats was greatly influenced by William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley. His father would read *Prometheus Unbound* aloud, which Yeats considered a magnum opus, and Shelley’s influence can be traced in Yeats’ early poetry (Ross 548). David A. Ross asserts the influence of Blake on Yeats in the following way:

No writer meant more to Yeats, early, middle, and late. Blake provided Yeats with nothing less than a sacred literature in which he could renew himself and in relationship to which he could orient himself as poet and thinker. Yeats found Blake as well a source of condensed and ready wisdom: It may be that Yeats quoted no one more regularly and in more context than Blake. (442)

These Romantics’ influences contributed to shaping Yeats’ thoughts towards mysticism. Especially Blake, who affected him deeply and “struck a blow for the ‘solidity and wonderful ‘coherence’ [with his] mystical system” came to be a central figure for Yeats (Ross 444). Blake had been judged wrongly due to his mystical beliefs and Yeats kept defending and explaining Blake’s ideas in different works, one of which is “The Writings of William Blake.” The work “complains mightily about the kind of textual liberties and condescending treatment of Blake’s mysticism that his own edition of Blake had been intended to correct once for all” (Ross 445). After a reassessment of Blake, in a letter to John O’Leary, Yeats states that “No one will ever call him mad again” (qtd. in Ross 444). Shelley’s influence helped Yeats’

development as much as Blake's did. Ross argues that "[t]he great romantic poet was one of the few most important influences ... on Yeats's poetic and intellectual development" (548). Yeats associated himself with many of the characters in Shelley's work like Alastor and he "derived the images of swan, fountain, cave, and tower, and the motif of the soul-allegorizing journey upon sea or river" from Shelley (Ross 548). George Bornstein asserts that "Shelley's influence helped shape Yeats's attraction to a large minded politics, to an idealized love for Maud Gonne, and to the pursuit of esoteric wisdom" (22).

Maud Gonne is another important figure in William Butler Yeats' life. He first came to meet Gonne in the late 1880s. Marjorie Howes claims that his relationship with her was "conceived one of the most famous unrequited passions in literary history" (2). He fell in love with her and proposed and got rejected four times, "in 1891, 1894, 1899 and 1900" (Bloom 166). After being rejected over and over again "Yeats and Gonne settled into a 'mystical marriage' that was emotionally but not physically intimate" (Ross 470). Thus, Yeats' love was a platonic one which appeared in a number of poems, one of which is "Among School Children". This platonic love inevitably involved mystical dimensions, and it can be argued that Yeats' love for Maud Gonne also nourished his interest in mysticism.

Yeats started to read Plotinus later in his life and was significantly influenced by his mystical ideas. Yeats was already into the understandings of ancient philosophers but he came to know Plotinus when he matured both in his life and in his work. Yeats' intense interest in Plotinus coincides with his marriage to George Hyde Lees. Jonathan Allison explains this fruitful companionship between the two as follows: "In 1917, the year he [Yeats] married, his wife George began doing automatic writing, supposedly dictated by spirit 'instructors,' which provided Yeats with the data for his occult book, *A Vision* (1925, second version 1937)" (194). In 1917, Yeats got married to George Hyde Lees and from then on he started reading Plotinus, which he acquired from the library of his wife, and focused on understanding Plotinus' mystical philosophy. Yeats used this philosophy in writing his late period poetry, starting with his collection, *The Tower* (1928). Around this time he also



wrote *A Vision* (1925) in the light of Plotinus' ideas and republished its second edition in 1937. Yeats puts this as follows:

Then I took down from my wife a list of what she had read, two or three volumes of Wundt, part of Hegel's *Logic*, all Thomas Taylor's *Plotinus* ... I read all MacKenna's incomparable translation of Plotinus, some of it several times, and went from Plotinus to his predecessors and successors whether upon her list or not. And for four years now I have read nothing else except now and then some story of theft and murder to clear my head at night. (*A Vision* 20)

Mrs. Yeats, then, became an important figure in Yeats' discovery of Plotinus. Margaret Mills Harper contends that besides their partnership in marriage Yeats and his wife, Georgie Hyde Lees, were also enjoying the productivity of a mystical marriage (160).

Yeats' constant study of Plotinus led him to employ Plotinus' system in devising the second version of his *A Vision*. Helen Hennessy Vendler asserts that Yeats was not in search for something new through his study of Plotinus' philosophy "but for confirmation of what he already knew: 'the more I read the better did I understand what I had been taught.'" (3). In the second version of *A Vision* (1937), Yeats poeticises Plotinus' three hypostases and employs Plotinus' system "to enunciate his own metaphysical beliefs" (Arkins 35).

As this discussion suggests, Yeats' mystical interests are very wide and varied, and it would be beyond the scope of this study to explore all of them. This study, therefore, focuses on Yeats' mystical interests later in his life when a more mature attitude can be observed in both his ideas and his work. As discussed above, this late interest is mainly in Neo-platonism and particularly in Plotinus. As mentioned at the beginning, then, this thesis aims to demonstrate how the foundation of Yeats' own mystical philosophy is built on Plotinus' mystical theories and how Yeats modifies these theories to his own preferences giving more importance to the earthly aspect of the mystical theory by reconciling art and philosophy. With a view to this aim, the next

chapter will begin with an overview of mysticism. It will then briefly discuss Plato and mysticism in Ancient Greece before delving more deeply into Neo-platonism in general and Plotinus' mystical world in particular. Chapter 3 will focus on William Butler Yeats' poems selected for analysis in this study. The chapter will first examine the second edition of *A Vision* in relation to Plotinus and show how Plotinus' philosophy helped to form Yeats' Neo-platonic world and how his philosophy was transcribed in Yeats' late poetry.

Since this study focuses mainly on the traces of Plotinus' mysticism in Yeats' poetry, the poems selected for analysis belong to Yeats' late career, which also coincides with his discovery of Plotinus and his Neo-platonic philosophy as stated above. The poems that will be analysed, then, are the ones included in his collection *The Tower* (1928) and the collections that were brought together after *The Tower*. The poems that have been chosen for analysis in this study are "Sailing to Byzantium", "The Tower", the "Crazy Jane" series, "Tom the Lunatic", "Tom at Cruachan", "Old Tom Again" and "Among School Children". It is obvious that there may always be other poems by Yeats which reflect Plotinus' philosophy, but these poems have been selected, believing that they reflect a wide enough range of ideas and concepts found in the philosophy of Plotinus as well as the elements that Yeats altered to a certain extent through his own preferences.

The fourth chapter will be the concluding chapter of this study. In this chapter, a synthesis of the points that have been critiqued and explored so far will be given; the arguments that are put forth will be evaluated in general and the conclusions reached will be discussed. The chapter will also provide some food for thought on the possibilities of further research on this topic.

## CHAPTER II

### MYSTICISM, PLOTINUS AND NEO-PLATONISM

#### 2.1. Mysticism

The word "mysticism" derives from the Greek  $\mu\upsilon\omega$  [*muo*], which means "to conceal" (Gellman). It is a state which cannot be achieved through common reasoning or ordinary emotions. It is an effort to see beyond this empirical world. Throughout history, humanity has always had a need to believe in a higher power through religions, which guide people towards a transcendental life and thus towards mysticism. However, it is incorrect to claim that mysticism is just about religion or that it is only within the context of a religious belief. As Evelyn Underhill argues, "mysticism is an essential element in full human religion, it can never be the whole content of such religion" (3). Furthermore, she argues that one would be mistaken to form a hierarchy between them and states "that the antithesis between the religions of 'authority' and of 'spirit,' the 'Church' and the 'mystic,' is false. Each requires the other" (Underhill 4). Mysticism does not seek to prove an Absolute Being or it does not seek to promulgate religion. The sole purpose of a mystical is union with such a transcendental being. Underhill states that mysticism is the pursuit of the feeling, which seeks to "transcend the limitations of the individual standpoint and to surrender itself to ultimate Reality; for no personal gain, to satisfy no transcendental curiosity, to obtain no other-worldly joys" (70).

Mysticism puts forward a means to achieve this unity without the help of a third party. It is between the individual and the transcendental force. It is, as William James states, the "overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute ... In mystic states we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness" (324). Through this experience or feeling, some people are able to achieve this state of being. Underhill puts forward her own understanding of mysticism and its subject in the following way:

Broadly speaking, I understand it to be the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order; whatever be the theological formula under which that order is understood. This tendency, in great mystics, gradually captures the whole field of consciousness; it dominates their life and, in the experience called “mystic union,” attains its end. (8)

This end that is achieved by the mystic may take different names under different contexts. It may differ from philosophy to religion or even from religion to religion. As Underhill explains,

Whether that end be called the God of Christianity, the World-soul of Pantheism, the Absolute of Philosophy, the desire to attain it and the movement towards it—so long as this is a genuine life process and not an intellectual speculation—is the proper subject of mysticism. I believe this movement to represent the true line of development of the highest form of human consciousness. (8)

Although the name given to the end differs, the way and the meaning of this end remain the same for all the mystics, the union with a higher power.

This higher power mystics talk about is not so different from the discussion of the concept of love or evil. Even to understand the term as well as the discussions of this topic, Underhill suggests to her readers that they should “break with [their] inveterate habit of taking the ‘visible world’ for granted; [their] lazy assumption that somehow science is ‘real’ and metaphysics is not” (11). She argues that only by overcoming the ego and asking “what else can be” can one achieve this mystical understanding, and states that the term itself “implies, indeed, the abolition of individuality; of that hard separateness, that ‘I, Me, Mine’ which makes of man a finite isolated thing” (Underhill 70).

William James argues that “[m]ystical truth exists for the individual who has the transport, but for no one else. In this ... it resembles the knowledge given to us in sensations more than that given by conceptual thought” (314). He puts the emphasis of the mystical experience on the intuitive aspect rather than knowledge. James

explains the importance of this sensation, this intuitive aspect in the following way: “[i]t is a commonplace of metaphysics that God’s knowledge cannot be discursive but must be intuitive, that is, must be constructed more after the pattern of what in ourselves is called immediate feeling, than after that proposition and judgement” (314).

The most common of the qualities experienced by the mystics is the state of an overwhelming sensation, the ecstasy of the moment. Henri Bergson, through the example of Plotinus, whom he strongly believes to be a mystic, explains mystical experience using the same word, ecstasy. He states that “[Plotinus] went as far as ecstasy, a state in which the soul feels itself, in the presence of God, being irradiated His light” (221). The mystics, however, cannot explain this moment of ecstasy. In the same line of thinking, Underhill explains the mystical experience as an ecstasy of the spirit, in which it has a taste of what is there for the soul to achieve, and states that “[u]nion must be looked upon as the true goal of mystical growth; that permanent establishment of life upon transcendent levels of reality, of which ecstasies give a foretaste to the soul” (159).

The mystic, Underhill claims, “is the person who attains this union, not the person who talks about it. Not to *know about* but to *Be*, is the mark of the real initiate” (71). The mystic is always in pursuit of finding himself or herself, bliss for the soul through stepping away from worldly pleasures. This art of spiritual life ultimately wishes to achieve a sense of union with God, or the Absolute in whichever context it is used. She argues that “mystics find the basis of their method . . . in the existence of a discoverable ‘real,’ a spark of true being, within the seeking subject, which can . . . fuse itself with and thus apprehend the reality of the sought Object” (Underhill 28).

The moment of ecstasy is different for each mystic. This moment is a personal experience. Yet, it is observed that they present resemblances among them. James Horne states that “while each mystic seems to advance a peculiar explanation of his experience, their statements collectively exhibit strong similarities” (101). Although they can express what they feel at that moment, they cannot put it into words which can define the experience itself completely.

In most of the sources on mysticism, there are certain qualities which appear frequently. Firstly, mysticism is beyond explanation. In order to understand what it is, one must experience it first-hand. It is beyond comprehension unless one feels it. It is mostly likened to the state of being in love.

Secondly, it forces itself on to the person who comes in touch with it. It is possible to prepare oneself by following the exercises which are laid bare by the great mystics of old. James Horne claims that there are practices that lead to the mystical experience and explains that “not all mysticism is so spontaneous. We know that the approach to the experience can be systematic, and that there are systems of meditation and of moral and even physical discipline that are supposed to lead to it” (3-4). However, when the person is having the experience, he or she cannot escape this overwhelming feeling. He or she has to give in to this transcendental sensation.

Thirdly, it is a temporary state. Although the regularity of it can be increased, it cannot be maintained for long. Thus, it has a transient quality. Underhill explains the mystical experience as “a temporary condition in which the subject receives a double conviction of ineffable happiness and ultimate reality” (306).

Fourthly, it is a state of passivity. Rather than having an active position, the person who is having the mystical experience is more of a receiver. He or she is presented with a transcendental view of the universe. Thus, the person in question takes all the information and this vision of the world, which are given to him or her.

There are different understandings of mysticism in different cultures and religions. In the East or the West, in Christianity, Islam, Buddhism or Platonism, despite differences there are, as explained, certain common qualities. In this study, however, these understandings will not be examined because within the scope of the thesis, Plotinus’ understanding of mysticism is essential. Plotinus’ influence on Yeats in his later works is fundamental. Therefore, after a brief overview of Platonism, in the next section, Plotinus’ mystical ideas and theories will be analysed in depth.

## **2.2. Platonism: Mysticism in Ancient Greece**

In Ancient Greece, the fundamentals of mysticism were laid on religion and then the philosophers developed it. Ancient Greeks' religion was pantheistic. They deified certain characters and thought of them as immortal and superhuman. Later on, they formed another understanding around the god Dionysus (Bacchus). He was known as the god of wine and fertility. His association with wine and drunkenness gave way to the understanding of mystical ecstasy. A similar mystical characteristic revealed itself around the god Orpheus, who is believed to be a man turned into god.

According to this idea, the soul was a divine being trapped in a body. Plotinus asserts that "it is requisite that the soul of man being tripartite should be dissolved with the composite, we must say that pure souls which are liberated from the body, dismiss that which adhered to them in generation" (qtd. in Kingsland 56). According to this religious belief which formed around Orpheus, the fundamental purpose of faith was to free the spirit of this entrapment and unite it with its creator. Only then would the soul be truly immortal and in order to achieve this immortality, one would have to strip the spirit from its terrestrial aspect. Plato states, as far as what he had assembled by the things he learned from the ecclesiastics of his time that "the soul of man is immortal; that it comes to an end of one form of existence, which men call dying, and then is born again, but never perishes" (qtd. in Kingsland 241).

The ideas formed around these religious beliefs, especially the one which had been founded by Pythagoras, paved the way for Plato and Platonism. Plato is the person who laid the grounds of mysticism as it is known today. The most of Plato's (428-348 B.C.) work focused on politics. It should not be forgotten, however, that "[b]ehind all his writings on political issues, however, lay a profound spiritual philosophy" (Happold 175). As F. Max Müller argues, the "World, as the thought of God, as the whole body of divine or eternal ideas, which Plato had prophesied ... is a truth which forms, or ought to form, the foundation of all philosophy" (qtd. in Kingsland 153). The foundation of Plato's philosophy is based on a duality. This theory of duality, as Happold states is as follows: "what was the nature of truly Real over against appearance, and what and how do we know about it" (175). The

fundamental idea behind Plato's theory, in its basic form, is that there are objects, for example cups, which human beings can perceive with sense-perception. These objects, however, are great in number but with slight differences yet they are cups, which share certain similar qualities, all the same. Yet, according to Plato, these cups are not the perfect Form of the real and ideal cup, which exists in the transcendental realm (Happold 175). This idea of the real, the true Form, is relevant for immaterial concepts as well as material ones. In the same line of thinking, Happold contends that "[i]t is the same with abstract things, such as beauty or justice. Behind all beautiful objects lies the Idea of Beauty, in virtue of which they are called beautiful. The Ideas cannot be known through the senses, but only through the mind" (175-176).

From this standpoint Plato argues that the world people live in is a shadow of the real one, the world of Ideas. For this reason, humanity should be seeking this real world of Ideas through their representations of them in the sense world. E. Hatch explains that "This visible world ... is a copy of the ideal world ... The matter of it as well as the form was created by God. It was made by Him, and to Him it will return" (qtd. in Kingsland 50). The empirical world, which humankind lives in, is the one that people can perceive with their senses. The world of Ideas is beyond perception, yet the intellect finds a common ground between these two worlds. Thus, contemplation and intellection would lead the individual to become aware of the world of Ideas. The power which holds both the empirical world and the world of Ideas together, is the transcendental being, God. Just like these two worlds, a person consists of two parts: the body and the soul. The mortal body is a prison for the immortal soul. Therefore, in order to find the essence of the universe one has to free the spirit from its earthly shackles. Plato's main principle is considered

the immortality and the divinity of the rational soul, and the reality and unchangeability of the objects of its knowledge. These doctrines constitute ... the twin pillars of Platonism: architrave of those pillars is



Anamnesis<sup>2</sup>, the doctrine that learning is recollection and that the truth of all things is always in the soul. (Allen 19)

This idea reflects that one has to look within himself/herself, reach the soul where he/she can find the truth. Thus, it indicates an inner journey through the immortal spirit towards the divine, towards a union.

Plato's theory of these two worlds, shadow and the world of Ideas, paved the way for Plotinus. Happold explains that the "pure Platonism of Plato himself was the stem from which branched out that Neo-platonism, of which Plotinus is the greatest exponent" (176). Plotinus (205-270 A. D.) was an Egyptian philosopher who spent his early years in Alexandria. A. H. Armstrong states that "Plotinus himself would never say anything about his family or birthplace ... and we really do not know to what race or country he belonged" (11). Most of the information about Plotinus comes from the Introduction, which his pupil and editor Porphyry added to Plotinus' most important work the *Enneads*. According to Armstrong, if there is one piece of information on Plotinus which is definite, this is derived "from Plotinus's own writings and everything else we know of him ... is that he was fully and completely Greek by education and cultural background" (12).

As a philosopher (back in that era this was a full time occupation) Plotinus' dealings were with worldly affairs but he was also greatly interested in religious and intellectual practice, which can be traced in his writings and ideas. Unlike in Plato and Aristotle's time, as Armstrong states, dealing with state affairs were not "a prime concern of the philosopher, and his [Plotinus'] writings show no signs of political activity or interest" (14). Plotinus' life covers a period during which the Roman Empire was in disorder. In his search for philosophical study Plotinus moved to Alexandria in 232 and here he studied under the tutorage of Ammonius Saccas and Armstrong states that Ammonius Saccas helped Plotinus shape his Neo-platonic ideas in the eleven years Plotinus had studied with him (Armstrong 12-13). Plotinus

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<sup>2</sup> The term Anamnesis has an important place in Plotinus' system and it is employed by Yeats in his poetry as well. For this reason, it will be analysed in depth later under the title, "Memory and Recollection."

returned to Rome and started teaching philosophy in 244 and in 254 he started to write. By then his writings and his philosophical thought were already in maturity and as Armstrong indicates “we should not expect to find, and do not in fact find, any real development of thought in them: they represent a mature and fully formed philosophy” (15).

In the next section, Plotinus’ philosophy of mysticism will be discussed in length. His greatest work the *Enneads* will be analysed thoroughly to clarify his mystical world and thought, through which he introduced the understanding of Neoplatonism.

## **2.3. Plotinus’ Mystical World**

### **2.3.1. Hypostases; The One, The Divine Mind and The All Soul**

Plotinus’ system is defined in three main hypostases or hierarchies. However, this system was not something new. It was an advancement of Plato’s bipartite universe. As Maria Luisa Gatti indicates,

the greatest continuator of Plato among the Neoplatonists was not Iamblichus, who struggled with obscure esotericisms, nor Proclus, who ontologized and divinized numbers and relations, but Plotinus, who, in the *Enneads*, has presented a powerful synthesis in which Platonic thought is represented and developed with the appropriate religious, mystical, and metaphysical sensitivities. (19)

Plotinus takes the Platonic system and advances it into a tripartite hierarchy, which constitutes the foundation of his system. These three main hypostases each have different members under themselves.

The first and the fundamental hypostasis is the One. Nothing comes before the One. It does not need anything to come after it and it is self-dependent. Plotinus contends that “the first is One, but undefined: a defined One would not be the One-Absolute: the absolute is prior to the definite” (V. III. 12). However, people can only talk about this unknowable hypostasis within their own frame of knowledge. John Bussanich contends that the term, “the One,” does not reify It but only refers to Its unique

nature or singularity, which is a prerequisite if there is to be any understanding of the One in the first place (42-43). Consequently, anything that comes after needs a first, anything that is not simple needs a simple, from which it comes. Plotinus explains this idea in his the *Enneads* as follows:

Standing before all things, there must exist a Simplex, differing from all its sequel, self-gathered not interblended with the forms that rise from it, and yet able in some mode of its own to be present to those others: it must be authentically a unity, not merely something elaborated into unity and so in reality no more than unity's counterfeit; it will debar all telling and knowing except that it may be described as transcendent Being—for if there were nothing outside all alliance and compromise, nothing authentically one, there would be no Source. Untouched by multiplicity, it will be wholly self-sufficing, an absolute First, whereas any not-first demands its earlier, and any non-simplex needs the simplicities within itself as the very foundations of its composite existence. (V. IV. 1)

Thus, the indication of this simplicity and oneness of the hypostasis reinforces the idea of a source that exists before all and exists on its own without being characterized by the things that come after it. Charles J. Whitby contends that the “first Divine Hypostasis is the prime source and principle of all being whatsoever and is designated indifferently the One or the Good” (23). Plotinus explains the nature of the One as follows:

the Good, the Principle, is simplex, and, correspondingly, primal – for the secondary can never be simplex – that it contains nothing: that it is an integral Unity.

Now the same Nature belongs to the Principle we know as The One. Just as the goodness of The Good is essential and not the outgrowth of some prior substance so the Unity of The One is its essential. (II. IX. 1)

John Bussanich argues as follows: the “distinctness of the One from everything else supports the further claim that the One has no relations to other things, whereas the

relations of others to the One are real” (43). In the same line of thinking, A. H. Armstrong explains Plotinus’ idea of the One in this way: “He is so completely One, Single and Simple, that no predicates at all can be applied to Him, not even that of existence” (29).

The One is self-sufficient, comes before all, is the source of all, single and simple; it is beyond the grasp of knowledge. Plotinus claims that the “One, as transcending Intellect, transcends knowing: above all need, it is above the need of knowing which pertains solely to the Secondary Nature” (V. III. 12). How is it possible to talk of It then? Plotinus states that people can only talk about It through the things that come from It. “According to the conception of imagining, the immanent presence of the higher generating reality is found in its lower manifestations” (Uždavinys 23).

This brings to mind the second hypostasis The Divine-Mind or Intellectual-Principle. S. Abhayananda clarifies Plotinus’ term “*Nous*, which is translated as ‘the Divine Mind’” and as “the creative Power inherent in the One” (44) The One, as discussed, is the source of all creation. It creates without Itself going through any change, it remains simple and constant. Plotinus explains:

all that is fully achieved engenders: therefore the eternally achieved engenders eternally an eternal being. At the same time, the offspring is always minor: what then are we to think of the All-Perfect but that it can produce nothing less than the very greatest that is later than itself. The greatest, later than the divine unity, must be the Divine Mind, and it must be second of all existence, for it is that which sees The One on which alone it leans while the First has no need whatever of it. (V. I. 6)

This is the first knowable hypostasis in Plotinus’ system. The knowledge of the Divine-Mind can be reached by reasoning. So the Intellect becomes the first step of the multiplicity. It is the source of all that comes after. Plotinus contends that the “Intellectual-Principle stands as the image of the One, firstly because there is a certain necessity that the first should have its offspring, carrying onward much of its quality” (V. I. 7). Thus, the Divine-Mind represents a light source from which the

rays of light pour forth. However, this does not mean the One is on the same level as the Intellect. Nor does this mean that the Mind is divided. Plotinus states the “divisibility belonging to the circle does not apply to the Intellectual-Principle; all, there too, is a unity, though a unity which is the potentiality of all existence” (V. I. 7). This is because the Divine Mind is a hypostasis thus it is a simplex and a unity. Algis Uždavinys explains as follows:

The contemplative reversion upon its source, the One, makes Intellect properly Intellect. Light plays a significant role in the actualization of Intellect through a ‘generative radiance’ of the One. However, since the One is beyond being and form, Intellect cannot grasp it but only sees the supreme image of the One. From this fragmental vision arises the multiplicity of Forms or intelligible beings (noetic gods, spiritual lights) and the actuality of pure thought or intellection (*noesis*). (22-23)

This potentiality of multiplicity gives the Divine-Mind a one and all quality which is likened to a city which has its own soul and also within itself contains other Forms: the “living city is the more perfect and powerful, but those lesser forms, in spite of all, share in the one same living quality” (IV. VII. 3). Algis Uždavinys states that the “divine Intellect contains the totality of true Being and transcends time; therefore on the level of *Nous* there is perfect identity between subject and object as well as complete self-awareness” (24). Plotinus also states that:

Intellect as a whole must be thought of as prior to the intellects actualized as individuals; but when we come to the particular intellects, we find that what subsists in the particulars must be maintained from the totality. The Intellect subsisting in the totality is a provider for the particular intellects, is the potentiality of them: it involves them as members of its universality, while they in turn involve the universal Intellect in their particularity, just as the particular science involves science the total. (VI. II. 20)

In the same line of thought Kevin Corrigan indicates that the intellect Plotinus comes up with is not the same as the modern understanding of the term implies but rather “Intellect’s understanding is more like a complete grasp of the whole at one glance. Each part is not only in the whole but *is* the whole” (34). Thus, this hypostasis becomes the mediator between the unknowable One and the knowable rest. G. S. Bowe indicates that the Divine-Mind (*Nous*) is this middle step and contends that “the One for Plotinus ... can be thought of as a sort of ‘Form of unity.’ Nothing can participate directly in the One, and the unity and being which it conveys has to be mediated by the circumscribing unity and being of the Forms and *Nous*” (15-16).

The Divine-Mind, as discussed, is the offspring of the One, from which all creation comes into being. Thus, while the One creates the Intellect in Its own image, the Intellect spreads the light it gets from the One into multitudes and these are the Forms. As Uždavinys states,

Intellect thus holds the One’s light within itself. It is filled by the One’s power and this plurality of lights, or intellects, is analogous to the spatial plurality of the sphere that is illuminated by the omnipresent power of light. The One’s light is broken into multiple unities by Intellect and these unities are also equated to the Forms. (23)

Since the Intellect is the offspring of the One, it is closest to It. Also, almost like the One it is infinite in power. However, the Forms that are given existence by the Divine-Mind are not limitless. Otherwise, it would be beyond the grasp of knowledge; thus, it would also be beyond understanding. Abhayananda claims that the “Divine Mind represents the creative Power by and from which is initiated the bursting into manifest activity of the Ideational Universe which is inherent within it” (45). However, despite all its power and eternity, the Intellect is not the ultimate. This is because, as Kevin Corrigan states, “[a]ll Forms or intelligible objects are also subjects or intellects; and every intellect includes the whole of intelligible reality without losing its own distinctiveness” (24). Thus, they still represent a duality, a “doubleness of subject thinking and object thought” (Corrigan 24). This is because, there is still a prior, a pure simplex beyond, which is the One. For this reason, the

One is the first, pure unity and differs from the other hypostases. In the same line of thinking, Plotinus contends the absolute unity has to be a simple and not a multitude; “Thinking and Object of its Thought, it is dual, not simplex, not The Unity: considered as looking beyond itself, it must look to a better, a prior: looking simultaneously upon itself and upon its Transcendent, it is, once more, the First” (VI. IX. 2). Therefore, the Divine Mind, despite its eternity and power, is still not the One.

Earlier, it has been said that the Divine Mind is in unity. However, it has also been mentioned that this unity differs from the unity of the One. How is this different then? As Plotinus argues, “if it were manifested as a bare unity, it could have no intellection, since in that simplicity it would already be identical with the object of its thought” (VI. II. 6). Plotinus explains this difference with Motion. The One, as discussed, is at rest and there is no motion. In the Divine Intellect motion leads to both multiplicity and unity. Plotinus explains this idea of motion as follows: the “Authentic Existents constitute the Intellectual-Principle with Which motion and rest begin. The Primal touches nothing, but is the centre round which those other Beings lie in repose and in movement. For Movement is aiming” and there can be nothing for the One to aim (III. IX. 3). Since the Divine Mind also looks up to its prior, there should be a trace of motion within its unity as well as its multiplicity. As Plotinus, in another part of his the *Enneads*, states,

Similarly the knowing principle itself cannot remain simplex, especially in the act of self-knowing: all silent though its self-perception be, it is dual to itself. Of course it has no need of minute self-handling since it has nothing to learn by its intellectual act; before it is [effectively] Intellect, it holds knowledge of its own content. Knowledge implies desire, for it is, so to speak, discovery crowning a search; the utterly undifferentiated remains self-centred and makes no enquiry about that self: anything capable of analysing its content, must be manifold. (V. III. 10)

Therefore, the Divine Mind, in its unity and multitude, has motion and does not move. Its motion is within itself. As Lloyd P. Gerson contends,

Intellect's activity is closest to the paradigm of activity, that of the One, it acts on or towards nothing outside itself. It is 'self-contained' activity. The One's activity is self-contained in the sense that there is nothing outside the One for it to act on. The self-contained activity of Intellect is an image of the One's activity. Since Intellect is identical with all The Forms, it is also the entity least limited by essence. There is nothing which it is not owing to its being something else (39)

It must also remain at rest otherwise it would imply an end, a fatigue which would be beyond hypostases' nature. If the mind is considered the mover of the body, similarly the Divine Mind is the mover of Plotinus' system. Plotinus states that the "Intellectual-Principle is continuously itself, unchangeably constituted in stable Act. With movement – towards it or within it – we are in the realm of the Soul's operation: such act is a Reason-Principle emanating from it and entering into Soul" (II. IX. 1).

This brings the study to the third hypostasis, the All Soul. As Charles J. Whitby argues, the All Soul is "engendered by the first movement (that of the divine Intelligence) and includes all other movements" (62). The Divine Intellect stands second to the One and just like that the All Soul stands second to the Divine Mind.

Plotinus positions souls in the Divine Mind at first. However, they are in unity within the second hypostasis. Therefore, Plotinus talks about two different souls. The All Soul, within unity, which is the third hypostasis, and the one that can be divided among the bodies. Thus, Soul has this nature of being in both realms. It has both a celestial and a terrestrial side. Plotinus explains this idea as follows: the "entity, therefore, described as 'consisting of the undivided soul and of the soul divided among bodies,' contains a soul which is at once above and below, attached to the Supreme and yet reaching down to this sphere" (IV. I. 1). Therefore, the soul in the body is a part of the third hypostasis, the All Soul. The hypostasis itself, however, is not a soul of anything. Despite its name, it is an entity like its prior. Plotinus states that



In the Intellectual Kosmos dwells Authentic Essence, with the Intellectual-Principle [Divine Mind] as the noblest of its content, but containing also souls, since every soul in this lower sphere has come thence: that is the world of unembodied spirits while to our world belong those that have entered body and undergone bodily division. (IV. I. 1)

Consequently, there is the All Soul which belongs to the transcendental realm, the realm of Being, and there is the lower soul, so to speak, which belongs to the empirical realm that gives itself to the task of separation. As Plotinus contends, the “Intellectual-Principle is for ever repugnant to distinction and to partition. Soul, there without distinction and partition, has yet a nature lending itself to divisional existence: its division is secession, entry into body” (IV. I. 1).

It has been discussed that the Divine Intelligence is where the Idea of motion comes into being. While the Divine Mind is at an immobile state, there is a movement towards it. Plotinus gives the example of circles as the One being at the centre of it all, the Divine Intelligence as a motionless circle, and the All Soul a roaming external circle (IV. IV. 16). For this reason, the All Soul is the only divine hypostasis that moves. The bipartite nature of the All Soul is important in the sense that it becomes a bridge between the transcendental realm and the empirical realm. As Corrigan states, “Soul is the great intermediary between the intelligible and sensible worlds, but she is also a hypostasis in her own right, part of the intelligible realm yet also a product, or ‘utterance’ ... of the Intellect” (38). It is also the creator of the sensible world. Everything, which is below the level of these three divine hypostases, comes from the All Soul. So, the Divine Mind is the source of all cognitive activity, Ideas, the All Soul is the source of life itself. As Corrigan explains,

Soul is not only the direct animator of the sensible world; she is a living organism in her own right. Less unified than intellect, she is an ‘all soul’ from which come the World soul, responsible for the generation and maintenance of the whole physical world, and all the individual souls with their full range of individual faculties, from intellectual to reproductive and nutritive capacities. (38)

However, if the All Soul is a hypostasis in Plotinus' system, and also if it has a divine nature, it must remain, somehow, untouched in this creation process. As discussed, if a hypostasis creates something, due to its divine nature, it does not give a part of itself. It emanates into the below entity and stays unified. Plotinus clarifies this idea in this way:

We are not asserting the unity of soul in the sense of a complete negation of multiplicity – only of the Supreme can that be affirmed – we are thinking of soul as simultaneously one and many, participant in the nature divided in body, but at the same time a unity by virtue of belonging to that Order which suffers no division. (IV. IX. 2)

So, while the All Soul lingers in the transcendental realm, it radiates throughout the sense world creating rays of soul which enter into bodies. Corrigan contends that the All Soul, in its divinity, “is not divisible like a physical mass but is more like scientific knowledge or even biological development in the sense that a particular theorem implies potentially the whole body of knowledge of which it is a part” (40). At this point, the role of the All Soul becomes vital, for the Divine Mind, as Gerson contends, “does not trade in images at all. And for Intellect to break out of eternity into the temporalized world would be for it to cease being Intellect” (51). Consequently, the All Soul is the one that takes up this task and souls become the organic representations of Forms in the empirical world.

Subsequently, Plotinus positions these three hypostases, the One, the Divine Mind and the All Soul, in the centre of the universe. Although there are different titles under his hypostases, these are the main elements of his conception of the cosmos. Now that the hypostases of Plotinus' universe are explained, the process of creation and how bodily forms come to be will be discussed.

### **2.3.2. Emanation**

Plotinus' understanding is formed around the idea of where the soul comes from and where it will return. He focuses on the oneness of the soul with the One. As Plotinus explains, “reality is brought about in virtue of something emanating from

the divine” (VI. VIII. 14). Thus, every individual carries a light that emanates from hypostases. Plotinus argues that the One overflows and the Divine Mind is created. Similarly, the Divine Mind overflows and thus a Form or Idea takes shape and finally the All Soul “arises as the idea and act of the motionless Intellectual-Principle” (V. II. 1). Finally, what the Soul creates is the sense realm. There is also a reverse movement toward the source as there is this downward path. Diana Lobel explains the way of Plotinus towards the Divine as:

Plotinus, the third-century father of Neo-Platonism, had described divine emanation as an initial “downward” path, whereby the unknowable One emanates through Mind, Soul, and Nature into this world; this is the philosophical dimension to this thought. However, he also prescribed an upward, religious path by which a soul yearning for return to the One could strive to attain union. (23)

Reality emanates from the All Soul, which emanates from the Divine Mind and this hypostasis emanates from the One. In the same line of thinking, Kevin Corrigan clarifies this two way movement of Plotinus’ mystical system in the following way: “[f]or Plotinus, there is an essential double movement in all being, a movement of procession outward (*prohodos*) or descent, and a movement of return or conversion (*epistrophê*) to the higher generative principle” (28). As Plotinus contends,

All existences, as long as they retain their character, produce – about themselves, from their essence, in virtue of the power which must be in them – some necessary, outward-facing hypostasis continuously attached to them and representing in image the engendering archetypes: thus fire gives out its heat; snow is cold not merely to itself; fragrant substances are a notable instance; for, as long as they last, something is diffused from them and perceived wherever they are present. (V. I. 6)

In the case of Plotinus’ hypostases, the presence lasts forever, for they are divine and eternal and they do not lose anything from themselves in this emanation process. For this reason, the examples that are given should not be considered literally. Due to their physical nature, one might find fault in these examples. However, as Frederic M. Schroeder states, the “imagery of emanation is successful to the degree that it

expresses the relationship of dependence that exists between source and product” (343). For Plotinus, the emanation process is what connects the universe. The two way link of the multiplicity to the hypostases and the hypostases to the individuals is this emanation. Each hypostasis contains a typical internal motion, and as Eyjólfur K. Emilsson contends,

Each such internal act, except matter and immanent forms at the lowest level of the hierarchy, are accompanied by an external one, which constitutes the beginning of the next stage below. This is the “activity of essence.” We may say that this notion of double act or activity describes in philosophical terminology what emanation metaphors render in a more pictorial language. (48)

Thus, the examples which are used by Plotinus are chosen for purposes of clarity, in order to make the idea more understandable for the reader.

The power that emanates from the source does not change in the process. If it did, then it would mean the power of the divine would have been diminished during this act. However, this is not the case. The power remains the same but using Plotinus’ example, the light an individual living in the sense realm can take is limited. Plotinus explains the limit of an individual in the empirical world as follows: “any presence is presence of an emanant [*sic.*] power: even this ... does not mean that the principle is less than integrally present; it is not sundered from the power which it has uttered; all is offered, but the recipient is able to take only so much” (VI. IV. 3). However, there is also a hierarchy among individuals. While some individuals remain lower even within the sense realm, there are some who rise above and achieve a mystical union with the One, thus achieve the transcendental sense of Being.

### **2.3.3. The Upward Way Toward Union**

Up until now, the downward path has been explained through hypostases together with the hierarchy among them. In the discussion of emanation it has been mentioned that just as there is this downward path, there is also an upward one. Every individual in the sense realm, as explained, carry the essences of the hypostases within them.

Yet, they are separated and away from the source. However, there is a way for such individuals to go back to the source and achieve unity with the One. Through the emanation process the body comes into being with the ability to contemplate and possess a soul which has a part within the divine realm. As Algis Uždavinys argues,

Ascension through the different levels of reality brings about a radical transformation of the being through the realization that the physical body and its constituents are a part of a much greater whole and that the human mind depends upon a superior divine Intellect, which illuminates it and permits it to think. (31)

This is only a part of the upward way explained. However, in order to truly achieve this state of transcendence, contemplation is not enough and a spiritual journey is also necessary. Uždavinys continues:

The spiritual ascent is not a theoretical journey undertaken by reason, but (like the Sufi *mi'raj*) it is a movement in consciousness, active imagination, and spirit, which transforms one's being and brings an inner unification and union (*henosis*) with the divine. The supreme goal of human life is to be united to the Good who is above all things. (31)

For this reason, one must purify oneself in terms of both intellect and soul. This is because the first aim of unity requires the understanding of the Forms through their reflections on the sense realm. Only when the union with *Nous* is achieved can the unity with the One be achieved. As Plotinus states,

Everything has something of the Good, by virtue of possessing a certain degree of Existence and by the Unity, Being, and Form which are present, there is a sharing in an image, for the Unity and Existence in which there is participation are no more than images of the Ideal-Form. (I. VII. 2)

He also states, however, this is different for the soul. All Soul is the fruit of the Divine Mind and compared to the Intellect it is closer to the sense realm. Also, it actually possesses the Good in it rather than just the Idea of it. For this reason, the

soul should move toward the Divine Mind firstly. As Plotinus explains, “life is the Good to the living, and the Intellectual-Principle to what is intellective; so that where there is life with intellection there is double contact with the Good” (I. VII. 2).

Uždavinys contends that “the goal of life is to live according to the divine Intellect ... If the soul wishes to contemplate the ineffable One, the Good, it must be ‘intellectified’ (*nootheisa*) and be reunited with the divine *Nous*” (30).

Of course, not everything is good despite the fact that it has the essence of the Good in it. Plotinus claims that the “Good is that on which all else depends, towards which all Existences aspire as to their source and their need” (I. VIII. 2). However, not everything is good and not everything can get close to the source. As Gerson argues, “[m]atter is unqualifiedly evil ... and so cannot partake in the Good” (160). The closeness to the One depends on the moral assessment of an individual. Anything or anyone other than the One can be evaluated on the grounds of being “good or bad, right or wrong ... Whatever supports and produces advancement towards the first principle is positively evaluated; whatever does the opposite is negatively evaluated” (Gerson 160). Plotinus indicates that in the state of Being and in the realm of the divine hypostases there is no place for evil and explains this idea as follows: “if Evil exist at all, that it be situate in the realm of Non-Being, that it be some mode, as it were on the Non-Being, that it have its seat in something in touch with Non-Being or to a certain degree communicate in Non-Being” (I. VIII. 3). By Non-Being, Plotinus means everything that is away from the source or away from the state of Being.

As indicated, particulars are away from the state of transcendental Being in the sense realm. However, they hold the trace of unity within themselves. By strengthening this unity these particulars aim to achieve a divine state of Being, and consequently, union with the divine source. Accordingly, there is a difference in the concept of Being and the concept of unity, as well as the same terms carrying different connotations in the sensible world and the transcendental realm. Plotinus clarifies this difference as follows:

Unity is not identical in all things; it has a different significance according as it is applied to the Sensible and Intellectual realms – Being

too of course, comports such a difference – and there is a difference in the unity affirmed among sensible things as compared with each other; the unity is not the same in the cases of chorus, camp, ship, house; there is a difference again as between such discrete things and the continuous. Nevertheless, all are representations of the one exemplar, some quite remote, others more effective: the truer likeness is in the Intellectual; Soul is a unity, and still more is Intellect a unity and Being a unity. (VI. II. 11)

For this reason, it would be wrong to assume that if something has less unity than another it is less a being. Everything desires unity with its own excellence and within its own limits. Plotinus states that “[e]very art in all its operation aims whatsoever unity its capacity and its model permit, though Being most achieves unity since it is closer at start” (VI. II. 11). In the same line of thinking, Gerson states that “[a] continuous body is farther from the One than a soul because it is a body; a chorus is even farther from the One than a body because it is not even an image of a Form” (40). In short, there is the idea of the eternal state of Being and there is the process and the desire of achieving this state. Plotinus, at this point, in order to explain the idea of “Real-Being”, introduces the concept of time.

The state of Being is associated with eternity, thus the path to this state should be in a non-eternal dimension. Plotinus claims that the true aim of life resides within this eternal state of Being. As He states,

Eternity is not merely something circling on its traces into a final unity but has [instantaneous] Being about The One as the unchanging Life of the Authentic Existent. This is certainly what we have been seeking: this Principle, at rest within the One, is Eternity; possessing this stable quality, being itself at once the absolute self-identical and none the less the active manifestation of an unchanging Life set towards the Divine and dwelling within It, untrue, therefore, neither on the side of Being nor on the side of Life – this will be Eternity [the Real-Being we have sought]. (III. VII. 6)

For this reason, whoever seeks this eternal state of Being, can only be outside of it. Consequently, they should be within the temporal realm. In the same line of thinking, Plotinus states that while eternity is a representative of the Divine Mind, temporality is a characteristic of the soul (IV. IV. 15). This temporal state towards the eternal is defined as becoming. Gerson contends that the “term of becoming has always to be given with a temporal predicate. Without temporal predicate, the description is essentially incomplete” (106). This is because the term applies to either now or a future that has yet to pass. As Gerson continues, “[u]nderstanding a temporally bound individual as being f requires an imaginative application of the concept of really being f, which is being f unqualifiedly or eternally” (106). In short, the path starts from the sensible realm and when it is the sensible realm that is dealt with, Plotinus states “the proper term would be Becoming” (VI. III. 2).

As discussed earlier, Plotinus considers that the aim of life is to transcend this process of becoming and achieve true being. In relation to this, people are not entirely void of this notion of true being after they assume a body. To clarify, as Plotinus argues,

Before we had our becoming Here we existed There, men other than now, some of us gods: we were pure souls, Intelligence inbound with the entire of reality, members of the Intellectual, not fenced off, not cut away, integral to that All. Even now, it is true, we are not put apart; but upon that primal Man there has intruded another, a man seeking to come into being and finding us there, for we were not outside of the universe. This other has wound himself about us, foisting himself upon the Man that each of us was at first.<sup>3</sup> (VI. IV. 14).

Therefore, Man exists within the Divine Mind as a Form but this becomes something else and Man assumes a body within the empirical world. Man loses its unity as a Form in the sensible world and becomes a multiplicity. Plotinus continues on the same topic: “now we have lost that first simplicity; we are become the dual thing,

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<sup>3</sup> Plotinus employs “Here” when he refers to the sense realm and employs “There” when he talks about the transcendental realm.



sometimes indeed no more than that later foisting, with the primal nature dormant and in a sense no longer present” (VI. IV. 14). The way upward is the means to attain this unity and simplicity back. The desire is there within the individual but there should be a triggering effect, which would set the individual on this path.

As stated, there should be a starting point, something that would lead the individual to the union with the One. Plotinus asks the same question and replies that there are certain qualities that one should have and certain ones that should be avoided:

The pleasure demanded for the Sage’s life cannot be in the enjoyments of the licentious or in any gratifications of the body – there is no place for these, and they stifle happiness – nor in any violent emotions – what could so move the Sage? – it can be only such pleasure as there must be where Good is, pleasure that does not rise from movement and is not a thing of process, for all that is good is immediately present to the Sage and the Sage is present to himself: his pleasure, his contentment, stands, immovable. (I. IV. 12)

Here Plotinus explains that the mystical journey or the upward path lies within the individual and for that reason there is no need to look for it in the empirical world. Also, the path lies within the qualities that can be found in the Good. Happiness, Plotinus argues, of course is true happiness, which can be attained through union with the One. Eyjólfur K. Emilsson states that “the sage’s action must not in any way be conditioned on particular results in the sensible sphere” (326). Plotinus argues that this triggering effect lies in pure beauty and the love for this beauty, and he states that “in the Soul’s becoming a good and beautiful thing is its becoming like to God, for from the Divine comes all the Beauty and all the Good in beings” (I. VI. 6). He compares the beauty of the material world and the transcendent world and praises Beauty, which comes first. As Plotinus contends, individuals in the empirical world “are no longer granted to know them, but the soul, taking no help from the organs, sees and proclaims them. To the vision of these we must mount, leaving sense to its own low place” (I. VI. 4). By Beauty, what Plotinus means is all the good qualities that emanate from the One into the empirical realm; however, this beauty should be seen with a vision beyond the sense perception. The beauty observed with the senses

is not the Beauty as the transcendental Idea but only the image of it in the temporal world. As Plotinus states,

As it is not for those to speak of the graceful forms of the material world who have never seen them or know their grace – men born blind, let us suppose – in the same way those who must be silent upon the beauty of noble conduct and of learning and all that order who have never cared for such things, nor may those tell of splendour of virtue who have never known the face of Justice and of Moral-Wisdom beautiful beyond the beauty of Evening and of Dawn. (I. VI. 4)

This is where Plotinus' mystical return lies. The individual should let go of his sense vision and use the soul's vision to see beyond the empirical. Those who experience such a vision are called Lovers by Plotinus and he states that "[t]his is the spirit that Beauty must ever induce, wonderment and a delicious trouble, longing and love and a trembling that is all delight" (I. VI. 4). Lovers are those who feel this immaculate, pure emotion towards the One. As Lloyd P. Gerson explains, "just as the desire for good is the desire to be associated with Intellect in contemplating Forms, so beauty is that aspect of intelligible reality that produces delight in the contemplator" during the contemplating process (183). Plotinus goes so far as to associate Beauty with the Good and puts the two together as one. Plotinus explains this idea as follows: "Beauty, this Beauty which is also The Good, must be posed as The First: directly deriving from this First is the Intellectual-Principle which is pre-eminently the manifestation of Beauty; through the Intellectual-Principle Soul is beautiful" (I. VI. 6). Charles J. Whitby explains the importance of Beauty in Plotinus' system as follows:

He [Plotinus] says that whenever a beautiful object is presented to the consciousness we strive always, while reducing that object to a form (apprehending it, that is, as an idea) to discover beyond and identify ourselves with the formative principle. This principle, which is superior to all determinate form, and hence to all ideas (being itself the one absolute and supernal *ideal*) is essential or transcendent beauty, the first Divine Hypostasis – shall we venture to name it universal Love? (120)

Beauty finds its correspondence in the empirical world through the mediator, which is Soul. Consequently, through the material that is shaped by Soul the essence of Beauty is represented in the sense realm. As Plotinus states, “the Soul, a divine thing, a fragment as it were of the Primal Beauty, makes beautiful to the fullness of their capacity all things whatsoever that it grasps and moulds” (I. VI. 6). The trigger is there but there is another achievement to be conquered by the individual to possess this vision, which is leaving the empirical behind.

As the divine descends it assumes different qualities on the way and finally possesses an empirical feature. In the same line of thought, in order to ascend back to the source the individual has to be rid of this empirical nature. As Plotinus states,

He that has the strength, let him arise and withdraw into himself, foregoing all that is known by the eyes, turning away for ever from the material beauty that once made his joy. When he perceives those shapes of grace that show in body, let him not pursue: he must know them for copies, vestiges, shadows, and hasten away towards That they tell of. (I. VI. 8)

Such is the journey according to Plotinus, within the individual as each one of them carries the traces of the source, and beyond the sense perceptions. One must look beyond these empirical beauties and see the pure Form of it, the Idea of Beauty as it exists in the Divine. As Gerson argues, “superiority of the immaterial beauty of soul to the sensible beauty produced by soul is owing to their relative proximity to the paradigm of beauty, Intellect. Souls become beautiful by being in love with Intellect” (183). As Plotinus states, Beauty is within individuals and those who have power should look within themselves. Thus, this introspection leads one to self-awareness.

Plotinus gives an account of his mystical experience in which he becomes self-aware leaving out everything else. He becomes one with the Good, as he explains:

Many times it has happened: Lifted out of the body into myself; becoming external to all other things and self-encentered; beholding a marvellous beauty; then, more than ever, assured of community with the

loftiest order; enacting the noblest life, acquiring identity with the divine  
(IV. VIII. 1)

Plotinus' experience indicates that he moved beyond the empirical self and gained an identity with the One. This different identity indicates, as discussed earlier, realising the Forms beyond the sense realm. Therefore, according to Plotinus, being self-aware does not mean being conscious of the bodily self but being aware of a self as it is within the realm of the Divine. As Sara Rappe states, "the possibility of self-knowledge is treated as a proof or demonstration that the self is incorporeal" (252). If this self-awareness belongs to the empirical self, the individual would only be aware of the lower self and would still remain in a divided state and thus would fail to achieve the state of being. However, in order to achieve the union, one has to think in unity. Once this understanding is achieved, Plotinus indicates, being "gives up its touring of the realm of sense and settles down in the Intellectual Kosmos, and there plies its own peculiar Act; it has abandoned all the realm of deceit and falsity" (I. III. 4). Self-awareness might be considered as a private act and this private act may oppose the idea of understanding the unity. On this ground Lloyd P. Gerson argues as follows:

for Plotinus ideal, self-reflexive cognition is assimilated to knowledge of eternal truth. Thus, what is strictly speaking private is in this context severely qualified. What it is that the discarnate intellect cognizes is actually identical with what it is that every other discarnate intellect cognizes. Thus, self-discovery is not the discovery of the private. Indeed, it is more accurately characterized as discovery of the universal. (113)

Thus, the self that is discovered is the Form of man rather than the man himself. This means that, the discovery is the Forms and the transcendental realm. Here, the ego of the bodily self, therefore, would not be able to exist since, as discussed, there is no duality, no difference between the object and the subject. Thus, the reasoning natural self has to be left behind and one should move beyond such a mental state in order to achieve this higher mode of self. As Rappe indicates,

Plotinus is sensitive to the empirical falsity of the claim that mental states are apprehended incorrigibly within consciousness; he recognizes that

there can be a fairly wide gulf between mental processes and the conscious awareness of those processes. Secondly, for Plotinus, Cartesian incorrigibility would be fundamentally representational in nature, since all discursive activity of the mind, such as thought or perception, introduces a representational gap between the knower and the object known. (252)

For this reason, the individual has to leave behind any and all sense-perception and anything that belongs to the sense realm; this includes anything that belongs to bodily self as well. Only then can one find universal truth and union with the source. Plotinus contends that by achieving all one leaves oneself behind and does not need that anymore, and this mode of thinking is the way upwards:

In that you have entered into the All, no longer content with the part; you cease to think of yourself as under limit but, laying all such determination aside, you become an All. No doubt you were always that, but there has been an addition and by that addition you are diminished; for the addition was not from the realm of Being – you can add nothing to Being – but from non-Being. (VI. V. 12)

What he means by this addition is that, one cannot change or add anything to a perfect, divine Form. However, in order to achieve this state one has to leave behind all the imperfection, which is anything associated with the lower realm in which, the multiplicity or a difference between the subject and the object is present. As Kevin Corrigan argues, “Plotinus connects the fall of the soul with descent, therefore, but descent in an intensified form, namely the wish to belong only to oneself” (46). Therefore, in order to rise back, this idea of belonging to a single individual should be diminished. Consequently, Corrigan further elaborates on this idea of self-consciousness: “[w]hat we nowadays call the ego is for Plotinus a weakened form of being dangerously close to being nothing at all. The ego cannot belong only to itself, when the very nature of the self is to be a ‘we’ in several dimensions simultaneously” (46). In the same line of thinking, as Eyjólfur K. Emilsson indicates, “if one is to grasp Intellect internally, one must let go of oneself as an individual and become one with the whole intelligible realm” (340-341).

Through the end of his work, Plotinus addresses this issue once more as follows:

...the dispenser of true life is There to see, that now we have nothing to look for but, far otherwise, that we must put aside all else and rest in This alone, This become, This alone, all the earthly environment done away, in haste to be free, impatient of any bond holding us to the baser, so that with our being entire we may cling about This, no part in us remaining but through it we touch with God.

Thus we have all the vision that may be of Him and of ourselves; but it is of a self-wrought to splendour, brimmed with the Intellectual light, become that very light, pure, buoyant, unburdened, raised to Godhood or, better, knowing its Godhood, all aflame then – but crushed out once more if it should take up the discarded burden. (VI. IX. 9)

To conclude, anything worldly, anything that is a double, anything that implies a distance between the source and the individual must be left behind and only then can one unite with the Good. As Emilsson contends, “ascending essentially involves leaving behind, letting go of the body and the sensible, in fact letting go of everything below the stage to which the soul is about to enter” (342). In order to achieve this state of unity anything that is a chain of Here must remain Here, since, they have no place There.

#### **2.3.4. Memory and Recollection**

The soul’s position as the mediator between the sense realm and the transcendental realm has been discussed earlier. In accordance with this, the individual souls come into the sensible realm when the creation of the empirical world is complete. Thus, these souls, emanating from the All Soul, move from their divine Forms into their bodily ones. R. A. H. King states that when this earthly form is achieved, individual souls are “no longer exclusively contemplating ideas, and have imagination, and when they acquire a body they use their faculty of perception to perceive actuality” (106). Being present in both realms, both the ideal Form of the soul and the bodily soul has a potentiality for memory. When the individual soul possesses a body in the sense world, it loses its unity. Plotinus indicates that the individual soul “falls in love

with its own powers and possessions, and desires to stand apart; it leans outward so to speak; then, it appears to acquire a memory of itself” (IV. IV. 3). Thus, memory comes with the fall of the soul to the sense realm which would indicate that memory is a necessary aspect of multiplicity. Considering that the hypostases are beyond temporality, there can be no past for such beings to have a memory of. However, Plotinus strongly believes that memory is an aspect of the soul but not the body. The question as to how memory belongs to the soul is answered by Plotinus in this way:

there is one order of which the memory must obviously belong to the soul; it alone can remember its own movements, for example its desires and those frustrations of desire in which the coveted thing never came to the body: the body can have nothing to tell about things which never approached it, and the soul cannot use the body as a means to the remembrance of what the body by its nature cannot know. (IV. III. 26).

As Plotinus indicates in this passage, memory is a part of the soul, and this is the memory of the transcendental realm. As indicated, although hypostases are beyond memories, the soul, due to its nature (belonging to both the transcendental and the temporal realm) has this aspect. Therefore, it is not the All Soul but the vegetable soul that has the aspect of memory. As King states, “[e]ven when the human soul is embodied, it retains its position in intellect, as does the world soul. In both forms of existence, embodied and disembodied, the human soul has the potential for memory” (107). In the same line of thinking Frederic M. Schroeder contends that “if the soul upon her descent recovers memories of what she has seen, she must have had them, in some sense, there too before her descent. The soul had memories, but potentially” (87).

Plotinus’ other argument on memory belonging to the soul is that it continues to exist after the body dies. For this reason, he offers two different kinds of memory “by their objects, namely experiences and ideas” (King 139). The Memory of Ideas is the part of soul’s transcendental aspect and cannot be acquired within the sense realm, and the memory of the lower aspect of the soul is the one that is gained through experiences within the temporal realm. Plotinus states that “a memory has to do with

something brought into ken from without, something learned or something experienced” (IV. III. 25). Thus this memory is related to the sense perception. The second kind of memory, as stated earlier, indicates the soul’s memory of Ideas. As stated before, the souls have a place as Forms within the Intellect and when individual souls come into the sense realm “they are no longer exclusively contemplating ideas, and have imagination, and when they acquire a body they use their faculty of perception to perceive actuality” (King 106). This is the kind of memory that is associated with the Ideas. Thus, this kind of memory cannot be acquired from outside but can only be achieved by contemplation. Plotinus explains the memory that is associated with sense-perception as follows:

we may well conceive that where there is to be memory of a sense-perception, this perception becomes a mere presentment, and that to this image-grasping power, a distinct thing, belongs the memory, the retention of the object: for in this imaging faculty the perception culminates; the impression passes away but the vision remains present to the imagination. (IV. III. 29)

In relation to this passage, sense-perception can be considered as an activity of the soul, which is actualized through the body. Thus, the body sees and relays it to the soul to be evaluated. Eyjólfur K. Emilsson contends that sense-perception is a “process starting in the external object perceived that acts on an organ of sense; the affection on the organ is transmitted to the soul to which sense-perception properly speaking, consisting in judgement, belongs” (159). This sense-perception and the object of desire, which is perceived by the organs, lead the individual soul towards the second kind of memory that is of the Forms, therefore, the realm of the Divine Mind. Thus, this process falls under the intellectual soul.

Plotinus argues that if there is no object to be perceived there has to be an intellectual activity in order to recall what was once present to the sense perceptions.

Consequently, if the object is not present for the sense-perception one has to contemplate in order to remember. Plotinus explains his solution as follows:



Perhaps memory would be the reception, into the image-taking faculty, of the Reason-Principle which accompanies the mental conception: this mental conception – an indivisible thing, and one that never rises to the exterior of the consciousness – lies unknown below; the Reason-Principle – the revealer, the bridge between the concept and the image faculty – exhibits the concept as in a mirror; the apprehension by the image-taking faculty would thus constitute the enduring presence of the concept, would be our memory of it. (IV. III. 30)

This idea leads to the intellectual soul's memory of the Forms, which leads the individual to the transcendental realm. Otherwise, as an example, if the individual does not see the beyond through a representation of an Idea on earth, the said person would only consider the earthly beauties which would shackle the individual to the empirical world. However, the essential idea is that one should see the divine through the images of it in the sense realm. In the same line of thinking, Algis Uždavinys contends that “[t]here are souls to whom earthly beauty is a leading to the memory of that in the higher realm and these love the earthly as an image; those that have not attained to this memory do not understand what is happening within them” (98). Such souls only consider the beauty of the image but the real beauty lies in the archetype of it in the higher realm. Plotinus contends that

We begin with Eternity, since when the standing Exemplar is known, its representation in image – which Time is understood to be – will be clearly apprehended – though it is of course equally true, admitting this relationship to Time as image to Eternity the original, that if we chose to begin by identifying Time we could thence proceed upwards by Recognition [the Platonic Anamnesis] and become aware of the Kind which it images. (III. VII. 1)

The issue is that Ideas are beyond temporality and memory is related to time. Thus, there should not be the memory of Ideas within the soul. However, as explained above, the soul has potentiality for this kind of memory. It surfaces from within and is not attained from outside. Plotinus contends that the memory of this kind comes forth as follows:

Of the Intellectual it is said to have intuition by memory upon approach, for it knows them by a certain natural identity with them; its knowledge is not attained by besetting them, so to speak, but by in a definite degree possessing them; they are its natural vision; they are itself in a more radiant mode, and it rises from its duller pitch to that greater brilliance in a sort of awakening, a progress from its latency to its act. (IV. VI. 3)

Therefore, the memory of Ideas is already latent within the soul and thus does not need to be perceived by sense-perception. This kind of memory comes forth from its innate place. Plotinus explains that this memory cannot be taken as memory in the sense that people know it, for this knowledge of Ideas are beyond temporality; however, this act of soul

which is to be observed seems to have induced the Ancients to ascribe memory, and “Recollection” [the Platonic Anamnesis] to souls bringing into outward manifestation the ideas they contain: we see at once that the memory here indicated is another kind; it is a memory outside of time. (IV. III. 25)

In the same line of thinking, R. A. H. King argues that the potential knowledge of the Ideas within the soul, in a sense, belongs to the soul as a constitutive element and this knowledge is there for this reason, not because the soul attained these Ideas later “and when it comes to think of them actually, then they are in its memory. The process of learning ideas is thus the recall of ideas that are innate in one: only then, that is, after recall, are they in one’s memory” (116). For this reason, memory and recollection play an important role in the process of attaining unity with the One.

## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSIS OF A *VISION* AND YEATS' LATE POETRY FROM A NEO-PLATONIC APPROACH

In this chapter, firstly, how Yeats employs and transcribes Plotinus' ideas in his second edition of *A Vision* (1937) will be explored. The way Yeats tries to reconcile art and philosophy, the earthly and the divine in order to transpose the transcendental realm of Being in the earthly realm will also be explored. Yeats' way out of binary understandings is through poetry. By employing Neo-platonic ideas with a new understanding, Yeats formulates an upward path through his poetry and reconciles Plato and Plotinus as well as the concepts of Being and Becoming. Following the analysis of *A Vision*, "Tom the Lunatic" poems, "Sailing to Byzantium," "The Tower," "Among School Children," and the "Crazy Jane" sequence will be examined. The concepts of hypostases, emanation, the upward path to unity with the divine, and the importance of memory and recollection on the way back to union, which have all been stressed in the previous chapters, will be looked into, and how these elements are aestheticized in the poems will be the subject of enquiry.

An exploration of mysticism in any work of poetry inevitably involves elements related to the poet's personal life and understanding. As suggested in the previous chapters, this is especially so in the case of William Butler Yeats. That is why the analysis of the poems below will not always make a strict differentiation between the poet and the persona. It can be argued that Yeats usually creates his personae in order to distance himself from his speakers, but in spite of this his ideas still slip through. Thus, at certain points, the speakers of the poems will be treated as Yeats' mouthpiece relaying his own memories and ideas.

The following analysis will begin with "Tom the Lunatic" poems and go on with the others mentioned above. This order of analysis is not chronological, but it has been preferred for the sake of developing the argument in a more convenient way. "Tom the Lunatic" poems reflect Plotinus' ideas in a more straightforward way without

much modification. In most of the other poems, however, Yeats also includes his own mystical philosophy, which sometimes differs slightly from Plotinus’.

Analysing the poems in this order, then, will allow a better understanding of how Yeats both makes use of and slightly modifies Plotinus’ mystical philosophy.

### 3.1. *A Vision*

As it has been discussed earlier, Yeats devised his second edition of *A Vision* (1937) based on Plotinus’ system. In this sub-section of the thesis, how Yeats transcribes Plotinus’ mystical system and how he slightly modifies certain aspects of it will be looked into. Yeats explains this idea in the Introduction stating that he constantly studied Stephen MacKenna’s translation of Plotinus’ the *Enneads*. Rosemary Puglia Ritvo states that this statement summons an enquiry and Plotinus’ “influence is marked by Yeats’s statements comparing his four Principles, ‘Husk’, ‘Passionate Body’, ‘Spirit’, and ‘Celestial Body’, with the metaphysical Hypostases of Plotinus” (34).

Yeats divides the cosmos into three in his *A Vision*. At the lower part of existence is the empirical realm which is created by Discord “and then the Discord separates the elements and so makes the world we inhabit” (*A Vision* 67). Similar to Plotinus, Yeats indicates that in this state there is multitude and there is instability. He explains it as follows: “[I]f life is an endeavour, made vain by the four sails of its mill, to come to a double contemplation, that of the chosen Image, that of the fated Image” (*A Vision* 94). According to Yeats, this is the realm of the Four Faculties. Yeats defines these terms under two categories, “primary” and “antithetical” as follows:

By *antithetical* cone ... we express more and more ... our inner world of desire and imagination, whereas by the *primary* ... we express more and more ... that subjectivity of mind ... The *antithetical tincture* is emotional and aesthetic whereas the *primary tincture* is reasonable and moral. Within these cones move what are called the *Four Faculties: Will and Mask, Creative Mind and Body of Fate*. (*A Vision* 73)

These are the qualities of Yeats' incarnate soul. These qualities shape the individual man and through these qualities one can reach the transcendental realm. Yeats states that the "*Principles* are the *Faculties* transferred, as it were, from a concave to a convex mirror, or vice versa" (*A Vision* 187). Harold Bloom contends that the "Principles are Husk, Passionate Body, Spirit, and Celestial Body, corresponding in *daimonic* existence to Will, Mask, Creative Mind, and Body of Fate in human existence" (263). Yeats explains that while Spirit and Celestial Body correspond to "mind and its object" his "*Husk* and *Passionate Body*, which correspond to *Will* and *Mask* are sense ... and object of sense" (*A Vision* 187-188). Consequently, Yeats' Spirit and Celestial Body correspond to the Divine Mind of Plotinus whereas the Husk and the Passionate Body become a parallel to the celestial and terrestrial aspect of the All Soul. He indicates that the Principles do not create but "through their conflict reveal reality" (*A Vision* 188). As Plotinus indicates, everything is an emanation from the One and for this reason hypostases do not create but only mirror the Forms that emanate and become an object of sense in the terrestrial world. Similarly, Yeats' Principles do not create but reflect the Ideas thus revealing reality. Furthermore, the Principles "find their unity in the *Celestial Body*. The *Faculties* find theirs in the *Mask*" (*A Vision* 188). Harold Bloom explains these terms as follows: "Faculties ... are 'man's voluntary and acquired powers and their objects,' the Principles ... are 'the innate ground' of our powers, centred in our consciousness even as the powers are centred in our wills" (263). Yeats later clarifies these expressions in his book by using another term called "Daimon", which, for Yeats, is the celestial aspect of Plotinus' soul. Ritvo explains the term in the following way: "Yeats's Ghostly Selves and *Daimons* are similar to Plotinus' Reason-Principles. The Ghostly Selves are the Reason-Principles remaining in unity in the sphere, and the incarnate *Daimons* are the *logoi* of particular souls" (42). Thus, Daimon plays the mediator between the two realms. As it has been discussed, multitude seeks the simplex and unity with the source and there is motion upwards to achieve this. In relation to this, the individuals seek self-realization through an inner search and they try to get a glimpse of the transcendental realm through the representations of the Forms in the sensible realm. Plotinus indicates that

All the forms of Authentic Existence spring from vision and are a vision. Everything that springs from these Authentic Existences in their vision is an object of vision – manifest to sensation or to true knowledge or to surface-awareness. All act aims at this knowing; all impulse is towards knowledge, all that springs from vision exists to produce Ideal-Form that is a fresh object of vision, so that universally, as images of their engendering principles, they all produce objects of vision, Ideal-forms. (III. VIII. 7)

Therefore, contemplation and the achievement of knowledge play an important role in the upward journey. Similarly, Yeats states that the “*Spirit ... is the Daimon's knowledge*” (*A Vision* 189). Ritvo claims that “this statement is logical because the Spirit, an aspect of the first emanation, would be prior to the *Daimon*, an aspect of the Third. Spirit is the object of the *Daimon's* contemplation” (42). For this reason, once the Daimon becomes one with the Spirit it “knows all other *Daimons* as the Divine Ideas in their unity. They are one in the *Celestial Body*” (*A Vision* 189). As Yeats further explains:

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

These “*Four Faculties*”, as Yeats explains, form the lower part of his cosmos, the sense realm and the individual man. The next level of his cosmos is “homogeneous sphere” shaped by Concord “but even the sphere formed by the Concord is not the

changeless eternity, for Concord or Love but offers us the image of that which is changeless” (*A Vision* 67-68).

Yeats indicates that this “Concord” creates the cosmos and through this “Discord” forms the sense world. This “homogeneous sphere” of Yeats can be achieved through the *Four Faculties*. He contends that “the *Principles*, which are, when evoked from the point of view of the Faculties, a sphere, shine through” (*A Vision* 89). Through the Principles this “Concord” can be known because Yeats contends that it is “the *Principles* where pure thought is possible” (*A Vision* 82). Yeats defines his Four Principles in terms of Plotinus’ system as follows:

When I try to imagine the *Four Principles* in the sphere, with some hesitation I identify the *Celestial Body* with the First Authentic Existant of Plotinus, *Spirit* with his Second Authentic Existant, which holds the First in its moveless circle; the discarnate *Daimons*, or *Ghostly Selves*, with his Third Authentic Existant or the soul of the world ... which holds the Second in its moving circle. Plotinus has a fourth condition which is the Third Authentic Existant reflected first as sensation and its object (our *Husk* and *Passionate Body*), then as discursive reason (almost our *Faculties*). (*A Vision* 193-194)

Consequently, the individual can achieve the ultimate reality through these Principles. Rosemary Puglia Ritvo suggests that “Concord is found when Spirit and Celestial Body are at rest and in perfect unity; then ‘pure thought’ becomes reality” (36). Furthermore, as Ritvo indicates, “the ‘homogeneous sphere’ is a dynamic reality, which is, for man, the highest conceivable reality and the end of an upward aspiration of soul” (36). However, there is a certain point left out by Yeats in this explanation and that is “the Good” of Plotinus.

As it has been discussed, the Authentic Existent is the word that MacKenna uses for the second hypostasis of Plotinus.<sup>4</sup> Yeats’ Four Principles leave out the One of Plotinus. According to Plotinus true reality is the unity of all within the One and

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<sup>4</sup> See page 23 for the Authentic Existent.

“everything in the Supreme is a reality” (II. VI. 1). However, Yeats indicates that this true reality lies not in such a source and “The resolved antinomy appears not in a lofty source but in the whirlpool’s motionless centre, or beyond its edge” (*A Vision* 195). As Heather C. Martin contends, “while Plotinus understood reality to be the union of all things in the One, Yeats’s ultimate reality is beyond even that unity” (28). Therefore, according to Yeats, an ultimate reality would be beyond either the One or Celestial Body. Ritvo suggests that

Yeats’s First and Second Authentic Existants clearly are not to be identified with Plotinus’ First and Second Hypostases. I propose that Yeats’s first two Authentic Existants correlate to the two aspects of Plotinus’ Second Hypostasis: the First Authentic Existant, Celestial Body, is Plotinus’ Second Hypostasis considered as Being; the Second Authentic Existant, Spirit, is the Second Hypostasis considered as act, or using MacKenna’s term, the Intellectual Principle. (38)

Yeats indicates that “*Spirit and Celestial Body* are mind and its object (the Divine Ideas in their unity)” (*A Vision* 187). For this reason, Spirit and Celestial Body together form the Divine Mind of Plotinus. Plotinus explains this hypostasis as follows: “Being, therefore, and the Intellectual-Principle are one Nature: the Beings, and the Act of that which is, and the Intellectual-Principle thus constituted, all are one: and the resultant Intellections are the Idea of Being and its shape and its act” (V. IX. 8). Plotinus also states why any man would make such a distinction among this unity, and the reason is as follows: “[i]t is our separating habit that sets the one order before the other” (V. IX. 8). Ritvo claims that Yeats’ understanding of Plotinus’ Second Hypostasis is similar to A. H. Armstrong’s explanation of “*Nous*”, which is clarified in the following way: the second hypostasis, the Divine Intellect is for “Plotinus both thought and object of thought, both the Divine Intellect and the Platonic World of Forms, the totality of real beings. This unity of thought and Forms in a single reality is ... a complete transformation of the Platonic World of Forms” (Armstrong 33; Ritvo 38-39). For this reason, Yeats’ Spirit and Celestial Body, being the mind and the object of mind, coincide with Plotinus’ Second Hypostasis.



The ultimate reality which, according to Yeats, “can be symbolised but cannot be known” is the highest sphere of his universe (*A Vision* 193). It is “neither one nor many, concord nor discord, is symbolised as a phaseless sphere” (*A Vision*, 193). In this sphere, just like Plotinus’ explanation of the One, there is no movement, no multitude nor a difference between the object and the subject (Ritvo 37). Yeats indicates that “the whole system is founded upon the belief that the ultimate reality, symbolised as the Sphere, falls in human consciousness ... into a series of antinomies” (*A Vision* 187). Thus, due to people’s own limitations, this sphere cannot be known fully.

Yeats transcribes Plotinus’ hypostases with the Four Principles and his tripartite universe. In his *A Vision* (1937), Yeats uses a diagram to show the relationship between his Principles (194). This relationship is similar to Plotinus’ emanation principle between his hypostases. Yeats likens it to a descent and water falling from a ledge. He also indicates that there is a return just like in Plotinus’ emanation principle. Yeats explains this idea as follows: “this diagram implies a descent from *Principle to Principle*, a fall of water from ledge to ledge, whereas a system symbolising the phenomenal world as irrational because a series of unresolved antinomies, must find its representation in a perpetual return to the starting-point” (*A Vision* 194-195). In the same line of thinking, Ritvo states that “Yeats describes the manifestation of the unknowable as a ‘falling’. This idea of descent suggests Plotinus’ law of necessary emanation which postulates a concomitant production of images” (37). Therefore, both Yeats and Plotinus stress that this movement is important both in creation and in achieving unity with the One. As it has been discussed, the movement means aiming and life. The emanation starts from the Good and reaches the sensible world. On every level, there is a movement away from the simple and away from unity. As Plotinus states, “the first Act is the thing itself in its realized identity, the second Act is an inevitably following outgo from the first, an emanation distinct from the thing itself” (V. IV. 2). For this reason, the return back to the simplex is essential. Yeats relays the same idea through his terminology. Ritvo claims that Yeats specifies a motion toward self-awareness on each level of the cosmos: Spirit has motion toward unity with Celestial Body; the *Daimon* has motion

to Spirit, its prior; the incarnate Soul tries to achieve “a double contemplation” (41). Yeats states that “*Spirit* ... clings to *Celestial Body* until they are one and there is only *Spirit*; pure mind, containing within itself pure truth, that which depends only upon itself” (*A Vision* 187-188). This idea reflects Plotinus’ thought, that is: “[i]n proportion to the truth with which the knowing faculty knows, it comes to identification with the object of its knowledge” (III. VIII. 6).

So far Yeats’ higher Existants have been discussed in relation to Plotinus’ hypostases. In this part, Yeats’ Third Authentic Existant, which overlaps with Plotinus’ All Soul, will be discussed. Yeats states that, as indicated earlier, his Daimon or the Ghostly Self is identified as Plotinus’ All Soul. Plotinus’ All Soul, despite being a hypostasis, gives itself to the task of creating the multitude in the sensible world, which has been discussed as Soul being in both the higher realm and the lower one at once. Yeats indicates that “[a]ll things are present as an eternal instant to our *Daimon* (or *Ghostly Self* as it is called, when it inhabits the sphere)” and this is similar to the two natures of Plotinus’ soul (*A Vision* 193). In the same line of thinking, Ritvo states that this “distinction serves to signal the double nature of the soul which is at the juncture of the divine and the sensible” (41). Plotinus’ All Soul is the result of the emanation of the Divine Mind and similarly Yeats’ diagram in *A Vision* (1937) conveys the information that his Third Authentic Existant is formed by his Celestial Body and Spirit (194). Ritvo indicates that

The Third Authentic Existant forms the third angle of the upper triangle; this tells us that the Soul of the World arises from the Spirit and the Celestial Body, the Act and Being of Plotinus’ Second Hypostasis, and that its highest phase remains on the same level as these Principles, a part of the Authentic Realm. (42)

This explains the higher aspect of Yeats’ Third Authentic Existant. However, as Yeats indicated, this Existant also has reflections Husk and Passionate Body as sensation and its object and then as discursive reason (Faculties) (*A Vision* 194). This conveys Plotinus’ idea that the “faculty presiding over sensation and impulse is vested in the sensitive and representative soul; it draws upon the Reason-Principle

immediately above itself; downward, it is in contact with an inferior of its own” (IV. III. 23). These are the terrestrial aspects of the soul, which undertake bodily separation, hence reflecting Plotinus’ idea of “the inferior of its own.” This idea is reflected by Yeats through the relationship between the Daimon and the Husk and the Passionate Body. Yeats states that “[i]n the period between lives, the *Spirit* and the *Celestial Body* prevail, whereas *Husk* and *Passionate Body* prevail during life” (*A Vision* 188). The motion is also important in the case of the Husk and the Passionate Body in the sense that, as Ritvo states, the bodily soul could achieve unity with the One “[w]hen in the Divine, Husk and Passionate Body ... disappear in the Ghostly Self. Finally, the individual *Daimon* or Ghostly Self can achieve perfect union and become one with its prior, Spirit and Celestial Body, the sphere of final rest” (46). How these ideas are reflected in Yeats’ poems will be looked at in the following parts.

## **3.2. A Neo-platonic Analysis of William Butler Yeats’ Selected Poems**

### **3.2.1. “Tom the Lunatic” Poems**

“Tom the Lunatic” sequence includes three poems which are all dated 1931. Tom is an important character along with Crazy Jane in *The Winding Stair* collection. Tom is rather a philosophical man and Yeats uses him to aestheticize his Neo-platonic ideas. As Marjorie G. Perloff indicates, “Old Tom is Yeats’s Plotinian, the ‘insane’ oracle” (272).

The opening stanza of “Tom the Lunatic” begins with Tom questioning himself as to why he has lost his vision that reveals what lies beyond temporality. He asks himself “What change has put my thoughts astray / And eyes that had so keen a sight?” (3-4).<sup>5</sup> He appears, for a moment, to have lost his sight that could see “Nature’s pure unchanging light” (6) and now all that light has turned into “smoking wick” (5). Tom seems to have gone through a mystical experience for a moment and then moved back to his bodily self. He sees certain figures once he comes to his bodily senses.

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<sup>5</sup> All the poems of Yeats quoted in this thesis are taken from *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*. Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1994.

However, there is an ambiguity that comes with the last lines of the second stanza. It is not certain whether these figures Tom sees are alive or not, or whether he is able to go back to his transcendental vision. The second stanza is as follows:

‘Huddon and Duddon and Daniel O’Leary,  
Holy Joe, the beggar-man,  
Wenching, drinking, still remain  
Or sing a penance on the road;  
Something made these eyeballs weary  
That blinked and saw them in a shroud. (7-12)

These characters seem to be busy with their daily routine. However, Tom’s weary eyes see them in a shroud. The last stanza makes this ambiguity unimportant because Tom does not care about bodily existence since every creature is equal in God’s eyes and that is all that matters. In the voice of Tom, in all the poems of the sequence, “[w]e hear of the profane perfection not only of mankind, but of birds and beasts as well. Yeats’s passion here may owe much to his interpretation of Plotinus” (Bloom 405). Tom states that

‘Whatever stands in field or flood,  
Bird, beast, fish or man,  
Mare or stallion, cock or hen,  
Stands in God’s unchanging eye  
In all the vigour of its blood;  
In that faith I live or die.’ (13-18)

Tom here unites two binaries, which are life and death. He believes that alive or dead, beast or man, all comes from the One and in Its unchanging eye all are the same. Thinking of the “Crazy Jane” sequence in a similar way, Walter E. Houghton indicates that both Jane and Tom “stand in violent opposition . . . to every dichotomy of the unified being, whether body and soul or thought and feeling. Their ‘insanity’ is the wisdom of the natural man” (322). Thus, Tom gains back his faith in the transcendental vision and in this vision, as in God’s unchanging eye, all are united and one.

In “Tom at Cruachan” and “Old Tom Again”, both Plotinus’ and Yeats’ understanding of the creation of the sense realm and the bodily individual through hypostases can be seen clearly. In the first poem, the speaker is sleeping, and there is a song that he must sing which could awaken his soul. As Plotinus states, unity with the divine means “rest; this is the end of singing ill; effectively before Him, we lift a choral song full of God” (VI. IX. 8). Thus, as Tom’s body is asleep, his soul awakens, realising the creation of the sense world as follows:

On Cruachan’s plain slept he  
That must sing in a rhyme  
What most could shake his soul:  
‘The stallion Eternity  
Mounted the mare of Time,  
‘Gat the foal of the world.’ (1-6)

Eternity, which Tom refers to, is the hypostasis that is responsible for the vegetable soul. As it has been discussed previously under the title “Emanation”, Plotinus explains the overflow from the One in the following way: the Divine Mind emanates from the One, from the Divine Mind emanates the Soul and the Soul “takes fullness by looking to its source; but it generates its image by adopting another, a downward, movement. This image of Soul is Sense and Nature, the vegetal principle” (V. II. 1). In the same line of thinking, Yeats explains this principle with the metaphor of water falling from ledge as has been discussed in the explanation of Yeats’ Principles and their relationships (*A Vision* 194-195). Through this vegetable soul the temporal realm comes into being. David A. Ross argues that “‘Old Tom Again’ shares with ‘Tom the Lunatic’ and ‘Tom at Cruachan’ the conviction that the world reposes and originates in the divine ... and remains driven by something of this perfection” (301). This is the idea that hypostases emanate from one to the next. Yeats aestheticizes this idea in the poem as Eternity mounting Time and as a result the sense world is created. This is the vision that Tom experiences with the song in “Tom at Cruachan”. Similarly, in “Old Tom Again” the hypostases and emanation principle are portrayed. Yeats employs the symbol of sailing to imply the emanation process. Plotinus

indicates that the hypostases are perfect. The One creates the Divine Mind and It in return overflows into the All Soul. Plotinus explains this process of emanation in his description of the second hypostasis, the Divine Mind, in the following way: “this Being is limitless and that, in all the outflow from it, there is no lessening either in its emanation, since this also is the entire universe, nor in itself, the starting point, since it is no assemblage of parts [to be diminished by any outgo]” (III. VIII. 8). The poem is as follows:

Things out of perfection sail,  
And all their swelling canvas wear,  
Nor shall the self-begotten fail  
Though fantastic men suppose  
Building-yard and stormy shore,  
Winding-sheet and swaddling-clothes. (1-6)

Everything emanates from the One, which is perfection, the simplest and the motionless. Once everything comes into the sense realm, all things that are incorporated into temporality assume “swelling canvas” (2) which are the material forms, the images of Ideas in the lowly world. As indicated in the discussion of the All Soul, It is the hypostasis responsible for creating and governing the sense realm.<sup>6</sup> Plotinus states that “the Soul has given itself to each of the separate material masses; or rather it appears to be present in the bodies by the fact that it shines into them,” and as the other hypostases, it does not lose anything of itself in this outgoing process but it just emanates into the sense world (I. I. 7). Walter E. Houghton argues how these two poems reflect the idea of emanation in the following way:

A few of the final lyrics are doctrinal statements of Yeats’s Neo-Platonism. In the dialectic of emanation, time and eternity are not separate entities (poem xxiii). That is why the “self-begotten” cannot fail (poem xxiv): not being bound by “winding-sheet and swaddling-clothes,”

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<sup>6</sup> See page 23.

they can return to the perfection from which they descended into time.<sup>7</sup>  
(325)

There is an aim in this voyage to the sense realm which is going back to the previous state of unity with perfection. However, the word fantastic has a hint of mockery in its tone. “Fantastic men” deal with the earthly chores which are nothing but illusions or shades of the real Forms. As David A. Ross contends, the “poem calls ‘fantastic’ not those who believe in the power of such divinity, but those who believe in the material bounds of birth and death represented by” the last two lines of “Old Tom Again” (301).

Thus, Yeats aestheticizes Plotinus’ philosophy of hypostases and emanation in these poems. Yeats’ universe follows the same path in its creation as Plotinus’, as can also be observed in his *A Vision* (1937). However, in the following poems that will be analysed in this section Yeats seems to differ from Plotinus to a certain extent, creating his own mystical vision and the way of attaining it. As the following analyses will demonstrate, Yeats appears to give more importance to certain aspects of the earthly realm and the binaries that belong to it. His way of explaining how to overcome these binaries is also slightly different from Plotinus’. Furthermore, it can be felt that Yeats is sometimes torn between the realms of philosophy and poetry, and these poems also seem to suggest a reconciliation between these opposite-looking realms.

### **3.2.2. “Sailing to Byzantium”**

This is one of the two famous Byzantium poems by William Butler Yeats, namely “Sailing to Byzantium” and “Byzantium.” “Sailing to Byzantium” is dated 1927. Yeats was 63 years of age when he wrote it, and his poem shows “his persistent longing for spiritual redemption through the timelessness of art” (Ross 214). His ideas on the earthly realm and the mystical union are apparent in the poem. His speaker portrays the binaries of old age and youth as well as the difference between

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<sup>7</sup> poem xxiii is “Tom at Cruachan” and poem xxiv is “Old Tom Again”

the sense realm and the transcendental realm. This is the opening poem of the collection, *The Tower* (1928).

Byzantium has a special meaning for Yeats. The poet thinks that the city itself is an embodiment of harmony, of oneness. He states that if he had the chance to go back to the past and spend a month he would do it there. He explains this in his *A Vision* as follows:

I think if I could be given a month of Antiquity and leave to spend it where I chose, I would spend it in Byzantium a little before Justinian opened St. Sophia and closed the Academy of Plato. I think I could find in some little wine-shop some philosophical worker in mosaic who could answer all my questions, the supernatural descending nearer to him than to Plotinus even. (279)

He believes that even Plotinus could not get close to experiencing the unity of the people who lived in Byzantium. The people of the city and the life in this city are the perfect symbols of oneness, and Yeats further explains this as follows:

I think that in early Byzantium, maybe never before or since in recorded history, religious, aesthetic and practical life were one, that architect and artificers ... spoke to the multitude and the few alike. The painter, the mosaic worker, the worker in gold and silver, the illuminator of sacred books, were almost impersonal, almost perhaps without the consciousness of individual design, absorbed in their subject-matter and that the vision of a whole people. (*A Vision* 279-280)

This “vision of a whole people” excites the poet as it must have linked him to the thought of unity in the transcendental world. As he continues to explain that although the city is the product of many, it appeared to him as “the work of one, that made the building, picture, pattern metal-work of rail and lamp, seem but a single image” (*A Vision* 280). As Richard Ellmann contends, “Byzantium is a holy city, because it is the capital of Eastern Christendom, but it is also Yeats’s holy city of the imagination” (257). For this reason, the title of the poem carries an important meaning because for Yeats Byzantium is the symbol of the realm of oneness and unity, hence a symbol of the transcendental world.



The opening lines of the poem indicate two different places. The persona states that the country he/she lives in is consumed by bodily love and “That is no country for old men” (1) because of “The young / In one another’s arms” (1-2). These two lines also add the binary of young and old in addition to “That” country and Byzantium. Virginia Pruitt states that “‘Sailing to Byzantium’ delineates the pursuit of an intellectual, or, if you will, spiritual, passion in order to efface the physical infirmities of old age” (150). In the following four lines the persona talks about the beauties of the natural world that may lead one to ignore the true beauty which lies within. These lines are as follows:

– Those dying generations – at their song,  
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,  
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long  
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies. (3-6)

Such earthly beauties such as “birds in the trees” (2) that sing or the energetic picture of summer may cause ignorance and people who are “Caught in that sensual music all neglect / Monuments of unageing intellect” (7-8). Plotinus indicates that the “Soul’s disaster falls upon it when it ceases to dwell in the perfect Beauty” (II. IX. 2). In relation to this, Yeats’ speaker expresses that one ceases to lose one’s touch with the transcendental, with the divine when the individual starts to focus on the earthly beauties rather than the Form that is in Plotinus’ Divine Mind or Yeats’ Celestial Body and Spirit. One observes that the persona uses the earthly senses of touch, hearing and seeing to emphasize the role of sense-perception and that it should be used to perceive the truth which lies beyond the senses. As Plotinus and Yeats believed, true Beauty, that is the Idea that emanates into the sense world, can be achieved through its images on earth and through self-inspection. Therefore, the sensible beauty may take one off the true path towards the transcendental realm. Harold Bloom indicates that the persona in the poem can be considered as Yeats himself in search for his Daimon “at the center of Unity of Being” (345).

In the second stanza, the idea of self-realization and inner search continues to be expressed by the persona. The old man image in this stanza is expressed as “a paltry

thing, / A tattered coat upon a stick” (9-10). As indicated in the first stanza, the old man does not want the world of the young and isolates himself from that world of sensual love and beauty. This image of him in the first and second lines of the second stanza reveal the toll of time and aging process on him. He appears to be nothing; however, the persona shows a way out at the end of this image as follows:

... unless  
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing  
For every tatter in its mortal dress,  
Nor is there singing school but studying  
Monuments of its own magnificence; (10-14)

Through this inner journey which is realised through the soul and through studying the inner self one can move beyond these earthly “tatters” that weigh the old man to the sensible realm. “A tattered coat upon a stick” (10), as David A. Ross states, “creates a deliberate contrast with the fleshiness depicted in the first stanza, and this emphatic decrepitude makes ... the sudden revelation of reserves of imaginative energy and spiritual ambition” (215). Through this imaginative vigour and spiritual drive the speaker can move beyond the binaries and sensual pleasures of the earthly realm. This is the aim, as indicated by Plotinus, of life “And therefore I have sailed the seas and come / To the holy city of Byzantium.” (15-16).

It has been mentioned in the opening of this part of the study that Byzantium is the city of harmony and unity. Yeats uses the city here not as an actual place but as an image of the transcendental realm which is beyond temporality. Thus, this journey does not actually mean a physical journey, but it is an inner journey through imagination. David A. Ross explains this condition in the following way:

There is nothing to discover or embrace beyond the self’s readiness, its welled intensity, its ability to imagine the terms of its new beginning. Byzantium, then, is less a place than a condition of triumph into which the imagination enters when it has finally thrown off all sense of its own limitation. (215)

For this reason, this journey can be taken not as an actual sailing towards a city but rather as an inner experience in which one searches the soul to find the ultimate truth.

Wit Pietrzak indicates that the poem “is revealed to aim at the creation of the Unity of Being in which all antinomies are resolved; once that has been achieved, the space of poetry is made conducive to the revelation of the truth of Being” (67). When the persona is referred to as “I” for the first time in the poem, this is where Yeats’ ideas start to mix with his speaker’s. Matthew Gibson argues that Yeats used poetry as a means to philosophise, and rather than an escape from the earthly life to reach ultimate reality, Yeats suggests a mystical vision through an artistic transformation (104). This idea will surface fully in the third stanza with the image of the wall and in the final stanza with the image of the golden bird. It may also imply that this character has found his true self and acquired a mystical vision. Thus, the daimon of the speaker desires unity with its Spirit and in doing so tries to achieve knowledge of Divine Ideas in their unified state (*A Vision* 189).

In the third stanza Byzantium is portrayed as a city formed by many different aspects but they are all one “As in the gold mosaic of a wall” (18). This image also implies stability, a multitude that becomes a simplex, a single image. As indicated in the previous stanza, Yeats’ mystical philosophy appears as a transformation through aesthetic images. These different images that appear like a gold mosaic of a wall suggest that Yeats wishes to be part of that wall through an artistic transformation. The persona appeals to the sages to be cleansed “in God’s holy fire” (17) for the persona’s heart is “sick with desire / And fastened to a dying animal” (21-22).

Plotinus explains this idea of cleansing as follows:

the soul takes another life as it approaches God; thus restored it feels that the dispenser of true life is There to see, that now we have nothing to look for but, far otherwise, that we must put aside all else and rest in This alone, This become, This alone, all the earthly environment done away, in haste to be free, impatient of any bond holding us to the baser, so that with our being entire we may cling about This, no part in us remaining but through it we have touch with God. (VI. IX. 9)

In this stanza the persona is aware that once the heart is cleansed of the earthly desires of the sensible realm unity that he seeks will be achieved. As Ross indicates, “unlike the melodists of the first stanza, whose song is ‘sensual’ ... the soul of the

‘aged man’ sings the more ineluctably for having schooled itself in ‘monuments of its own magnificence.’” (215). The speaker states his wish to be cleansed so that he can be gathered “Into the artifice of eternity” (24). Then the unity the speaker desires will be achieved.

In this stanza, just like in the first one, visual and auditory images are present. However, there is a slight difference in these images. Rather than the sense perception and what the persona sees in the empirical world, this time it is about what lies beyond the empirical. Rather than a bird singing in the trees as in the first stanza, this time the masters of the speaker’s soul are singing, and rather than the fish and salmon that the speaker observes, this time he sees the images on the wall of the city. The speaker sees with a mystical vision what is beyond in the transcendental realm. After all, Byzantium is the place of unity and only those who are purified in “God’s holy fire” are accepted “Into the artifice of eternity.” As David A. Ross claims, the “‘holy fire’ withers everything that is not of eternal spirit or substance” (216). Also, as Plotinus indicates, anything that does not belong to the realm of Being is related to the realm of Non-Being and that is deemed evil and for this reason has to be purified.<sup>8</sup> The song shifts from the birds to the “singing-masters of my [the persona’s] soul” (20). Consequently, the implication is that the speaker moves beyond the temporal realm to the transcendental world of Byzantium.

In the final stanza, the speaker states that “Once out of nature I shall never take / My bodily form from any natural thing” (25-26). Now that the image of Byzantium in its unity is presented to the speaker, he does not care about the earthly beauties or the temporal reality. The persona sees the Form of men, as it exists in the transcendental world, “as Grecian goldsmiths make / Of hammered gold and gold enamelling” (27-28). He is now beyond temporality in the realm where all exists in its simplex Form, and now he is able to sing “To lords and ladies of Byzantium / Of what is past, or passing, or to come” (31-32). As suggested earlier, Yeats has achieved the aesthetic transformation he desired. He is now a golden bird who has shed his human body and is able to sing philosophy in his poetry. In the transcendental realm of

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<sup>8</sup> See page 28.

Byzantium, as the speaker indicates, the past, the present and the future do not exist differently but all in a single bundle with no difference, and there is not old man or young man but all the lords and ladies in unity.

Yeats conveys the transcendental realm which is beyond temporality and the binary understanding of the sense realm in this poem. David Holdeman indicates that

Byzantium

has been forged into unity by spiritually inspired artists. The speaker of “Sailing to Byzantium” seeks it for the sake of his soul. For him, the soul can only learn to “clap its hands and sing” by studying artistic “Monuments of its own magnificence” in a city made “holy” by its golden mosaics. He regards these monuments in the same way Yeats had long regarded symbols and masks: as magical icons empowering him to call down otherworldly “sages” who will “Consume” his mortal attachments and gather him “Into the artifice of eternity.” (82)

He suggests that the upward path to this realm of unity – as also explained by Plotinus – lies within the individual, in soul and in intellect. This journey lies within the monuments of “unageing intellect” (8) through intellection and inner search through soul and its “own magnificence” (14). Finally, Yeats adds his own preference in this journey and rather than choosing philosophy alone, he adds his artistic vision and considers poetry as a way to philosophise. Especially this poem and “The Tower”, which will be analysed below, seem to position philosophy and art as opposites between which Yeats is torn. Rather than choosing one over the other, Yeats finds his solution in embracing both at the same time.

### **3.2.3. “Among School Children”**

This poem, like “Sailing to Byzantium” is included in *The Tower* collection and is also dated 1927. Similar to “Sailing to Byzantium”, it depicts the same topic of old age and union with the Divine Mind through Love as it exists in the hypostases. Also, the role that memories and recollection play in attaining this mystical unity is apparent in the poem.

The poem introduces an old man looking at the classroom setting with an old nun focused on the studies of children. However, the focus seems to be heavily on external perfection that would fit the modern times in the best way possible. The old nun answers the old man's enquiry in the first stanza of the poem. The first part of the poem is as follows:

The children learn to cipher and to sing,  
To study reading-books and history,  
To cut and sew, be neat in everything  
In the best modern way – the children's eyes  
In momentary wonder stare upon  
A sixty-year-old smiling public man. (1-8)

For a moment, the focus of the children shift from their studies to the old man and the old man drifts into a dream. The old man dreams of a "Ladaean body" which is a reference to Maud Gonne. As discussed previously, Maud Gonne, after rejecting Yeats' marriage proposals and due to the nature of their mystical partnership, became the symbol of Love in its perfect state in the divine hypostases, just as Byzantium became the symbol of Yeats' ultimate reality in his poetry.<sup>9</sup> Pittock explains this idea as follows: "Yeats's reaction from 'the best modern way' leads him to a memory of Maud Gonne, a creature from another age ... Of all Yeats's characters and symbols, she is the only one who defies ultimate definition in terms of his system" (214). According to Yeats, with some hesitation, Maud Gonne is the embodiment of the ultimate beauty that a human can represent. She is beyond temporality, as Pittock indicates, "her image is seen as simultaneously occupying three positions in history ('Ladaean', 'Quattrocento', and 'She stands before me as a living child')" in the poem (214). Plotinus explains this idea, i.e. being present in different times, in relation with the circular movement of the soul in the following way: every single "soul that knows its history is aware, also, that its movement, unthwarted, is not that of an outgoing line; its natural course may be likened to that in which a circle turns not upon some external but on its own centre, the point to which it owes its rise" (VI. IX. 8). She is the symbol of Ideal Love for Yeats, and in the second stanza this Ideal

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<sup>9</sup> See page 6 for further information on Maud Gonne.

Love is reflected when the woman and the old man become one. Pittock explains that the “poem is in part an elaborate exploration of the theme of metaphysical re-union with Maud Gonne, which Yeats had felt to be more than human since their ‘spiritual marriage’ of the 1890s” (215). The old man’s dream is portrayed as follows:

I dream of a Ledaean body, bent  
Above a sinking fire, a tale that she  
Told of a harsh reproof, or trivial event  
That changed some childish day to tragedy –  
Told, and it seemed that our two natures blent  
Into a sphere from youthful sympathy,  
Or else, to alter Plato’s parable,  
Into the yolk and white of the one shell. (9-16)

Yeats integrates a story into this poem that Maud Gonne once told him about her childhood. As the symbol of mystical love, Maud Gonne takes the old man Yeats towards the upward path of unity through this recollection. The allusion to Plato’s parable in line 16 further supports this. As Zeus divided the first human beings into two, leaving them in search for their other halves for the rest of their lives, the old man searches and finds his lacking part and becomes one with her through a mystical union in the memory. Considering that Gonne represents Ideal Love for Yeats, it could mean he became one with the Good for that moment. Her image keeps reoccurring in different forms in the third and fourth stanzas. In the third stanza, she appears as a little child before the old man as he “look[s] upon one child or t’other there / And wonder[s] if she stood so at that age” (18-19) and finally “She stands before” the old man “as a living child” (24). However, in the fourth stanza

Her present image floats into the mind –  
Did Quattrocento finger fashion it  
Hollow of cheek as though it drank the wind  
And took a mess of shadows for its meat? (25-28)

The old man imagines her in her present age and she is as old as him. Yet she appears to the old man beyond temporality in different ages both old and young at once and even back in ancient times before mankind as it is known in modern days.

She becomes the Form Love that resides in the transcendental realm. It is the memory of Love that brings this mystical moment to the old man. Thus, this memory of Love becomes the triggering effect for the old man.

The speaker comes to his earthly body and realises that both he and she are now “a comfortable kind of old scarecrow[s]” (32). In the fifth and sixth stanzas, the old man explains that everybody is subject to the process of aging. A mother might not like her son when he is old and may think that her motherhood would not be worth the trouble, as the old man explains that the mother

Would think her son, did she but see that shape  
With sixty or more winters on its head,  
A compensation for the pang of his birth,  
Or the uncertainty of his setting forth? (37-40)

Similarly, in the sixth stanza, the persona indicates that Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras suffer the same fate. All their works would mean nothing once these people are old because their deeds are terrestrial and their bodies are within temporality and will decay. They will all become “Old clothes upon old sticks to scare a bird” (48).

In the final two stanzas, the speaker states that only the images can endure. He explains that a mother and a nun do not love the external but they “worship images” (49). Plotinus explains this difference in the following way:

so long as the attention is upon the visible form, love has not entered:  
when from that outward form the lover elaborates within himself, in his  
own partless soul, an immaterial image, then it is that love is born, then  
the lover longs for the sight of the beloved to make that fading image live  
again. (VI. VII. 33)

In the same line of thinking, as Richard Ellmann indicates, the persona “declares that only images escape the disintegration of age; the mother worships an image of her son (not his flesh and blood) just as the nun worships an image of God” (256). The old man explains that images are the true symbols of heaven, not their earthly representations in the following lines:



But those the candles light are not as those  
That animate a mother's reveries,  
But keep a marble or a bronze repose.  
And yet they too break hearts – O Presences  
That passion, piety or affection knows,  
And that all heavenly glory symbolise –  
O self-born mockers of man's enterprise; (50-56)

In the final stanza, the same idea of images being the true reality continues to be expressed by the old man. Yeats appears to be creating a symbolic space where this transcendental reality occurs. This last stanza relays Plotinus' unity with the Divine Mind where the knower and the known become one. Ellmann contends that "[i]n the final stanza the poet imagines heavenly glory a place, or more likely, a state, where body and soul are united as he and his beloved had seemed united that day long before" (256). The stanza is as follows:

Labour is blossoming or dancing where  
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,  
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,  
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.  
O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,  
Are you the leaf, blossom or the bole?  
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,  
How can we know the dancer from the dance? (57-64)

Plotinus indicates that "in the Intellectual-Principle Itself, there is complete identity of Knower and Known" (III. VIII. 6). In Yeats' system this idea coincides with the state in which the Spirit and the Celestial Mind unite and thus reflects the "Divine Ideas in their unity" (*A Vision* 187). The old man unites with his love in the same way body and soul become one. Murray G. H. Pittock contends that the "mystical circular motion and nature of the soul according to Plotinus becomes the metaphorical recapturing of that sphere in the dance" (215). The chestnut tree is the leaf, blossom and the bole, and the dancer cannot be differentiated from the dance as all are one and have moved beyond the sense realm, united with the Divine Mind in

this space that Yeats creates. As Yeats implies through his speaker in the poem, “Labour is blossoming or dancing where / The body is not bruised to pleasure soul” (57-58). This could be interpreted as suggesting that the body should not be discarded to please the soul. In the same line of thinking, the binaries should be embraced together rather than leaving the earthly behind altogether. That is why Yeats’ speaker cannot differentiate between the dancer and the dance because the speaker has not bruised the body to please the soul or chosen philosophy over art. He has been able to change his line of thinking to treat these as a whole rather than as parts of a binary opposition. He has, therefore, been able to attain the desired position of the mystic.

#### **3.2.4. “The Tower”**

“The Tower” is the poem that carries the name of the collection. It is dated 1926 but it is not the first poem in *The Tower*. As Ross contends, “[a]s the ROSE is the chief symbol of Yeats’s youth, so the tower is the chief symbol of his maturity” (256). Here too Yeats picks up the old age topic he employed both in “Sailing to Byzantium” and “Among School Children”. In his tower, Yeats’ speaker contemplates about old age, and then through memory and imagination he tries to find a solution to the dilemma as to whether he should find his true place with his muse or with philosophy. Then he presents his will in the final part of the poem. It has been indicated that Yeats prefers to philosophise through his poetry and he believes that a mystical vision can be achieved through aesthetic transformation. Therefore, as he declares through his speaker, he does not prefer philosophy over his poetry but rather he considers both to be equally important.

The poem opens with a sad mood declaring that the speaker is now old. He is trapped in the empirical world through the body and heart. In the initial lines he questions himself about what to do as follows: “What shall I do with this absurdity – / O heart, O troubled heart” (1-2). The speaker explains this issue by mentioning “Decrepit age that has been tied to me / As to a dog’s tail ...” (3-4). In “Sailing to Byzantium” the speaker’s heart was sick with desire and in “The Tower” the persona asks his troubled heart what he should do about his old age. Virginia Pruitt indicates that the

speaker should “relinquish his heart, and thereby achieve the victory of transcendence”, but this would mean that the persona must “gut his imagination” (150). However, this turmoil is followed by a statement that although the body is decaying within the process of time the power of imagination is getting stronger. The speaker indicates: “Never had I more / Excited, passionate, fantastical / Imagination” (5-7). The following lines, just like in “Sailing to Byzantium,” create a binary between the young and the old speaker. The persona states that “in boyhood, when with rod and fly, / Or the humbler worm, I climbed Ben Bulben’s back / And had the livelong summer day to spend” (9-11). Furthermore, there is another dilemma that the speaker goes through, which takes place between his art and philosophy. The speaker says:

It seems that I must bid the Muse go pack,  
Choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend  
Until imagination, ear and eye,  
Can be content with argument and deal  
In abstract things; or be derided by  
A sort of battered kettle at the heel. (12-17)

The words, “It seems” suggest that the persona is not completely sure about what to do: should he let go of his heart and muse in order to move beyond the empirical? The poem, then, opens with an explanation of the speaker’s dilemmas as his old age deprives the persona of his bodily power but increases his imagination. He problematizes the choice between his heart and philosophical studies and says he must either “bid [his] Muse go pack” or focus on philosophy by choosing Plato and Plotinus as his companions. The speaker’s muse binds him to earthly things; however, in order to move beyond his temporal shackles he must give up on the heart, in this case poetry, and focus on abstract things through philosophy. The idea of choosing philosophy or art echoes similar concerns in “Sailing to Byzantium.” As indicated in that poem as well, Yeats prefers both rather than making a preference. Treating philosophy and art as two polar opposites, Yeats desires to overcome them by not choosing one over the other but accepting both together just like all the other binaries, thus achieving a mystical vision.

In the second part of the poem, the speaker moves on to another topic without giving any information on his decision about these conflicts. The speaker “paces upon the battlements” (18) around his neighbourhood and “send[s] imagination forth” (21) on a quest:

Under the day’s declining beam, and call  
Images and memories  
From ruin or from ancient trees,  
For I would ask a question of them all. (22-25)

The speaker summons memories and images of different figures and experiences to find an answer to the dilemma he is going through. These images and memories involve Mrs. French, a peasant girl, a blind poet and Hanrahan. They consist of individuals’ experiences associated with sense-perceptions. As it has been discussed, there are two kinds of memory according to Plotinus. The first one is related with sense-perceptions and the second one is the soul’s memory of Ideas.<sup>10</sup> The speaker appears to be trying to overcome his dilemma by seeking an answer from these characters. Ross indicates that

In this local procession – imperious patrician, peasant beauty, rustics smitten to madness, blind poet, rambling visionary, scandalous wastrel, ‘rough-men-at-arms’ whose ghosts continue at their game of dice – Yeats finds a precedent of passion and personality that corroborates his own living heart. (258)

The speaker’s questioning of these recollections and imaginings as to whether they too rebelled against old age gets a positive answer. The speaker, through these recollections, appears to be trying to transcend both his dilemma and the sense-realm. He even seeks his own soul to find a memory of Ideas, in order to achieve a relief and a conclusion. In his *A Vision* Yeats claims that

the creative power of the lyric poet depends upon his accepting some one of a few traditional attitudes, lover, sage, hero, scorner of life. They bring us back to the spiritual norm. They may, however ... act upon the events

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<sup>10</sup> See pages 37-38.

of our lives as to compel us to attend to that perfection which, though it seems theirs, is the work of our own *Daimon*. (*A Vision* 234)

In this series of recollections and memories of different characters, Yeats' speaker seems to be in search of his own perfection through his own daimon. Similarly, according to Plotinus, the memory of Forms are inherent within the soul, and through this memory one can achieve unity with the One since everything that has emanated into the sense realm has a Form in the hypostasis. Sarah Youngblood argues that "the tragedy' of art is that its images may break hearts ... by setting before man an idealized image in the form of a real one, a 'dream' which reality can only belie" (82). In relation to this and according to Neo-platonic understanding, the ultimate reality is in the transcendental realm and not in the sense realm. Finally, the speaker asks all other characters to leave except for Hanrahan, who is a character created by Yeats. Bloom explains the relationship between Hanrahan and Yeats in the following way:

Hanrahan in the story *Red Hanrahan's Curse*, felt "a great anger against old age and all it brought with it," but his struggle with self never proceeded far enough for him to accept the four sacred emblems ... Taken together, the four attributes would have unified him in the image of a Blakean Divine Man, or God. The implication in *The Tower* is that Yeats, like Hanrahan, has failed ... (351)

These memories, both acquired through sense-perception and the memory of Ideas, lead the speaker to come to the conclusion which he reveals in the third part of the poem.

The third and final part of the poem starts with the speaker announcing that "It is time that I wrote my will" (122) and "I declare my faith" (146). The declaration is that the speaker has failed to overcome his imaginative powers and cannot leave his muse all together. Bloom indicates that "[l]ike Hanrahan, the poet has not attained Unity of Being, and so finds himself at the impasse of knowing perfection neither in his life nor in his work" (351). He "mocks Plotinus' thought / And cry[ies] in Plato's teeth" (147-148). He appears to have chosen the side of imagination because of "Poet's imaginings" (161) and memories: "All those things whereof / Man makes a

superhuman / Mirror-resembling dream” (164-166). Due to his respect for these philosophers in a note to the poem Yeats explains what he had in mind when he came up with the line “Choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend” (13) in the following way:

When I wrote the lines about Plato and Plotinus I forgot that it is something in our own eyes that makes us see them as all transcendence. Has not Plotinus written: “Let every soul recall, then, at the outset the truth that soul is the author of all living things, that it has breathed the life into them all, whatever is nourished by earth and sea, all the creatures of the air, the divine stars in the sky; it is the maker of the sun; itself formed and ordered this vast heaven and conducts all that rhythmic motion – and it is a principle distinct from all these to which it gives law and movement and life, and it must of necessity be more honourable than they, for they gather or dissolve as soul brings them life or abandons them, but soul, since it never can abandon itself, is of eternal being?” (qtd. in Jeffares 258)

Regardless of what appears to be the triumph of the imaginative power, in the penultimate stanza of the poem the speaker tasks his soul “to study / In a learned school” (183-184). As opposed to his speaker, who sends his soul to study and declares his choice in philosophy, Yeats, as discussed earlier, seems to have chosen both. As the speaker says, Yeats’ imaginative powers enable him to “Dream and so create / Translunar Paradise” (156-157). Rather than taking the side of a single one, Yeats himself has chosen both. Ross indicates that “[i]n Yeats’ conceptualization, the soul might be defined as the heart brought to discipline, the heart reconstructed – forged, as ‘Sailing to Byzantium’ has it – in the image of its own permanence” (259). This idea echoes in the “Crazy Jane” series, which will be analysed in the following section.

### **3.2.5. “Crazy Jane” Poems**

The “Crazy Jane” poems are included under the title “Words For Music Perhaps”. They are dated between 1929-1933 and included in *The Winding Stair and Other*

*Poems* (1933) collection. The first two poems of the sequence are dated 1929, the third poem and the last one are dated 1930 while the fourth, fifth and the sixth poems of the sequence are dated 1931. Crazy Jane is one of the most important figures along with Tom the Lunatic in the collection. Yeats explains his drive to create Jane in the following way “‘Crazy Jane’ poems ... are I think, exciting and strange. Sexual abstinence fed their fire – I was ill and yet full of desire. They sometimes came out of the greatest mental excitement I am capable of” (qtd. in Ross 295). Yeats also explains that he portrayed Crazy Jane in the image of an old woman who lived in Gort and with whom Lady Gregory was in contact (qtd. in Ross 296). Despite her name Crazy Jane, Yeats depicts her as not so mad and uses her craziness as an excuse for her to say anything that would not sit well with the moral etiquette of the time. Ellmann explains the importance of the name, Crazy Jane, as follows: “[i]n these poems he wanted to root deeper than conventional morality. Crazy Jane, because of her name, could speak with all the prerogatives of the Elizabethan fool without, of course, being crazy at all” (272). For this reason, Yeats enables Jane to talk about love in whichever way she wants because she would not be judged due to her madness. However, Ellmann further contends that “Crazy Jane is not so wild as she appears, or as Yeats pretended” (273).

The first poem of the sequence, “Crazy Jane and the Bishop” tells the story of Crazy Jane. Jane visits “the blasted oak” (1) and curses the Bishop because even before this man became a bishop “his ban / banished Jack the Journeyman” (8-9). Jack is now dead and Crazy Jane puts the blame on the bishop who separated them. With an old book in his hand, probably the Bible, the Bishop condemns Jane and Jack due to their bodily love stating that they “lived like beast and beast” (13). As Plotinus states,

There are Souls to whom earthly beauty is a leading to the memory of that in the higher realm and these love the earthly as an image; those that have not attained to this memory do not understand what is happening within them, and take the image for reality. Once there is perfect self-control, it is no fault to enjoy the beauty of earth; where appreciation degenerates into carnality, there is sin. (III. V. 1)

The poem involves a conversation between Jane and the Bishop, and read against Plotinus' explanation, there may be two different approaches to this conversation. The Bishop's talk refers to the carnality of love between Jane and Jack but Jane, despite being crazy, refers to self-controlled earthly love. In relation to Ross' explanation, in which he indicated that according to Yeats' understanding the soul is the heart that has been controlled, Jane's love for Jack can be taken as a self-disciplined love (Ross 259). However, in the final stanza of the poem Jane states that "Jack had my virginity" (22). Therefore, it is understood that their love was of a carnal nature. Together with Jack's ghost who "bids me [Jane] to the oak" they find "shelter under it", curse the Bishop and if he approaches, spit on him. Despite what seems like a mad explanation of what Crazy Jane has gone through, there is some wisdom in her voice, as Ross claims in the following way:

The parenthetical refrain "All find safety in the tomb" seems the voice of disembodied wisdom, the vatic voice, whispering of a final reconciliation of antithesis represented by the "solid man" and the "coxcomb," by the Bishop and Jane, much as the same voice whispers "All things remain in God" in "Crazy Jane on God." (296)

Thus, there lies a hint in the first Crazy Jane poem which seems to focus mainly on bodily love, that carnal love may gradually leave itself to something else, which is a unity of earthly and divine love. This is reflected more clearly in the later poems of the sequence.

The second poem of the series is "Crazy Jane Reproved." However, the title of the poem should not be understood literally. It is not Crazy Jane that is being reproved "whether by herself or by the poet, for her choice of lovers" (Bloom 401). In the opening lines of the poem Jane says she "care[s] not what the sailors say: / All those dreadful thunder-stones, / All that storm that blots the day" (1-3) may defy her love for Jack like the Bishop. Jane loves Jack, and she does not regret her choice, and she is the one that is reproving. As Bloom indicates, the "point is that Jane scorns every manifestation of Heaven and Zeus, whether it be storm, Europa's bull, or the painstaking design of the Creator's toil" (401). The final lines of the poem indicate that such carnal love "Made the joints of Heaven crack: / So never hang your heart



upon / A roaring, ranting journeyman” (11-13). However, as she tells with the sexual image in the second stanza, she will keep “Adorning every secret track / With the delicate mother-of-pearl” (9-10) for her love despite all the criticism against her. From Jane’s perspective, all these criticisms and the divine manifestation of scorning against her is nothing but “Fol de rol, fol de rol” (14) which “underscores the nonsense of this admonition” (Ross 297).

As it can be observed, in this poem Crazy Jane still insists that she is right in her choice of following her heart’s desire. However, in the third poem of the series her wisdom starts to show itself and she argues that true love is the one that embraces both the earthly and the transcendental. Thus, she sets love in a Neo-platonic perspective here.

“Crazy Jane on the Day of Judgement” starts with a reference to the unity of body and soul. Jonathan Luftig states that the poem “explicitly introduces the theme of love in conjunction with death and helps to provide the necessary link between these two elusive processes that can be neither ‘known’ or ‘shown’” (1132). The speaker reports what Crazy Jane has said on the topic of love, which embraces both bodily love and the Form Love. Jane says Love should embrace both carnal and the divine feelings; otherwise, it is not satisfied. The binary of carnal and divine should mingle into one another to reveal true Love. Thus, it implies a transition from a Platonic to a Neo-platonic mode of thinking. The first stanza is as follows:

‘Love is all  
Unsatisfied  
That cannot take the whole  
Body and soul’;  
*And that is what Jane said. (1-5)*

The importance of the unity of the binaries, as in the conversation between the Bishop and Jane, is emphasised. Only by doing so can the true nature of love come forth. Luftig indicates that “a satisfied love would be love in which one *could* take the ‘whole Body and Soul,’ love would be what could perform the unification of elements assumed to be heterogeneous (i.e., body and soul)” (1132). Bodily love is

not the whole truth but it is a part of it after all. As Luftig indicates, “Love, then, is not only a human relation . . . but also something inhuman and intimately related to death” (1132). Therefore, Jane is unable to comment much as she can only guess what true love may be like for the “status of satisfied love might be determined only from a perspective that transcends the domain in which things are ‘known’ or ‘shown’” (Luftig 1133). In the second and third stanzas of the poem, Jane keeps on talking about how one must embrace the lower to come to the true understanding of love. She tells to a “he”, probably her lover, that he must “Take the sour / If you take me [Jane]” (6-7). Then, she contemplates on what true love is in the following way:

‘Naked I lay,  
The grass my bed;  
Naked and hidden away,  
That black day’;

*And that is what Jane said. (11-15)*

Her conclusion is that true love can be known once temporality is removed from the equation and she states that “All could be known or shown / If Time were but gone” (18-19). Jane’s words relating to time can be interpreted as one moving beyond the temporality of the sense realm. She understands that body and soul work together in order to reach the transcendental and Love is the triggering element in this process and imagination in poetry becomes a cognate term for Love. Once the union with the Divine Mind is achieved, all knowledge is within the reach of the individual within this state of being. Then the question “what is Love?” can be answered. Luftig indicates that the “main topic of the poem is . . . related to the problematic limitations that Jane places on ‘knowing’ or ‘showing’ true love within it. ‘True love’ might be the love of God, but we are as unable to ‘know’ or ‘show’ God as we are true love” (1132). Thus, the ineffability of the transcendental power limits the individual to an extent. In this poem, Yeats philosophises through Jane and indicates that bodily love is a part of the divine. Therefore, true love would embrace both body and soul, just as Yeats choosing both philosophy and art. This is how Yeats believes that the mystical vision can be attained and the binaries would diminish. This would lead the individual to the union with the hypostases, and as indicated in the poem, when Time

is gone, the acceptance of both binaries would lead the individual to the knowledge of the hypostases and also to the resolution of the binaries.

The next poem of the sequence is “Crazy Jane and Jack the Journeyman.” In the poem Jane stresses the endurance of love even after death in a typically Neo-platonic frame of thinking. The first stanza focuses on the temporary aspect of love. She states that “love is but a skein unwound” (5) and “The more I leave the door unlatched / The sooner love is gone” (3-4). Luftig argues that Jane “trembles to the ‘bone’ at the moment looks meet because she has already envisioned the moment when they [Jane and Jack] must part” (1133).

In the second stanza Jane indicates that “A lonely ghost the ghost is / That to God shall come” (7-8) because a lonely ghost has not chosen carnal love but the divine love of God which is a recurrent theme in Yeats’ poetry. As Plotinus states, all that comes from the One loves and desires to go back to that previous state of unity with It. However, those that chose earthly pleasures cannot go back to the unity with the One for it is not the way of the Sage.<sup>11</sup> That is why the lonely soul, who is lonely for it chose divine love, goes back to God. However, in Jane’s case this is different. Plotinus believes that there is reincarnation for men in various sections of his the *Enneads*.<sup>12</sup> In one of the sections on reincarnation Plotinus states that “[t]hose that have maintained the human level are man once more” (III. IV. 2). In the following lines, Jane indicates that while the lonely soul goes back to God, she “shall leap into the light lost / In my mother’s womb” (11-12). She will reincarnate again to relive the most passionate moments of her life. She will love Jack again. Thus, as Plotinus states, Jane believes that although she loves in a bodily way, she has managed to keep her humanity; otherwise, she would not be human again but an animal. As Plotinus explains his theory on reincarnation: “Those that have lived wholly to sense become animals” (III. IV. 2). Consequently, Jane believes that her love for Jack should not be taken as carnal only a detail which implies that she is aware of the

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<sup>11</sup> See page 31.

<sup>12</sup> For further information on Plotinus and reincarnation see the *Enneads* III. II. 13, III. IV. 2, IV. III. 8.

spiritual or mystical dimension of Love. As this detail indicates, Love is a very complicated and ambiguous, at times, a term in Yeats, and it makes sense only within a Neo-platonic context. The complexity in his mode of thinking was the source of his complex symbolism, which made him a good practitioner of modern symbolism. As indicated in the previous poem, Jane believes that carnal love is a part of true love and should not be discarded. That is why she believes that she will reincarnate as a person. As Gerson indicates, the “immortality of the highest part of the soul is the immortality of the self, the self which is punished for incarnate sins by reincarnation or finally released from incarnation altogether to live everlastingly with the Forms” and that is what the lonely soul does (157). Yeats also presents a similar stand in relation to this idea in his *A Vision* but rather than using the word reincarnation he introduces a term called “Dreaming Back”, which is explained in the following way: the “*Spirit* is compelled to live over and over again the events that had most moved it; there can be nothing new, but the old events stand forth in a light which is dim or bright according to the intensity of the passion that accompanied them” (*A Vision* 226). The implication might be that Jane would follow the same path and love Jack again and again without any regrets. Here a subversive attitude can be sensed in Jane as she opts for a re-union with Jack rather than being lonely which implies, in a Neo-platonic context, being released from reincarnation or one’s carnal side.

In the final stanza, Jane’s acceptance is revealed. Even if she is destined “to lie alone / In an empty bed” (13-14) she will keep loving Jack even after. As Bloom states, Crazy Jane “is to be led, not to heaven’s gate built in Jerusalem’s wall, but out upon the lonely ghost’s roads of sexual purgatory” (401-402). Against all the heavenly promises that is presented to her, she refuses to give up on her love and prefers to live in a mystical purgatory, which is considered lowly by the Bishop and Plotinus as well. Thus, Yeats lets Jane embrace her carnal love as he himself embraces his heart’s desire, poetry. Consequently, Yeats appears to disagree with Plotinus’ philosophy at a certain point, which is leaving every earthly concept behind. He would rather use these earthly concepts to attain his own personal mystical vision as he does in “The Tower.”

The next poem of the sequence, “Crazy Jane on God”, offers a mystical setting through memories and visions from the past. All four stanzas of the poem end with the line “*All things remain in God*” which might imply “a parallelism between God and the *ANIMA MUNDI* and makes Crazy Jane, if not Neoplatonist of Yeats’s own stamp, then at least an instinctive sharer of his basic idea” (Ross 297). In the first stanza, the temporary nature of love is once again implied as in the previous poem since “men come, men go” (6). In the opening lines of the poem, Crazy Jane recollects a memory with a “lover of a night” (1) who “Came when he would” (2) just like a “skein unwound” in “Crazy Jane and Jack the Journeyman.” However, the refrain “*All things remain in God*” following this statement indicates that Jane is also aware of a permanence, and that is what is meant by the parallelism discussed by Ross and explained above through Yeats’ term “Dreaming Back” in relation to the previous poem.

The following stanza in “Crazy Jane on God” presents a vision of a battle in which “Banners choke the sky; / Men-at-arms tread; / Armoured horses neigh” (7-9). This great battle is over and again “*All things remain in God*” (12). Ross explains this vision of the battle, its origin and its connection to “Anima Mundi” in the following way:

Crazy Jane’s vision of a battle is illuminated by a passage in *PER AMICA SILENTIA LUNAE* in which Yeats alludes to a similar vision of “ancient armies fighting above bones or ashes” and explains that we “carry to *ANIMA MUNDI* our memory, and that memory is for a time our external world; and all passionate moments recur again and again, for passion desires its own recurrence more than any event, and whatever there is of corresponding complacency or remorse is our beginning of judgement ...” (297)

In the first stanza, the lover comes to remain in God and now the image of the battle returns to the source, God. In this way Jane seems to imply that people, personal experiences, emotions and all things will remain in God as all came from the One. In the third stanza, a miracle takes place. “Uninhabited, ruinous” (15) house “suddenly lit up” (16) before an unidentified audience who are referred to as “they.” This empty

place, like Jane in the previous poem who is “left to lie alone” without her lover Jack, experiences a miracle in the same way Jane does and understands that all things remain in God. Luftig argues that:

Just as Jane can only vindicate Jack from the critical perspective provided by his death, the “ruinous house” is also seen from the perspective of the diminished form it assumes at its end. It is “suddenly lit up” in the process of its deterioration because only the image in which its change through time is, like a secret track, crystallized can provide an appreciation of what it once was. (1136)

Plotinus explores the question “whether there exists an ideal archetype of individuals, in other words whether I and every other human being go back to the Intellectual, every [living] thing having origin and principle There” (V. VII. 1).

Although she probably does not know it, Jane acts and thinks within a Neo-platonic frame, which suggests that Yeats is talking through his persona once again. Walter E. Houghton indicates that Yeats had been working on Plotinus’ philosophy on whether individuals have Ideal archetypes in the divine realm or not and the conclusion he reached is that ““the game-keeper did hear those footsteps the other night that sounded like the footsteps of a stag where stag has not passed these hundred years,’ *‘the Irish country-woman did see the ruined castle lit up’*” (326).

In the final stanza, Jane once again tells the reader about her love for Jack and despite all the condemnation from the Bishop she still believes that “*All things remain in God.*” Although she loved Jack specifically, she has been used “like a road / That men pass over” (20-21) but her “body makes no moan / but sings on: / *All things remain in God*” (22-24). Here, the word “body” stands for more than what it literally implies as it seems to refer to a landing space in a mystical process or a container which is charged with mystical potential. Therefore, the expression “That men pass over” should be taken metaphorically and in positive terms.

The next poem of the series, “Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop,” depicts the conversation between Crazy Jane and the bishop once again. The bishop indicates that the body is bound to temporality and destined to decay. For this reason his

advice is that one must leave the body behind in order to move on to a transcendental place. According to Walter E. Houghton “the Bishop asserts ... the dichotomy of soul and body: the spirit is good, the flesh is evil; the virtuous life is ascetic, in a heavenly mansion, evil life is natural life, in a bodily mansion” (323). The bishop states this idea in the following lines:

‘Those breasts are flat and fallen now,  
Those veins must soon be dry;  
Live in a heavenly mansion,  
Not in some foul sty.’ (3-6)

The bishop talks about the earthly pleasures of the sense realm. In order to unite with the One in the transcendental realm such shackles should be overcome. However, Jane disagrees with the bishop and states that “fair and foul” are binaries that need one another. Marjorie Howes contends that “Crazy Jane argues with a Bishop ... rather than rejecting religion, she offers an alternative metaphysics in which sexual and spiritual knowledge are linked” (16). In fact, in her alternative metaphysics, she sounds more competent in spiritual matters than the Bishop himself. This is irony of situation, the woman who is regarded as crazy by the institution and religion is more “illuminated” than its representative. As in the previous poems, Jane once again defends carnal love and states it should not be discarded all together. Only by embracing these binaries can one learn about the world beyond the senses and move upwards. As Crazy Jane states, “Fair and foul are near of kin, / And fair needs foul,” (7-8). This means that both body and soul need each other because one needs to know multiplicity to be able to go back to the source, the simplex or, only if they complement each other they can lead to transcendence. This simple philosophical standing has huge resonances as it leads to the dissolution of the binary logic of the Church of the Bishop. Ross indicates that Jane finds the divine “in the ebb and flow of sexual experience” (297). The following lines indicate this idea as follows:

My friends are gone, but that’s a truth  
Nor grave nor bed denied,  
Learned in bodily lowliness  
And in the heart’s pride. (9-12)

Bodily lowliness is also a hint of the hierarchy in the universe. In this lowly state the individual comes to know about the higher principles and just as the emanation process brought the soul to the sense realm, it will take him/her back to the transcendental world. Plotinus states that each individual has the of the One as well as “of ourselves; but it is of a self-wrought to splendour, brimmed with the Intellectual light, become that very light, pure, buoyant, unburdened, raised to Godhood, or better, knowing its Godhood” (VI. IX. 9). Consequently, the individual has all the necessary knowledge within the self in the sense realm.

The last stanza explains where this upward path lies. “Love” has its place within the lowly body, as stated in the lines “Love has pitched his mansion in / The place of excrement” (15-16), and through this idea the individual soul can go back to the source. In a letter Yeats claims that “One feels at moments if one could with a touch convey a vision – that the mystic vision & sexual love use the same means – opposed yet parallel existences” (qtd. in Ellmann 264). This idea finds its voice in *Crazy Jane* and, as her words imply, one should learn about the divine Love in the sense realm because Love is a light that has emanated into the bodily self and “nothing can be sole or whole / That has not been rent” (17-18). Thus, the binary should be known first and then should be demolished. Richard Ellmann indicates that Jane “sees it [love] as a conflict of opposites but also as an escape from them to unity, wholeness, or, to ... beatitude” (273). Consequently, Love that emanates into the sense realm, into the individual soul, once seen with a vision that overcomes binaries can take the individual back to the unity with the One.

In the final poem of the sequence, “*Crazy Jane Grown Old Looks at the Dancers*,” Jane is now old and only a spectator of what is presented rather than taking part in it. The dancers are the reincarnation of her soul, now, Jane has the potential to be alone, that is she is purged of her carnal side being a lonely soul. Yeats explains the idea behind the poem as follows:

Last night I saw a dream strange ragged excited people singing in a crowd. The most visible were a man and woman who were I think dancing. The man was swinging around his head a weight at the end of a



rope or leather thong and I knew that he did not know whether he would strike her dead or not, and both had their eyes fixed on each other, and both sang their love for one another. I suppose it was Blake's old thought 'sexual love is founded on spiritual hate' ... (qtd. in Jeffares 376)

The idea behind the poem brings forth another binary that is of love and hate. As in the earlier poems, this binary of love and hate is taken together as one needs the other in the dance of the lovers. As Ross indicates, "[i]n the context of the Crazy Jane sequence, the poem reiterates the emphasis that 'fair and foul' – in this case, love and hate – are 'near of kin'" (298). Thus, Jane observes the dancers and sees the image of love as she states in the opening lines "I found that ivory image there / Dancing with her chosen youth" (1-2). Luftig argues that "[i]f 'true love' is the object of Jane's gaze, then the cognitive effects of such a stare will be no less than the poetic equivalent of looking in the face of a god" (1138). As Jane keeps observing, one thing she notices is that the dancers' eyes are closed, and she notices the gleam under their eyelids. One might infer that true love, as in "Crazy Jane on the Day of Judgement," can neither be "known or shown." In *A Vision*, Yeats describes the realm of his Principles with the image of light but this "light is thought not nature" and gives further explanation: "Plotinus describes the Light seen with our eyes open and that seen when we rub our closed eyes, as a light coming from the soul itself" (*A Vision* 190-191). This idea of closed eyelids and the image of the dance indicate the harmony of the binary of love and hate. Therefore, as Ross claims, "Crazy Jane considers the distinction between love and hate inessential; what matters is the intensity of the dance" (298).

In the final stanza of the poem, whether the lovers kill each other or whether one of them kills the other is not revealed. Bloom indicates that "Jane's desire for participation, whatever the cost, is revealed, in the poem's climax, and in its refrain, *Love is like the lion's tooth*" (405). These lovers, as indicated in the second stanza, "danced heart's truth" (9) although their love is as sharp and as dangerous as a lion's tooth but is equally majestic. Yeats contends that

my imagination runs from Daimon to sweetheart, and I divine an analogy that evades the intellect. I remember that Greek antiquity has bid us look

for the principal stars, that govern enemy and sweetheart alike ... and that it may be 'sexual love,' which is 'founded upon spiritual hate,' is an image of the warfare of man and Daimon ... (*Mythologies* 336)

The dance of the lovers in this poem is the representation of this warfare. In the same line of thinking, Bloom indicates that the "poem culminates an obsessive theme that Yeats had broached in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and then developed fully in *A Vision's* account of *daimonic* love" (405). In addition, not being able to tell whether the dancers are dead or not seems to parallel the idea in "Among School Children" concerning the inability to differentiate the dancer from the dance. As Plotinus indicates in his theory of mystical union with the Divine Mind, the binary between the knower and the known diminishes. In "Tom the Lunatic" when Tom overcomes the binary between life and death, all becomes equal in the eyes of God whether dead or alive. In relation to this idea, whether the lovers are alive or dead or who killed whom or whether they both died appear to be less important issues considered against the idea of overcoming the binaries.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

This thesis has analysed William Butler Yeats' *A Vision*, the second edition (1937), as well as his late poetry, "Sailing to Byzantium", "The Tower", "Among School Children", the "Crazy Jane" and "Tom the Lunatic" poems within a Neo-platonic framework. Although Yeats had different interests, he remained a mystic throughout his life. Yeats' mystical universe especially later in his career derives its foundation from Plotinus' philosophy, and he transcribes certain ideas of Plotinus into his own in *A Vision* (1937). Both in this work and in his late poetry he makes use of Plotinus' ideas such as hypostases, the emanation principle, the transcendental state and unity of Being, and the importance of memory and recollection in the upward path to union with the One. This study has attempted to demonstrate that although Yeats acknowledges and employs Plotinus' philosophy in the poetry of his late period, he also adds his own twist to Plotinus' mystical universe, creating a slightly different understanding of mysticism better suited and perhaps more easily applicable to his own world.

Before providing the theoretical background concerning mysticism, the study has tried to shed light on Yeats' life and the influences that led him to focus his studies on mysticism. Yeats' life has been discussed in this way since a discussion of mysticism would always be incomplete without reference to the personal. The study, therefore, first explored the elements that helped Yeats shape his mystical mind. These elements are Yeats' involvement with the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, his relationship with his father who constantly criticised Yeats because of his mystical ideas, his heavy reading and interest in Romantic writers such as William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Furthermore, the understanding of his time in accordance with modernity and empirical theories such as Lockean theory, which asserted that all knowledge can be attained through empirical experience and which disregarded the role of the transcendental in human life, has been discussed. The

influence of Helena Blavatsky, a mystical leader of Theosophical Society, has also been discussed as a factor shaping Yeats' mystical interests as well as the influence of two other women, Maud Gonne and George Hyde Lees. While Maud Gonne became a symbol of Love because she refused Yeats' marriage proposals and eventually forming a mystical marriage with him, George Hyde Lees introduced Yeats to Plotinus as well as becoming a rich vein of resource with her automatic writing sessions.

In the second chapter, the study has tried to form a theoretical framework with a brief overview of what mysticism is and the major role Plato played in bringing mystical philosophy to life. Plato and his bipartite universe consisting of the transcendental world of Ideas and the empirical world proved critical for Plotinus and his theories. Improving on Platonism, Plotinus introduced his own system of the cosmos which is based on three divine hypostases; the One, the Divine Mind and the All Soul. The common element of Platonism and Neo-platonism is that both theories emphasise that the truth is in the transcendental realm and that the sense realm humankind lives in is just an image in the mirror. Therefore, in order to reach this universal truth, the individual should let go of anything that is related to the empirical world. One must see the Forms behind their images in the sense world as this is the world of Becoming, and the world of Being resides in the divine hypostases of Plotinus. However, Plotinus' system differs from Plato's in the way that it is tripartite. There is the One, motionless, simplex and beyond any understanding. It emanates and the Divine Mind is created which is the first knowable of the hypostases. It is also simplex. The Divine Mind consists of Forms and essence and from its essence which emanated from the One, comes the All Soul. The All Soul gives itself to the multiplying task, and from the All Soul comes the vegetable soul which creates the sense realm. This main difference, as well as the emanation principle, the upward path to union and the role that memory and recollection play in this path back to perfection have been discussed in the second chapter under subtitles such as "Hypostases; The One, The Divine Mind and The All Soul," "Emanation," "The Upward Way Toward Union," and "Memory and Recollection."

In the third chapter, the major elements of Plotinus' philosophy transcribed by Yeats in his second edition of *A Vision* (1937) are explored. In 1917, Yeats took MacKenna's translation of Plotinus' the *Enneads* from his wife's library and studied it thoroughly. Then, he kept readjusting his *A Vision*, which he had first published in 1925. Yeats confessed that he had not understood certain points on mysticism before reading Plotinus. Then he published his second edition of the work in 1937. In the second edition, Plotinus' system such as the divine hypostases are transcribed to the "Four Principles": "Celestial Body," "Spirit," "Daimon" or "Ghostly Self," "Husk" and "Passionate Body." However, there is a slight difference, for Yeats' Celestial Body and Spirit together coincide with Plotinus' Divine Mind. His Daimon or Ghostly Self equates Plotinus' All Soul, and Husk and Passionate Body are the vegetable soul that emanates from the All Soul. As it has been discussed, Yeats leaves out Plotinus' One in which the universal truth and reality are positioned. Rather than a being such as the One, in Yeats' mystical cosmos the One is a homogeneous sphere, a state of being where such unity occurs.

Yeats takes Plotinus' ideas and re-employs them in his late-period poetry. Following the theoretical study with *A Vision* (1937), the "Tom the Lunatic" poems, "Sailing to Byzantium," "The Tower," "Among School Children," and the "Crazy Jane" sequence have been analysed with a view to showing how they reflect a wide range of Plotinus' theories aestheticized by Yeats. "Tom the Lunatic" sequence depicts Plotinus' philosophy in quite a straightforward fashion. In this sequence, rather than his own preferences, Yeats poeticizes his Four Principles that he has adapted from Plotinus' hypostases. "Tom the Lunatic" portrays the ultimate state of every living being, man and beast alike, an understanding Yeats gets from Plotinus. In his mystical vision Tom sees, as in their perfect state of unity with the One, their oneness in that state before the eyes of the hypostasis. Yeats makes use of the emanation principle of Plotinus, through which the hypostases and the sense realm are created.

In "Sailing to Byzantium," Yeats reflects Plotinus' way back to unity in which all the earthly pleasures should be done away with. The binary of old age and mystical search through philosophy as opposed to earthly pleasures, which is reflected

through the young and passionate people, should be overcome. Thus, by purifying a sick heart with desire, the state of unity that is symbolized through the city of Byzantium can be achieved. In order to do so, the individual should reach within his/her soul as it has all the divine residue within, as indicated in Plotinus' system. However, when the speaker reaches the gates of Byzantium, Yeats' own ideas start to surface. Yeats' mystical vision lies not in discarding all earthly desires. He rather suggests a philosophy and a mystical state that can be achieved as an aesthetic transformation reflected through the golden bird symbol.

In "The Tower," Yeats' speaker, who could be regarded as Yeats himself, appears to be stuck between his art and his mystical studies at his old age, which creates the theme of the poem. The speaker summons visions and memories in order to solve his dilemma. He must make a choice, either Plato and Plotinus or his muse that will remain with him. Although the speaker first implies that he is choosing philosophy, we know that Yeats kept on writing poetry. Thus, he reconciles Plato (philosophy) and Plotinus (art). Yeats could not let go of his muse for the sake of philosophy. This is because he believed that art and philosophy should work together. Consequently, he failed to achieve the unity of Being on Plotinus' terms. However, he may be said to have achieved eternity in his own way: through his own ideas he could achieve this non-temporal or timeless unity in poetry or artistic space. Thus, he may be said to have transpositioned transcendence or blurred the boundaries between "Here" and "There," or, in Neo-platonic terms, the empirical world and transcendence. This is another way of saying that he has translocated the state of Being to the state of Becoming by creating a space of existence through his art. In other words, he blurs the boundary between philosophy and art. Matthew Gibson explains this idea in the following way:

Yeats was using the poems to philosophise through art, and to portray aesthetic as having the ability to realise philosophical notions. The 'sages standing in God's holy fire' who offer an escape from the life described earlier in 'Sailing to Byzantium' ... offer instead a vision of Ultimate Reality as aesthetic transmutation, because Yeats discerned therein a spiritualism in keeping with his own preferences. (104)

He believed that art as his heart's desire, which is represented by the muse, and the divine, which is represented through philosophical study, should work together and through this Yeats' vision of ultimate reality as aesthetic transmutation is revealed. In this aesthetic transmutation, Yeats invites once more the poet, who was banished, from the place of mysticism back again. In a nutshell, Plotinus' project of reintegrating the poet into the mystical process is poeticized and objectified by Yeats. His poetry tells, in that sense, that poetry itself metamorphoses into what is called "the way up."

In "Among School Children," the importance of memory and recollection in achieving the unity of Being is aestheticized through a story of Maud Gonne. As indicated in the introduction, Gonne became the symbol of Platonic Love and appeared in Yeats poetry. Yeats remembers Gonne appearing in different times under different forms, which enables him to achieve a mystical vision. His mystical marriage to Gonne and her becoming the symbol of Love in his poetry is apparent in this poem. Yeats comes to learn true love in his lowly state in the sense realm. Through three different images of Gonne recollected through memory, Ledaean body, a little child and her present image which resembles a scarecrow, Yeats gets on the path towards union with the Divine Mind, which is indicated through the dance metaphor in the final line. In the state of union with the hypostasis, Yeats' speaker is unable to differentiate between the subject and object; the binary between the knower and the known is diminished. Thus, in the state of perfection the duality subsides and gives its place to the simplex.

The "Crazy Jane" poems depict Yeats' own belief that bodily love and the mystical ways are opposite but also parallel. Therefore, both carnal love and mystical love should go hand in hand in the attempt to transcend sense perception and attain a mystical vision. Yeats' idea finds its voice in Crazy Jane defending the love that she has for Jack against the Bishop's criticism. Throughout the sequence, Jane relays her "crazy" wisdom on how Love can be achieved through bodily love and divine love accepted together rather than discarding the bodily all together, which according to Plotinus, is the way back to the previous state of unity. While the understanding of

the Bishop, the representative of the institutional Church, indicates that bodily love leads one to live like a beast, or that its place is in some foul sty, Jane's understanding implies something different. She indicates that love is not true if it cannot embrace body and soul together. If both are accepted according to Jane's perspective, true love shall be revealed. This is because, through accepting the binaries together lovers will move out of the temporal state; all will be known and shown. Jane comes to learn that all things remain in God, fair and foul alike since they are next of kin. Only in bodily lowliness can the divine Love be learned and then what the lovers are left with is not the binary of bodily and divine love but the intensity of it as described in the dance of the lovers.

To conclude, Yeats makes use of Neo-platonism in accordance with Plotinus' ideas. There are certain points Yeats employs in a way similar to Plotinus, such as the emanation principle, the hypostases aestheticized in "Tom at Cruachan" and "Old Tom Again" and the importance of memory in attaining mystical vision poeticized in "Among School Children." However, there are certain points, as in "Sailing to Byzantium", where, rather than the hypostasis, the One, Yeats creates his own symbol where the state of unity occurs. Rather than the hypostases, Yeats employs the symbolic city of Byzantium where his understanding of mystical union through aesthetic transformation takes place. In "Crazy Jane" poems sexual love is emphasised and depicted as a way which leads to mystical vision. Also, Yeats did not disregard art for the sake of philosophy in his search for the universal truth, as in "The Tower." Thus, Yeats' understanding as to how to attain mystical vision lies in accepting all binaries together, body and soul, earthly and divine as well as art and philosophy.

Consequently, this study claims that, although Yeats heavily employs the Neo-platonic theories of Plotinus, he does not find the ultimate truth in them. He adds his own preferences into this mystical philosophy, which embrace certain elements that Neo-platonism does not. His reemployment of Neo-platonic concepts within a new context can also be taken as his response to the impasse that triggered modernism. In this process, he offers his own way of going beyond the binarism and linearism of



the previous poetic traditions and reconciles Being with Becoming. Although it is an elusive process, he manages to ground his poetry as an organising principle which leads to the unity of the Dancer and the Dance, an expression which became a catchphrase in Yeats studies.

Within the scope of this study certain issues have been explored, explaining William Butler Yeats' Neo-platonic philosophy, his study of Plotinus as well as his adaptation, transcription and aestheticizing of Plotinian terms in his poetry. However, due to the limited scope of this thesis a more detailed discussion of mysticism has not been offered. Knowing that Yeats has been under the influence of different understandings of mysticism throughout his life, further research could look into how Yeats' work also reflects these different mystical ideas. A comparison of these various understandings in Yeats' work and the results they lead to can be the topic of a further study, which could make a further contribution to understanding the role of mysticism in the poetic career of William Butler Yeats.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

#### WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS VE MİSTİSİZM: NEO-PLATONCU BİR YAKLAŞIM İLE ŞİİRLERİ

Mistisizm evren hakkındaki mutlak gerçeği aramanın yoludur. Mistikler ise bu yolun öğretilerini kullanarak ilahi bir varlığa ulaşmayı ve bu varlıkla bir olabilmeyi amaçlarlar. İrlandalı şair William Butler Yeats (1865 – 1939) hayatı ve kariyeri süresince farklı mistisizm anlayışlarının etkisinde kalmıştır. Bu tezin amacı, bu mistik etkilenmenin şairin şiirlerinde nasıl ortaya çıktığını incelemektir. Çalışma Yeats'in Neo-platonizm ve bu bağlamda Plotinus'un yoğun etkisi altında kaldığı hayatının ve kariyerinin son dönemine odaklanacaktır. Bu bağlamda, bu tez Yeats'in *A Vision* adlı eserinin ikinci edisyonunda kendi görüşüne göre uyarladığı Plotinus'un mistik felsefesini ve bu felsefenin şair tarafından şiirlerinde nasıl estetize edildiğini incelemeyi amaç edinmiştir. Fakat bu felsefe Yeats'i tam olarak tatmin etmemiştir. Temelini Plotinus'un felsefesinden alarak kendi fikirleri doğrultusunda uyarladığı mistik görüş ile Yeats mistik teorinin dünyevi yönünün önemini vurgulamak suretiyle sanat ve felsefeyi, Varlık ve Oluşum anlayışlarını şiiri ile dünyevi düzlemde buluşturup, uzlaştırmıştır.

İnişli çıkışlı bir hayat süren William Butler Yeats politika, İrlanda milliyetçiliği gibi farklı yönelimleri olsa da onun için mistik yaşam her zaman ilgi odağı olarak kalmıştır. Bu mistik ilgisi 7 Mart 1980 tarihinde katıldığı Altın Şafak Hermetik Birliği (Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn) ile kesinlik kazanmıştır. Yazdığı eserler ve mektuplarında bu ilgisini tekrar tekrar vurgulamıştır. Yeats'in Romantiklere olan ilgisi, babasının bu ilgisine olan negatif tepkisi onu mistisizme daha da bağlayan etkenler olmuştur. Yeats'in mistisizme doğru yönlendirilmesinin bir başka nedeni, zamanının sosyal durumu oldu. Birinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra insanlar inanç ve istikrar umutlarını kaybetmeye başlamışlardır. Bu dönemde sanayi, bilim ve dolayısıyla akıl çağı yükselmeye başlamıştır.

Modernizm İngiliz edebiyatında kapsamlı bir genelleme olarak kullanılsa da, aslında, her şairin veya yazarın modernizmi farklıdır. Yeats'in modernizm anlayışının yerleştirildiği sabit bir zemin bulamama meselesi, “modernizm” teriminin kendi içinde sorunlu olması ile de ilgilidir. Farklılıklara rağmen, tüm modernistler modernite anlayışına karşı çıkmayı amaçladılar; bu nedenle, Locke, Newton ve Descartes'ın deneysel yaklaşımına dayanan Aydınlanma epistemolojisinin gerçekçiliğine karşı bir protesto olarak ele alınabilirler. Yeats'in okült pratiklere katılımı ve aynı zamanda farklı topluluklarla olan ilişkisi ve İrlanda edebiyatını yeniden canlandırma çabası onu akranlarından ayıran özellikleridir. Yeats ayrıca, modernist şiirin parçalanmış ve bozulmuş stiline yanı sıra, Romantik şiir anlayışının güzellik ve gerçeğin bir ifadesi olarak kullanılmasının daimi eleştirisini onaylamadı. Hayal gücüne verilen önemin azalması, maneviyat gerçeğinden ziyade dış gerçekleri ifade etmek için mantıksal ve doğrudan yaklaşım anlayışı, Yeats'i modernist şiir anlayışından uzaklaştırmıştır. Modern şiirin hayal gücünü önemsemeyen ve algı dünyasındaki günlük hesapları mekanik bir şekilde ifade etmeye odaklanan bu aşırı-gerçekçi söylemi, Yeats'in şiirsel tarzı ile uyuşmuyordu. Yeats modernist bir yazar olarak düşünülür, ancak Locke teorisinin bilgi ve bu bilginin nasıl elde edildiği konusundaki fikirlerine karşı duruşuyla akranlarından ayrılır. Locke teorisi “bilginin tecrübelerden kaynaklandığını” iddia eder (Surette 61). Ulvi dünya ve bu dünyanın insan hayatındaki yerini yok sayan anlayış Yeats'in şiir anlayışı ile çatışma içerisindedir. Yeats'in bu epistemolojinin ulaştığı çıkmazdan çıkış yolu ya farklı mistizizm anlayışları ya da tarihöncesi bir çerçeve aracılığı ile algısal gerçeklikte aşmayı amaçlıyordu. Bu anlayışın, temel olarak, onun gerçekçiliğin temsil gücüne meydan okuma yolunun olduğu söylenebilir. Mistisizm ve efsanevi geçmişe başvurarak, şiirsel söylemi yeniden canlandırmaya çalışmıştır. Bu, aynı zamanda, algılar ile gerçek, gerçeklik ve dil, gösteren ve gösterilen arasında kurulan sıkı bağlantıyı da çözüyordu. Gösterileni ulvi dünyada bırakarak, temsil diline ölümcül bir darbe indiriyordu.

Yeats'in mistisizme yakınlığı, yukarıda da belirtildiği gibi, Aydınlanma tarafından tasarlanan epistemolojiye ilk meydan okuyan Romantiklere olan ilgisinin etkisi büyüktü. Yeats, gençlik yıllarında William Blake ve Percy Bysshe Shelley'den büyük



ölçüde etkilendi. Yeats, Shelley'nin, örneğin Alastor, eserlerindeki birçok karakterle kendini bağdaştırmış ve Shelley'nin eserlerinden aldığı bazı sembolleri kendi eserlerinde de kullanmıştır. George Bornstein dediği üzere, “Shelley'nin etkisi, Yeats'in açık fikirli bir siyasete, Maud Gonne için ideal bir sevgiye ve ezoterik bilgeliğin peşinde koşmasına yardımcı olmasını sağladı” (22).

1880 yıllarında ilk defa karşılaştığı Maud Gonne Yeats'i çok etkilemiştir. Gonne'a defalarca aşkını ilan etmiş evlilik teklif etmiştir. Fakat teklifleri her defasında olumsuz sonuçlanmıştır. Daha sonrasında Gonne ile sadece felsefi bağlamda mistik bir beraberliğe başlayan Yeats, Gonne'a olan aşkını zamanla mistik bir aşk sembolüne dönüştürmüş ve şiirlerinde bu bağlamda kullanmıştır. Bu şiirlerden bir tanesi de bu tezde çalışılmış olan “Among School Children” isimli şiirdir. Bu platonik sevgi kaçınılmaz olarak mistik boyutları içeriyordu ve Yeats'in Maud Gonne'a olan aşkının da mistisizme olan ilgisini beslediği söylenebilir.

Yeats, Plotinus'u hayatının ilerleyen zamanlarında okumaya başlamış ve mistik düşüncelerinden önemli derecede etkilenmiştir. Yeats halihazırda birçok eski filozofun etkisi altında kalmıştır ancak Plotinus'un fikirleri ile hem hayatında hem de kariyerinde olgun bir noktadayken tanışmıştır. Yeats'in bu yoğun ilgisi 1917 yılında evlendiği George Hyde Lee zamana denk gelir. Çünkü Plotinus'un *Enneadlar* adlı eserini karısının kütüphanesinden alıp okumaya başlamıştır. Üzerinde yoğun bir şekilde çalıştığı bu eser, Yeats'in Plotinus'un mistik felsefesini kavramasını sağlamış ve bu felsefe ışığında ilk baskısı 1925 yılı olan *A Vision* adlı eserini yeniden gözden geçirerek 1937 yılında, Plotinus'un teorilerini kendi fikirleri doğrultusunda uyarlayarak, kendi mistik felsefesini oluşturmuştur. Yeats, Plotinus'un üç temel ilkesini (*hypostases*) şiirselleştirir ve Plotinus'un sistemini “kendi metafizik inançlarını ifade etmek için kullanır” (Arkins 35).

Yeats'in mistik ilgisi çok geniş ve çeşitlidir ve hepsini keşfetmek bu çalışmanın kapsamı dahilinde mümkün değildir. Bu nedenle, bu tez hem fikirleri hem de eserinde daha olgun bir tutum sergilediği, hayatının ilerleyen dönemindeki Yeats'in mistik ilgisi üzerine odaklanmaktadır. Yukarıda tartıştığımız gibi, bu geç ilgi özellikle Neo-platonizm ve özellikle Plotinus üzerinedir. Başta da söylendiği üzere,

temelini Plotinus'un felsefesinden alarak kendi fikirleri doğrultusunda uyarladığı mistik görüş ile Yeats mistik teorisinin dünyevi yönünün önemini vurgulamak suretiyle sanat ve felsefeyi, Varlık ve Oluşum anlayışlarını şiiri ile dünyevi düzlemde buluşturup, uzlaştırmıştır ve bu tezin amacı bu uzlaşmayı göstermektir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, tezin ikinci kısmı mistisizme genel bir bakış sunmuştur ve bunun sonrasında Neo-platonizme ve özellikle Plotinus'un mistik felsefesine geçmeden önce Eflatun ve Antik Yunan'da mistizm konusunu kısaca tartışmıştır. Eflatun'un fikirleri Plotinus ve dolayısıyla Neo-platonizm için elzemdir. Eflatun'un İdealar dünyası ve gölgeler dünyası diye ikiye ayırdığı mistik sistemi Plotinus'un üç temel ilkeli anlayışının çıkış noktasıdır.

Plotinus'un Bir (*the One*), Külli Akıl (*Nous*) ve Külli Ruh (*the All Soul*) olarak adlandırdığı üç temel ilkesi mistik dünyasının yaratıcılarıdır. Platonculuk ve Neo-platonizmin ortak ögesi, her iki teorisinin de gerçeğin ulvi dünyada olduğunu vurgulaması ve insanlığın yaşadığı algı dünyasının sadece aynadaki bir görüntü gibi olduğu, sadece bir yansıma olduğunu vurgulamasıdır. Bu nedenle, bu evrensel gerçeğe ulaşmak için, algısal dünyayla ilgili her şeyi, bütün dünyevi zevkleri bırak gerekmektedir. İnsanlar bu dünyadaki yansımaların ardında yatan İdeayı görmelidir. Çünkü algı dünyası Oluşum dünyasıdır, Varlık dünyası ise Plotinus'un üç temel ilkesi (*hypostases*) ile birlikte. Bu üç temel ilkedeki Bir hareketsizdir, ilk ve tektir, eşi benzeri yoktur. İnsan aklının anlayabileceğinin ötesindedir. İlk ve temel olan ilke Bir'dir. Hiçbir şey O'nun önünde gelmez, gelemes. Ardından gelen hiçbir şeye ihtiyacı yoktur ve sadece kendine bağımlıdır. Sonra gelen her şey bir ilke ihtiyaç duyar; basit olmayan her şey basitten gelmesi gerektirir ve Plotinus'un sisteminde en basit olan Bir ilkesidir. Bu basitlik ilkenin sadeliğinin ve birliğinin göstergesidir. Bir'in bu özelliği herkesten ve her şeyden önce var olan ve kendisinden sonra gelen şeylerle karakterize edilmeden var olan bir kaynak fikrini güçlendirir. Sudur (*emanation*) eder ve kendinden sonraki temel ilkeleri yaratır. Bir'e en yakın olan ilke Külli Akıl'dır. Bu ilke adeta Bir'in bir yansıması gibidir. Bu ilke, Plotinus sisteminde ilk bilinebilir ilkedir. Külli Akıl hakkında bilgi akıl yürütme yoluyla elde edilebilir. Dolayısıyla, Külli Akıl çoğulculuğun ilk adımı olur. Sonradan gelen her şeyin kaynağıdır. Neredeyse Bir kadar kudretlidir. Külli Akıl, ışığın saçıldığı bir kaynağı

temsil eder. Ancak, bu, Bir'in Akıl ile aynı seviyede olduğu anlamına gelmez ya da Akıl'ın bölünmüş olduğu, sade ve eşsiz olmadığı anlamına gelmez. Çünkü Külli Akıl da bir temel ilkedir ve kaynak olması kendisinden bir şey kaybetmek suretiyle sonra gelenleri yarattığı anlamına gelmez. O da eşsiz, sadece ve bir birlik sembolüdür. Bir'den sudur eden töz ve İdealardan oluşur. İdealar ona potansiyel olarak bir çokluk özelliği katar fakat bu çokluk bir şehre benzer. Çokluğun bu potansiyeli ile Külli Akıl kendi ruhuna sahip ancak içinde de farklı varlıkların, İdeaların, var olduğu bir şehri anımsatır. Külli Akıl ise sudur eder ve Külli Ruh meydana gelir. Plotinus ruhun öncelikle Külli Akıl içerisinde var olduğunu iddia eder. Külli Ruh diğer iki temel ilkeden farklıdır çünkü hareket eder ve kendisini diğerlerinin aksine çoğunluğu oluşturma görevine adar. Bu sebepten dolayı Plotinus iki farklı ruh ortaya koyar. Ruh hem ulvi hem dünyevi dünyadadır. Külli Ruh Varlık dünyasındadır ve bir temel ilkedir ve bir de alttaki, algı dünyasında olan ve kendini çokluğu yaratma görevine vermiş olan ruh vardır. Ruh bu iki dünya arasındaki aracı rolünü oynar. Ulvi dünyanın en son basamağı, dünyevi dünyanın yöneticisidir. Külli Akıl hareketsiz durumda iken, ona doğru bir hareket vardır. Plotinus, hepsinin merkezinde olan Bir'i ve Külli Akıl'ı hareketsiz birer daire olarak ve Külli Ruh'u onların etrafında dolaşan bir dış daire olarak ifade eder (IV. IV.16). Eğer Külli Akıl tüm bilişsel aktivitenin kaynağı olarak adlandırılırsa Külli Ruh da tüm yaşamın kaynağı denilebilir. Fakat Külli Ruh da bir temel ilke olduğu için bu yaratılış sürecinde kendisinden bir şey eksilmez. Algı dünyasındaki yerini sudur yoluyla kendisinden bir şey eksilmeden alır. Üç temel ilke Plotinus'un mistik evreninin merkezi ve bu evreni taşıyan sütunlardır. Bu kavramlar ve özellikleri, algı dünyasının yaratılışı ve birliğe dönüş yolunun temelini oluşturan sudur kavramı, birliğe ve gerçekliğe dönüş yolunda etkili önemli kavramlar tezin ikinci bölümünde alt başlıklar halinde incelenmiştir. Bu alt başlıkların ilk ikisi Plotinus'un üç temel ilkesi ve sudur kavramına ayrılırken diğerleri birliğe geri dönüş yolu ve bu yolda önemli bir rol oynayan hafıza ve anımsak kavramlarına ayrılmıştır. Aynı zamanda geri dönüş yolunda önemli olan Güzellik, Aşk gibi kavramlara da değinilmiştir. Her yaratılan varlık içinde Bir'in tözünü içinde taşır. Bu töz varlığın dönüş yolunun kapısı açacak güçtür. Yaratılışı itibari ile Bir'den uzaklaşan birey kaynağa dönmeyi ister ve içinde var olan bu tözü

Varlık durumuna dönmek için kullanır. Bu dönüşün gerçekleşebilmesi için hem ruhsal hem zihinsel bir arınma ve aktivite gereklidir. Bunun sebebi ise Bir direkt olarak anlaşılmadığı için öncelikle Külli Akıl ile bir olmak gerekir ve bu da ancak algı dünyasında imgeleri olan İdeaları anlayarak olacaktır. Bu sebepten ruhun arındırılması gerektiği kadar, bireyin algıları ile değil mistik görüş ile çevresine bakması gerekir. Bir'e ulaşmak için öncelikle Külli Akıl ile birlik sağlanmalıdır. Plotinus bireyin hayat amacının bu birliğe ulaşmak olduğunu ifade eder.

Üçüncü bölümde, Plotinus'un felsefesinin başlıca unsurları, Yeats'in *A Vision* (1937) adlı eserinin ikinci baskısında nasıl uyarlandığı konusu araştırılmıştır. 1917'de Yeats, Meekenna'nın çevirisini yaptığı Plotinus'un *Enneadlar* eserini eşinin kütüphanesinden alıp yoğun bir şekilde çalıştı. Sonrasında, 1925'te ilk kez yayınladığı *A Vision* eserini bu doğrultuda yeniden gözden geçirdi. Yeats, Plotinus'u okumadan önce mistisizmin belirli noktalarını anlamadığını itiraf etmiştir. Daha sonra 1937'de eserinin ikinci baskısını yayınladı. İkinci baskıda, Plotinus'un sisteminin üç temel ilkesini (*hypostases*) kendi düşüncesi doğrultusunda "Dört İlke" (*Four Principles*): "Kutsal Beden" (*Celestial Body*), "Ruh," (*Spirit*) "*Daimon*" ya da "Ruhani Öz" (*Ghostly Self*), "Kabuk" (*Husk*) ve "Tutkulu Beden" (*Passionate Body*) olarak uyarlamıştır. Ancak, Yeats'in Kutsal Beden ve Ruh kavramı birlikte Plotinus'un Külli Akıl kavramına tekabül etmesi gibi bir fark vardır. *Daimon* ya da Ruhani Öz, Plotinus'un Külli Ruh kavramına eşittir ve Kabuk ve Tutkulu Beden, Külli Ruh'un dünyayı oluşturan parçasına denk gelir. Evrensel doğrunun ve gerçekliğin Plotinus sisteminde yer aldığı Bir, Yeats tarafından direkt olarak değinilmemiştir. Yeats'in mistik kozmosunda Bir, Bir gibi bir varlıktan ziyade, homojen bir küre ve bu birliğin oluştuğu bir durum şeklinde ifade edilir.

Herhangi bir şiir eserinde mistisizmi araştırmak kaçınılmaz olarak, şairin kişisel yaşamı ve anlayışıyla ilgili unsurları içerir. Önceki bölümlerde de belirtildiği gibi, özellikle William Butler Yeats gibi hayatını mistik felsefeye ve anlayışa adanmış bir şair söz konusu olunca bu durum geçerli olacaktır. Bu nedenle aşağıdaki şiirlerin analizi şair ve şiirinde yarattığı karakterler arasında her zaman katı bir ayırım yapılması mümkün olmayacaktır. Aksine, Yeats, karakterlerini kendisini ve şahsi

hayatını şiirlerinden uzaklaştırmak için oluştur olmasına rağmen, fikirleri hala ara ara karakterlerinin ağzından kaçmıştır. Böylece, bazı noktalarda, şiirlerindeki karakterler, Yeats'in kendi hatıralarını ve fikirlerini aktaran birer aracı olarak değerlendirilecektir.

Yeats, Plotinus'un fikirlerini alır ve onların geç dönem şiirlerinde yeniden istihdam eder. *A Vision* (1937) ile kuramsal çalışmanın ardından, "Tom the Lunatic" şiirleri, "Sailing to Byzantium," "The Tower," "Among School Children," ve "Crazy Jane" şiirleri, Yeats tarafından estetikleştirilen geniş Plotinus teorileri yelpazesini nasıl yansıttığını gösteriyor. "Tom the Lunatic" dizisi, Plotinus'un felsefesini oldukça açık bir şekilde tasvir eder. Yeats, bu şiirler ile, kendi tercihlerinden ziyade, Plotinus'un üç temel ilkesinden adapte ettiği Dört İlkesini şiirselleştiriyor. "Tom the Lunatic", Yeats'in Plotinus'tan aldığı bir anlayış doğrultusunda, her canlının, insanın ve mahlukatın nihai durumunu tasvir eder ve bu durum Tanrı'nın gözünde bir olmaktan başka bir şey değildir. Mistik vizyonunda Tom, tüm canlıların Tanrı ile bir oldukları hali ile mükemmel bir birlik ve uyum içerisinde, bu halde Tanrı'nın gözleri ile O'nun gözleri önünde canlıların birliğini görür. Yeats, üç temel ilkenin ve dünyanın oluşumunu sağlayan sudur kavramını da bu şiirlerinde estetize eder.

Yeats "Sailing to Byzantium" adlı eserinde Plotinus'un bütün dünyevi zevkleri geride bırakmak sureti ile ulvi güç ile bir olma yolunu anlatıyor. Yaşlılık ve mistik arayış yoluyla ifade edilen felsefe aracılığı ile, genç ve tutkulu insanlar aracılığı ile ifade edilen dünyevi zevklerin oluşturduğu ikili zıtlığın aşılması gerekmektedir. Böylece, hasta bir kalbi arzularından arındırıp, Bizans ile simgelenmiş olan ulvi güç ile birlik durumu elde edilebilir. Bunu başarmak için birey Plotinus'un sisteminde de açıklandığı üzere tüm gerekli ilahi kalıntıyı içinde barındıran ruhuna bakmalıdır. Fakat şiirde Yeats'in yarattığı kişi Bizans'ın kapılarında ulaştığında Yeats'in kendi fikirleri ortaya çıkmaya başlar. Yeats'in düşüncesine göre mistik görüş bütün dünyevi arzuları geride bırakarak ulaşılmaz. O bunun yerine şiirdeki altın kuş sembolü ile de ifade ettiği üzere mistik halin estetik bir dönüşüm ile de elde edilebileceği bir felsefi teori önerisinde bulunur.

Yeats'in "The Tower" şiirindeki karakteri, ki bu karakter şairin kendisi olarak da kabul edilebilir, ilerleyen yaşında sanat ve mistik çalışmaları arasında sıkışıp kalmış ve bu çıkmaz şiirin temasını oluşturmuştur. Karakter bu durumu çözmek için hayaller ve anılarını çağırıyor. Karakterin Eflatun ve Plotinus ya da ilham perisi arasında bir seçim yapması gerekiyor. Karakter Eflatun ve Plotinus tarafından sembolize edilen felsefeyi seçmesine rağmen Yeats'in şiir yazmaya devam ettiği biliniyor. Buradan da anlaşıldığı üzere şair sanatını geride bırakmamıştır. Böylece Yeats Eflatun (felsefe) ve Plotinus (sanat) arasında uzlaşmayı sağlamış oluyor. Çünkü şair bu ikilinin birlikte işlemesi gerektiğine inanıyordu. Sonuç olarak Plotinus'un anlayışına göre Varlık duruma ulaşamamıştır. Fakat kendi düşüncesi doğrultusunda zamanın dışında olan sonsuz birlik durumunu şiirinde ya da sanat düzleminde yakalamıştır ve böylece ulvi düzlemin yerini değiştirmiş ya da başka bir deyişle "Burası" ve "Orası" arasındaki sınır çizgilerini inceltmiştir. Bu şiirlerinde bir varoluş düzlemi yaratarak Varlık ve Oluşum anlayışlarını bu düzleme taşımasının farklı şekilde ifadesidir. Yani sanat ve felsefe arasındaki sınırları yok etmeye çalışmıştır. Matthew Gibson bu fikri şöyle açıklar:

Yeats şiirleri sanat yoluyla felsefe yapmak ve estetiğin felsefi kavramları gerçekleştirme özelliğine sahip olduğunu göstermek için kullanıyordu. 'Tanrı'nın kutsal ateşinde duran bilgiler' daha öncesinde 'Sailing to Byzantium' şiirinde tasvir edilen hayattan bir kaçış yerine ... Nihai Gerçeklik görüşünü estetik dönüşüm olarak sunar, çünkü Yeats orada kendi görüşleri ile uyum sağlayan bir spiritualizm sezinlemiştir. (104)

Yeats'in düşüncesine göre, ilham ile sembolize edilen kalbinin arzusu sanat ve felsefi çalışma ile ifade edilen ulvi uzlaşıp ve bu anlayış aracılığı ile Yeats'in estetik dönüşüm aracılığı ile mistik görüşe ulaşma fikri ortaya çıkmalıydı. Yeats zamanında Eflatun'un sürdüğü şairi tekrar mistisizme davet eder. Özetlersek, Plotinus'un şairin mistik süreçle yeniden bütünleşmesi projesi Yeats tarafından şiirselleştirilir ve nesnelleştirilir. Yeats'in şiirleri bir anlamda "yukarı giden yol" olarak ifade edilen ulvi güç ile bir olma yoluna dönüşür.

“Among School Children” adlı şiirde hafıza ve anımsamanın birliğe ulaşma yolundaki önemi Maud Gonne’in hikayesi aracılığı ile estetize ediliyor. Mistik bir aşk sembolüne dönüşmüş olan Gonne, Yeats’in bu şiirinde de yerini almıştır. Yeats bu şiirde Gonne’u farklı zamanlar da ve farklı şekillerde hatırlar ve mistik bir görüş elde eder. Yeats algı dünyasında öğrendiği sevgi ile gerçek aşka ulaşmıştır. Gonne’un anımsanan üç farklı hali aracılığı ile Yeats son mısradada dans benzetmesi ile ifade edilen Külli Akıl ile bir olmanın yolundadır. Külli Akıl ile birliğe ulaşan Yeats’in karakteri özne ve nesne, bilen ve bilinen arasındaki ikili zıtlık durumu aşmıştır ve bu yüzden bu zıtlıkların arasındaki ayrımı yapamamaktadır. Bu durumda dualite yerini basit olana bırakmıştır.

“Crazy Jane” şiirlerinde, Yeats’in bedensel zevk ile mistik yolun zıt fakat aynı zamanda paralel olduğu düşüncesi tasvir ediliyor. Dolayısıyla algıları aşmak ve mistik bir görüş elde etmek için dünyevi ve ulvi aşkın birlikte kabul edilmesi gerektiği anlatılıyor. Yeats’in bu fikri Jane’in tüm eleştirilere rağmen Jack’e olan aşkı savunmasında ses buluyor. Tüm bu “Crazy Jane” şiirlerinde mistik görüşe ulaşma yolunda dünyevi aşkın bir kenara atılmaması gerektiği ve ulvi aşk ile birlikte kabul edilmesi gerektiği anlatılıyor. Kilise temsilcisinin ve Plotinus’un anlayışına göre dünyevi aşk kişiyi birlik yolundan uzaklaştırır ve hayvanlar gibi yaşamaya iter. Jane ve Yeats’in anlayışına göre bu durum farklıdır. Eğer aşk hem dünyevi hem ulviyi birlikte kabul etmiyorsa gerçek aşk değildir. Jane’in bakış açısına göre her ikisi de birlikte kabul edilirse gerçek aşk ortaya çıkacaktır. Bunun nedeni, ikili zıtlıkların birlikte kabul edilmesi ile birlikte, sevenler zaman kavramının dışına çıkacak ve her şey bilinecek ve görülecektir. Jane güzel ve çirkin gibi ikili zıtlıkların da, kardeş olduklarından dolayı, fark gözetilmeksizin Tanrı’da kalacağını anlayışına ulaşıyor. Sadece bu bedensel durumda öğrenilen aşk ile birlikte ulvi aşka ulaşabileceği ve bu noktada aşıklara kalan ise dünyevi ve ulvi ikili zıtlığı değil ettikleri dansın yoğunluğudur.

Sonuç olarak, Yeats, Neo-platonizmi Plotinus’un fikirlerine uygun olarak kullanmıştır. Yeats Plotinus’un fikirlerine sadık olarak, “Tom at Cruachan” ve “Old Tom Again” şiirlerinde olduğu gibi, sudür ve üç temel ilkesini ve “Among School

Children” şiirinde görüldüğü gibi hafıza ve anımsamanın Varlık yolundaki önemini estetize etmiştir. Fakat, “Sailing to Byzantium” şiirinde olduğu gibi bazı noktalarda Plotinus’un fikirlerini kendi görüşüne göre uyarlamıştır. Bir temel ilkesi yerine ulvi diyarla birliği Bizans şehri ile sembolize etmiştir. Burada birliğe estetik dönüşüm aracılığı ile ulaşılır. “Crazy Jane” şiirlerinde cinsel aşk ve bu aşkın mistik görüşe ulaşmadaki önemi vurgulanmıştır. Ayrıca “The Tower” şiirinde olduğu gibi Yeats’in evrensel gerçeğe ulaşma yolunda felsefe uğruna sanatını bırakmadığı sonucuna da ulaşılmıştır. Yeats’in mistik felsefesine ve düşüncesine göre mistik görüş beden ve ruh, dünyevi ve ulvi, sanat ve felsefe gibi tüm ikili zıtlıkların birlikte kabul edilmesi yoluyla ulaşılır.

Sonuç olarak, Yeats Plotinus’un Neo-platonik teorilerini yoğun bir şekilde kullansa bile evrensel gerçeği Plotinus’un fikirlerinde bulmaz. Neo-platonizmin kabul etmediği bazı fikirleri kucaklayarak kendi mistik felsefesini oluşturur. Yeni bir bağlamda Neo-platonik kavramların yeniden kullanımı, modernizmi tetikleyen çıkmaza olan cevabı olarak da kabul edilebilir. Bu süreçte ikili zıtlıkların ve önceki şiirsel geleneklerin doğrulsallığının ötesine geçmede kendi yolunu sunar ve aynı zamanda Oluşum ve Varlık anlayışını uzlaştırır. Zor bir süreç olmasına rağmen, şiirini, Yeats çalışmalarında bir slogan haline gelen Dans ve Dansçının birliğine ulaşılmasını sağlayan düzenleyici bir ilke haline getirmeyi başarmıştır.



## APPENDIX B: TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

### ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü

Enformatik Enstitüsü

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü

### YAZARIN

Soyadı : Tülüce

Adı : Mustafa Uğur

Bölümü : İngiliz Edebiyatı

**TEZİN ADI** (İngilizce) : William Butler Yeats and Mysticism: A Neo-Platonic Approach to his Poetry

**TEZİN TÜRÜ** : Yüksek Lisans  Doktora

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
3. Tezimden bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.

**TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ:**