

William A. Gordon

Eastern Religion and the Later Years

I. Gods of Sky and Earth

If we could define one over-ruling characteristic of what we now call modern, it would have to be the return to the concrete with all that implies. Whitehead, early in our century, defined for us the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, showed us the tendency in our language to remain on continuously high levels of abstraction. Benjamin Whorf suggested to us the possibility that our way of seeing the world was a perspective generated by language, and his and others' work along these lines undid once and for all the Enlightenment assumption that the world was knowable in its essential being through reason. Looking back over 5000 years of history, trying to find some point of origin for what we experience as our own cultural milieu, is an unsettling experience fraught with a sense of ontological crisis. For example, Marcuse claims the central trend of Western culture must be defined by aggression embodied in a philosophy of domination and alienation. Poets and novelists appear to concur. The great themes of modern literature have been those exploring alienation, aggression, and eros, always with a sense of civilization in crisis. When one looks back over the cultures that have come and gone, taking the period of Indo-European migration as the beginning, one is struck, necessarily it seems, by the similarity of development in the vast network of related peoples. From Ireland to India, and indirectly in the Americas and the Pacific, we have watched the unfolding of what appears to be a single and relatively simple idea. To the nomadic horse-mobile Indo-Europeans, the earth was territory to be conquered, the religious power was a projection of the needs of the battle-oriented tribes for a standard of heroism. The earth deities were conquered and crushed, to become the devils and demons of

modern theology and folk culture. The god of the nomads was a respecter of strength and success. Being a sky-god, he had no need to explain the powers of earth.¹ Even Indo-European language in most of its development appeared to have an innate tendency toward ever more lofty abstractions.

As the Indo-European migration spread over the known world, it crushed and destroyed all competing cultures, or pushed them so far underground that only the merest vestiges of their typical cultus remained. Anthropologists agree that the indigenous civilizations of Europe and Asia, which disappeared for the most part except for archaeological remains, had certain common traits. Primary among these was the mother goddess or female principle.² That this figure was central is undisputed; what that meant for the civilization is still in question. But the power of those remains is testified to by the continuing tradition of occultisms in the West.³ Yeats found the tradition in Irish folklore, in Blake, and in the mystical counterculture of Europe. My thesis is that this counterculture, what Frobenius has called the "Invisible Counterplayer", can tell us much about the thrust of modern literature and possibly at its broadest suggest to us where our revolt is going.⁴

Of all those vast areas civilized by the Indo-European migrations, only India, it appears, fostered a return of indigenous elements of belief. The pre-Aryan culture, which left remains undiscovered until this century, reasserted itself through folk ritual in outlying districts and was eventually absorbed by Indo-Aryan forms as an all-inclusive union of opposites. The pre-Aryan elements of Indian religion have been studied and the probable course of their assimilation by the ruling Aryans charted. One of the main developments, from the vantage point of this study, is the triumph of the "union of opposites" as the organizing principle of Indian experience.⁵ What that means may be seen in Joseph Campbell's comparison of Medusa with Kali. The Medusa figure, with its hair of hissing serpents, represents that general threat of the powers of darkness to the hero which runs through the whole of Western literature. Yet some elements of ambivalence remain, for the blood of the gorgon is taken from her left and right side: "with the former he [Asclepius] slays with the latter he heals." The same powers exist in the goddess Kali, Campbell goes on to say, "who with her right hands bestows boons and in her left holds a raised sword. Kali

gives birth to all beings of the universe, yet her tongue is lolling long and red to lick up their living blood....She is Black Time, both the life and death of all beings, the womb and tomb of the world, the primal, one and only ultimate reality of nature."⁶

The difference between the two myths is the central difference between the Western and the Indian experience. The way of the West is the way of the hero. There is a reinforcement both of his individuality, as the "I" who acts, and of his membership in the tribe. The outside world, as the "other", is to be dominated, and the sense of continuity between the individual and all other forms of life is destroyed. The forces of earth, of blood, of instinct, on the other hand, become a threat to the survival of the tribe. Having been derived from a culture in its nomadic stage, the Indo-European gods are not inclusive and all-encompassing, but exclusive, ego-oriented gods to help the individual and the tribe survive in that context.

The Indian experience, however, after the blending of the indigenous religion with the Vedas, speaks differently. It derives reality itself from the play of opposites. In that play there is no first and second among interacting principles. The dark forces are not excluded but necessary. In this way the system escapes the dualism of the West. But however interesting in itself the Indian non-dualistic cosmology, the system is too complex to analyze in any depth within the scope of this study. We are interested, therefore, in certain aspects of Indian ideas which are relevant to the study of Yeats.⁷

I see three important Indian beliefs which came to be significant for the poetry of Yeats: first, the sense of the "manifest world"; secondly, the relationship between individuality and the ground of existence; thirdly, the union of opposites, especially as symbolized in Śiva-Śakti, the god and the goddess in sexual union. The first of these, the manifest world, I take up in connection with Yeats's Irish period. Fundamentally, it consists in a way of apprehending reality as a "manifestation" of some substratum which is itself unknowable. A sense of the world as "manifest" differs from Western perceptions because it lacks a feeling of the fixed identities of objects. All we perceive is a result of the play of opposites. In this perception, both self and nature are interdependent results of a world of Illusion. The second, the relation between the individual "self" and the ground of existence, was a difficulty for Yeats during his entire poetic career. He could never

regard empirical experience as the ultimate of knowledge, and he held firmly to a mystical ground but, at the same time, too much emphasis on that ground threatened a loss of individuality. Only late in his life was he able to write poetry which seemed to find a way to transcend that conflict. The third, the union of opposites as Siva-Sakti, is the most fundamental dictum of Hindu Tantrism, the religious view that is closest to the indigenous forms of Indian religion.⁸ In this relationship the identity *Atman* is *Brahman*, the Self is the Immensity, brings us to the methods of Yoga, which developed to discover experimentally through the experience of the Self and World, the transcendent reality.

II. The Self and the Manifest World

I see two main phases in Yeats's use of ideas or symbols which can best be explained within the context of Indian thought: first, his early use of Irish folklore and secondly, the more explicit use of Indian ideas after his meeting with Purohit Swami in 1931. Between these times Yeats explored many different symbolic systems and developed one of his own, but his knowledge of Indian thought increased through exposure to a number of sources. By turning first to the early period, I propose to show that Yeats's use of Irish ideas is consistent with attitudes to reality he later found in Indian thought, though he used them at first in a much less elaborate and systematic way. He has explained this in his introduction to the *Autobiography of Purohit Swami*:

We came upon visionaries of whom it was impossible to say whether they were Christian or Pagan, found memories of jugglers like those of India, found fragments of a belief that associated eternity with the field and road, not with buildings; but these visionaries, memories, fragments, were eccentric, alien shut off, as it were, under the plate glass of a museum; I had found something of what I wanted but not all, the explanatory intellect had disappeared. When Shri Purohit Swami described his journey...and fitted everything into an ancient discipline, a philosophy that satisfied the intellect, I found all that I wanted.⁹

The relationship between Irish folklore and Indian belief was not, however, merely fortuitous in the eyes of Yeats. He detected there, indeed wanted to believe, that he had found an ancient connection between the beliefs of East and West, perhaps even a perennial religion which could be the basis of renewed vision. In making this connection,

he saw what others have seen since, scholars like Joseph Campbell and Mircea Eliade.¹⁰ For example, in his introduction to the *Ten Principal Upanishads*, Yeats notes the similarity between the "Song of Amergin" and Eastern beliefs:

It pleases me to fancy that when we turn towards the East, in or out of church, we are turning not less to the ancient west and north; the one fragment of pagan Irish philosophy come down, the "Song of Amergin" seems Asiatic; that a system of thought like that of these books, though perhaps less perfectly organized, once overspread the world, as ours today; that our genuflections discover in the East something ancestral in ourselves, something we must bring into the light before we can appease a religious instinct that for the first time in our civilization demands the satisfaction of the whole man.¹¹

The world described is one in which the stability of objects and of the self is lacking. Joseph Campbell has also pointed out many similarities between them, Irish and Indian beliefs, and in this same poem "supposed to be recited by the chief poet, Amairgen, of the invading Goidelic Celts, when their ships scraped to beach on the Irish shore:

I am the wind that blows o'er the sea;
I am the wave of the deep;
I am the bull of seven battles;
I am the eagle on the rock;
I am a tear of the sun;
I am the fairest of plants;
I am a boar for courage;
I am a salmon in the water;
I am a lake in the plain;
I am the word of knowledge;
I am the head of the battle-dealing spear;
I am the god who fashions fire [=thought] in the head.
Who spreads light in the assembly on the mountain?
Who foretells the ages of the moon?
Who tells of the place where the sun rests"?¹²

Campbell comments: "Much has been written around this poem and certain others of its kind, suggesting affinities of Druidic thought with Hinduism, Pythagoreanism and the later philosophy of the Irish Neoplatonist Scotus Erigena". In Campbell's interpretation, "what the poem renders in the way of a world philosophy is a form rather of pan-wizardism than of a developed mystical theology.... As one authority has put it,...'what is claimed for the poet is not so much memory of past existences as the capacity to assume all shapes at will.'"¹³

The poem inevitably reminds us of Yeats's "Fergus and the Druid", a similar version of Shamanism in the ancient Irish world:

Druid. Take, if you must, this little bag of dreams;
Unloose the cord, and they will wrap you round.

Fergus. I see my life go drifting like a river
From change to change; I have been many things –
A green drop in the surge, a gleam of light
Upon a sword, a fir-tree on a hill,

An old slave grinding at a heavy quern,
A king sitting upon a chair of gold –
And all these things were wonderful and great;
But now I have grown nothing, knowing all.
Ah! Druid, Druid, how great webs of sorrow
Lay hidden in the small slate coloured thing!

The mode of experience expressed in "Fergus and the Druid" goes back to that most primitive of all mystics, the shamanistic shape-shifter, but it is more than that, for it challenges the Western notion of the fixedness of identity – that whatever is is this way and no other. It puts the Real self back down into the substratum where all things meet, where identity can be grasped only symbolically, having no fixed ontological base. At the time of "Fergus and the Druid", Yeats did not have the cosmology he later developed. In his essay "Magic" he outlined some of his beliefs: "I believe in three doctrines, which have, as I think, been handed down from early times, and been the foundations of nearly all magical practices. These doctrines are:

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

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

(3) That this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols." 14

Let us note several characteristics of the above. First, in terms of our usual rational object-relatedness, it is anti-rational. Secondly, it is given without explanation, that is, it is not tied to any view of the world or of man which explains it. It is simply arbitrarily believed. Now the impulse to justify our beliefs goes deep, and it did in Yeats. We know from his own words how far he went in trying to give support and credence to *A Vision*. Magic, therefore, is an almost blind assertion of what Yeats preferred to believe; only later would he attempt to find philosophical underpinnings for it. Later, similar ideas will have their

basis in his knowledge of Yoga. Yoga is not, however, simply an elaborated shamanism, according to those who have studied it; rather, it has lifted some elements which it has in common with the shamanistic tradition and assimilated them. The Shaman defeats his enemies by becoming many things, much as the Druid acts towards Fergus. But the Yoga finds himself able to be the other by virtue of identity with cosmic processes. Campbell illustrates that point from Shvetashvatara Upanishad:

You are the dark-blue bird and the green parrot with red eyes.
 You have the lightning as your child. You are the seasons and the seas.
 Having no beginning, you abide with all-pervadingness,
 Wherefrom all beings are born.¹⁵

As I have pointed out, Indian thought differs in one respect at least from that of the West in supposing a continuity between Self and Nature, Self and God. Instead of the Indo-European stress on the "otherness" of the object, we find stressed that the object and "I" are one. But as I grasp this identity between myself and the other, I also sense that our separateness is less important than our unity. The "Dance of Life" is the perception, experimentally, that I and the other "dance" within some larger context, the "ground" of our existence. The danger of course, as this perception is intensified, is that I will lose that special sense of individuality which has been the gift of Indo-European civilization.¹⁶ Yet at the same time, I profit by experiencing my mystical participation in the universe of being.

Towards the end of his life, Yeats moved steadily towards a cosmology which, like the Indian, grasped the essentials of the "Dance of Life". Comments in his late essays show us his changing views and provide a key for the interpretation of much of his late poetry. He became particularly conscious of the way in which Christianity, with its doctrine of Original Sin, had disrupted the sense of our participation in the Universe:

Saint Bernard...passed the Swiss Lakes with averted eyes... The Indian on the other hand approaches God through vision, speaks continually of the beauty and terror of the great mountains, interrupts his prayer to listen to the song of birds.... These things are indeed part of the splendor of that Divine Being. The first four Christian centuries shared his thought, Byzantine theologians... sang it too...so did those Irish monks who made innumerable poems about bird and beast.¹⁷

Even near the end of his life, Yeats saw the connection between the Irish material of his early poetry and his recent investigations into Asian thought. He feels that the West is now moving back into a new relationship with the East, finding in the East the common source of all that is greatest in our literary tradition:

Then I think of the sensuous deliberation Spenser brought into English literature, or the magic of *Christabel* or *Kubla Khan*, or the wise peddler in *The Excursion*, of Ahasuerus in *Hellas*, and wisdom, magic, sensation, seem Asiatic. We have borrowed directly from the East and selected for admiration or repetition everything in our own past that is least European, as though groping backward towards our common mother.¹⁸

In perhaps his most complete interweaving of the forms of Indian thought and the literary tradition of the West, he treats personality in the context of Indian ideas:

Personality is first of all the man as he has been made by his Karma; he is set in the external world because that, too, has been made by his Karma. Even though initiation be complete, his nature so gathered up into itself that he can create no new Karma, he must await the exhaustion of the old. In pure personality, seedless *Samadhi*, there is nothing but that bare "I am" which is Brahma. The initiate, all old Karma exhausted, is "the Human Form Divine" of Blake, that Unity of Being Dante compared to a perfectly proportioned human body; henceforth he is self-creating.¹⁹

This is a remarkable passage, for it preserves intact that universal ground of being which in Indian thought is Brahman and the personality which Yeats had tried to unite for years in a dialectic with the Divine Ground. It marks a new perception, which he carries into his late poetry. He has created for himself a new myth and tied it to the work of the greatest poets he knew.

In his later poetry, after more exposure to Indian thought, Yeats did not approach the matter of metamorphosis in quite the simple way he did in "Fergus and the Druid", though he did something similar in "Mohini Chatterji", written shortly before he met Purohit Swami. The Brahmin tells him to pray for nothing, only to say:

I have been a king.
I have been a slave,
Nor is there anything,
Fool, rascal, knave,
That I have not been.

In the next part of the poem, Yeats follows with a commentary on Mohini's words, introducing the idea of Eternal Recurrence:

Birth is heaped on birth...
 Birth hour and death hour meet,
 Or as great sages say,
 Men dance on deathless feet.

This is no longer an Irish idea but represents, as Coomaraswamy has put it, the "dance of life and death". But Yeats's use of Indian thought did not end here, for near the end of his life, especially after 1931, he came to have far more intimate knowledge of the most concrete of Indian beliefs, that based on Tantrism and its method, Yoga, which is a grasp of the Self and World through the experience of opposites. We must briefly summarize some basic Tantric beliefs, then see how they functioned in a selection of the late poetry of Yeats.

III. Śīva-Śakti and the Ground of Existence

Tantric ritual, particularly that of the "Lefthand way", has, according to all recent commentators, been misrepresented in the West and disparaged by reform Hindus in the East. Its use of the ritual of sexual reenactment, man-woman as Śīva-Śakti, providing a means of finding the Divine Self within, led to abuse on occasion, but the sense of the living vitality of the divine force is, as Zimmer points out, the central tradition of Indian religion. The Kundalini, which represents that divine force as it lies sleeping within the undivided man, is the centre of a symbolism which most effectively communicates the mode of man's relationship to the Divine.²⁰ But it is not a denial of the intricacies and necessities of man's life in the world. It provides instead a means of enhancing that life, bringing it to the fullness of knowledge, while maintaining one's course toward final liberation. Much of what is implied by the Tantric ritual is contained within the *Ten Principal Upanishads* which Yeats, with Purohit Swami, chose to translate. The sense of the symbolism is that of the life within. Zimmer has captured it well in describing an ancient statue of the goddess:

The artist's chisel has glided caressingly along this living organism, everywhere halting to record the infinitesimal form of some subtle nuance.... To render such a living contour map, the artist started from within: from the hidden well that, according to Hindu philosophy, sends life surging outward to create and sustain the masses and the limbs. He began, that is to say, with the intangible life-force (śakti), which is ever evolving and transforming itself into the phantasmagoria of the visible universe (māyā), ever creating and sustaining the macrocosm and its microcosmic part and counterpart, the human organism.²¹

As the words of the sage Uddalaka countlessly reiterate in the Cnandogya Upanishad, "Thou Art That", we continually experience a sense of this life force, but we must also note that the Self, which is the personal form of that divinity, is always like Brahman beyond our grasp. The world of Māyā remains simply because our faculties have no other world in which to work. The presence of the Self is affirmed by faith in those, like the guru, who have attained it, but to the one who still journeys toward it, it is beyond all the data he is able to examine. Māyā, therefore, is illusion but illusion in a special way. It is the illusion with which the individual must work on his way to liberation. The Śakti concept, in its inner presence as Kundalini, seems one of the clearest ways of grasping that human condition in relation to the divine.

It is difficult to know from the evidence just when Yeats began to grasp the concrete as opposed to the abstract aspects of Indian thought, perhaps between the time he met Tagore and the days he spent with Purohit Swami.²² More likely, the enormous fund of information Yeats had on all esoteric subjects was brought into focus just prior to the time of his meeting Swami, and that meeting gave his knowledge the sense of order which he needed. Most importantly, the kind of knowledge which Yoga provided was quite opposed to the abstractions of Vedanta which he had earlier found offensive. Actually the various kinds of Yoga and Tantric Yoga in particular furnished a view of reality to which Yeats's own system could be easily adapted. In fact, Indian thought in many respects went Yeats one better in the very direction he was going. Particularly, it allowed for the understanding of how political thought, social thought, ancient traditions, one's former actions and non-actions, repressions, ancestral experience, and the potential for new experiences were encompassed by the ancient Yoga system. Even primary and antithetical had a place. The one difficult point for agreement between Yeats and Indian thought was that of the place of the individual. Joseph Cambell has gone too far, perhaps, in his view of how Indian thought denies a place to growth, progress, and individuality. Certainly Yeats opposed his own sense of individuality to the Asiatic Vast Immensities. But even here there is a way out of the seeming contradiction. Indian thought holds that the individual, what we know as the "I", has no ontological significance. It is illusion. But it has enormous "psychological" significance, for it is a psycho-experimental *datum*, one with which the experiencing person must cope. In fact,

there is an entire code of rules and laws which help the individuality. Self-experience in the Western sense has little value in Indian thought, but practically speaking the gap is not so wide as it at first appears.

Yeats found his most bizarre expression of this new myth in the Crazy Jane poems, but similar attitudes occur throughout the late poems. In effect, we have the equation One=Many, rather than Imagination=Reality. Crazy Jane sees her own experience differently than the romantic would. Though she acted individually, for her own good ends, the sense of reality about her relation to Jack the Journeyman is less important in many ways than the participation of all phenomena in a world which is prior to them all, caught nicely in the refrain, "All things remain in God." The same point of view is used in "Tom the Lunatic", which creates a common ground for experience and extends significant experience to all living creatures:

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 vigor of its blood;
 In that faith I live or die.

Certainly this verse is not wholly inconsistent with a Christian viewpoint. Yeats after all explained that Ribh was Christian except for his views on the Trinity. But it is a move towards the kind of cosmology with which historical Christianity has had little sympathy. Yeats was doing a curious thing during this period, which muddies the waters insofar as tracing influences goes. As his knowledge of Indian cosmology, symbolism, and psychology grows, he adapts this knowledge back into the material with which he began, the period of Irish myth. This move serves a double purpose. It allows him to exploit the real insights into non-dualistic Indian philosophy, and it enables him to convert ancient Irish mythology into a spokesman for a kind of perennial religion, crushed by the intellectual traditions which came out of European Christianity. Thus Amergin, Ribh, and even Cuchulain share common religious values, while Patrick becomes the spokesman for the patriarchal rationalism that eventually dominated Europe.

The specifically sexual content of Yeats's late poems also finds its meaning in Indian cosmology. Since no knowledge can develop until there is a knower and a known, we must always begin with two at the level of experience. For Yoga that two is Śiva-Śakti, the continuum and

the energy which awakens it to life.²³ Thus sexual intercourse has a special meaning quite distinct from its usual meaning in western culture. We have dynamic union and opposition. As Crazy Jane points out, "Fair needs foul." And as Tom puts it, looking to the birth of the world, "The stallion Eternity/Mounted the mare of Time,/Gat the foal of the world." Both here and in "Supernatural Songs" the problem of interpretation arises about what symbolism Yeats was using when he speaks of sexual activity in the godhead. Almost all of the occultisms which he knew suggest such an origin of the world.²⁴

Several other poems in this late period fall under a similar consideration, for example the group entitled "Three Bushes" and "The Wild Wicked Old Man". But instead of considering merely the content of these, I should like to reintroduce the notion of "manifestation", and its effects on point of view. We know from our literary experience subsequent to Yeats that fiction has begun to explore this world of "multiple selves". It is not unusual, of course, for modern writers to adopt different points of view with respect to different material. But Yeats has had a curious history in this respect. He is an autobiographical poet, and when he writes other than from inner emotion, subjectively that is, he tries for an objectivity based on his *persona* or mask, the Phase Three Primary man. His symbolic system, *A Vision*, also provided a measure of objectivity, but as in the early forms of those poems, "Ego Dominus Tuus" or "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes", he constructs a scene with himself as spectator to the revelations. The Crazy Jane poems appear to be the first full-fledged effort of Yeats to enter alternative experiences, experiences not clearly autobiographical or Vision-based. Tom the Lunatic is another attempt to give voice to sentiments for which Yeats had no clear precedent in his own poetry. One could say that Yeats seemed to find it easier to surrender personality as old age approached, and though he continued to return to his basic themes, he also continued these experiments.

In his discussion of Yeats's late period, Ellmann points out that Yeats was trying to get through the "easy insincerities" which he had adopted as a mask to conceal his fanaticism on certain subjects. In that search for "bare soul", Yeats sought widely for a *persona* to help him express his "elemental passions". This interpretation is based on the romantic notion of a "real Self" that can be discovered by stripping away the layers created by civilization and custom. But the *personas*

expressed in "Wild Wicked Old Man", in "Crazy Jane", and in "Tom the Lunatic" are also consistent with a changing view of reality. "All things remain in God" is the background song, and the reduced tyranny of empirical experience allows Yeats greater flexibility in choosing poetic subject matter. It is similar to the attitude that Yeats expressed in "Lapis Lazuli", one which seeks out a ground for experience which is more real than the individual events in which we are isolated.²⁵

"The Wild Wicked Old Man" is not simply the celebration of an ancient and febrile lust. It is the old play between primary and antithetical cast in a new and more concrete mold. It is also a feeding back of attitudes which Yeats acquired in reading Indian thought and from his contact with Purohit Swami, acknowledging the two roads, the Right hand and the Left hand way.²⁶ Let us recall in this context that Tantrism and its associated method, Yoga, speak of actualizing latencies rather than repressing them. It cannot therefore be an act of the Primary will, which seeks simply to repress experience. The old man is presented to us as an individual who has surrendered his "Will", "Who travels where God wills." And all he asks is that his life of fulfillment be continued. Further, he offers the fruit of his wisdom and his reflection, accepting implicitly the fact that "all things remain in God." The young girl cannot share his world and rejects him for "the old man in the skies" — our sky god, of course, who demands surrender to the objective. The old man then turns to the girls at the seashore, who "understand the dark". Now that dark is a constant presence in modern literature, for it defines what Western myths have left out, though in terms of Western myth it cannot be made explicit. They are part of the dance which "men dance on deathless feet", the dance of life and death and love, which the first young girl could not understand. The knowledge the old man brings is equivalent to that first stage of Hindu wisdom, that all life is by its nature suffering, something the "warty lads" have not discovered yet.²⁷ In effect, the old man has decided to take the Left Hand Way (the low road) and leave the purging to "the old man in the skies" when his time shall come, "for all things end in God."

"The Three Bushes" uses a common fictional technique, breaking down a human situation into a number of characters and allowing their interplay to suggest the wholeness of experience, which cannot be conceptually synthesized. Love consists of a number of elements some

of which are stable, some, unfortunately, temporary. The man's love is divided between the Lady and the Chambermaid, between idealized aesthetic love and passionate sensual experience, brought to him by the Chambermaid. In the end, of course, after his death in the race, all three become a common source or ground for the rose bushes, which intertwine so that none can tell what the origin is.

At the root of Yeats's search into personality and individuality is the attempt to find a principle which will "connect". Here he had to go beyond the Romantics, for Nature in the romantic sense had proved insufficient. Indian thought furnished a more adequate symbolism to explain Yeats's own sense of the world, for here man and world are both "*Prakṛti*", Nature. "The "I" who thinks has been a stumbling block for the West, whereas for the East the problem of our deeper identity is solved by losing the self-conscious person. The Self for the Indian, in the sense of *atman*, is "a continuum which exists within and without things."²⁸ Why then the sense of separation, since all things share consciousness? Because to the degree that the "other" becomes an object of our thought, it is no longer part of our consciousness. Thus the beginning of man's life in the world is his separation from the continuum of consciousness through taking thought. Yeats certainly was reluctant to give up this individuality, and he rejected all primary notions of surrendering individuality to another not oneself. But that problem differs in the focus of Indian experience. The "I" in Indian thought is taken to be the "knot" which ties together different universal faculties or energies in indefinite space as particularized existence. For the moment we should not stress the "absolute" nature of the Soul, the only absolute to which man has access,²⁹ but rather that notion of "knot", the tying together of a "bundle" of faculties. The individual seeking enlightenment penetrates that bundle, discovers its functions and its parts, and realizes existentially the temporariness of the knot. He finds himself at the "point limit" or *bindu*, which is the point at which the particular manifestation that is my thinking self enters the world and through which I will be withdrawn.³⁰ Yoga method consists in meditation and exercises which bring under the control of knowledge the various aspects of this particularized existence, so that in saying "not this, not that", we may find the true Self and be liberated. Once again, we find a sense of the substratum, the *urgrund*, the ground of experience, from which all takes its origin in

multiplicity. Many of these basically Indian views are converted by Yeats into early Irish experience from Ribh the hermit, on the grounds that early Irish experience must have been like the Indian before Christianity distorted it.

Western culture had its origin, according to Yeats, with the measurements of Pythagoras and the images of Phidias. But in that same world was born the patriarchal godhead which made reason the measure of all. Ribh denounces this heresy against perennial theology and asserts that natural and supernatural are based on the same principle, "with the self-same ring are wed." The Supernatural Songs express that sense of the ground of existence symbolized, because Ribh is a Christian, as God. As he says in "Ribh in Ecstasy", "My soul had found/All happiness in its own cause or ground." Similarly, the difficulties of finding the ultimate self are noted in "Ribh denounces Patrick"; in a world of multiplicity, "all must copy copies". Yet those "that run in couples", share something of the godhead. The emergence and disappearance of being depend upon the point, the *bindu*, which is now "The Needle's Eye", the point through which all being comes and into which it disappears:

All the stream that's roaring by
 Came out of a needle's eye;
 Things unborn, things that are gone,
 From needle's eye still goad it on.

"Meru" is a proper capstone to this series, for it stresses finally the illusion implicit in man's life in the world:

Civilization is hooped together, brought
 Under a rule, under the semblance of peace
 By manifold illusion; but man's life is thought,
 And he, despite his terror, cannot cease
 Ravening through century after century,
 Ravening, raging, and uprooting that he may come
 Into the desolation of reality.

For Indian thought the arts which govern civilization are not, as they have so often been thought to be in the West, a fixed part of natural law, discoverable by science or reason. The laws of ethics, of business practices, even the laws of love and sex are regulated by rules that are themselves a part of *maya*, the world of illusion. The way to peace, it would appear, is through detachment from the "sins" of aggression, greed, and pride. The way of the West on the other hand has been the

way of the nomadic Aryan, whose philosophy of war and aggression has been the spur to civilization. Yet Egypt and Rome have fallen, and the sage who sits in the snow on Meru knows that all cycles must roll around again — clearly the philosophy of the goddess.

Footnotes

1. The triumph of monotheism in the West, especially in its three great forms, Hebrew, Christian, and Moslem, relegated earlier forms of religious practice to the limbo of "folk tale". Alain Danielou questions the superiority of Monotheism; he sees it rather as a special kind of religious practice. "Monotheism is always linked with a culture, a civilization. It is not through its forms but in spite of them that gifted individuals may reach spiritual attainment. We shall see that monotheism is the projection of the human individuality into the cosmic sphere, the shaping of 'god' to the image of man. Hence the monotheist commonly visualizes his 'god' as an anthropomorphic entity who shares his habits, patronizes his customs, and acts according to his ideals. Religion becomes a means of glorifying his culture or his race, or of expanding his influence." (*Hindu Polytheism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), p. 10. This view is supported in many ways by Joseph Campbell in *Masks of God; Occidental Mythology* (New York: The Viking Press, 1959). See also Heinrich Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955).
2. See Part I of Campbell for a discussion of the mother goddess. Apparently one important distinction between civilizations, which determines whether they will be exclusive and patriarchal or inclusive and matriarchal, is whether they are nomadic or agricultural. The Irish folklore that Yeats discovered in Sligo is associated with "place", and may go back to the same roots which brought the goddess to power in Indian. See also, Zimmer, and Danielou (note I above).
3. Occultisms in the West appear to have a similar relationship to the prevailing orthodoxy as Tantrism does to Hindu Orthodoxy. Tantrism is called by Bachchan "Hindu Occultism". (H.R. Bachchan, *Yeats and Occultism*). The Hebrew scholar G.G. Scholem shows that the Cabbalah functioned as an alternative to the rationalism of orthodox Rabbinical Judaism. Furthermore, the treatment in the Cabbalah of the Shekinah, or face of God, as a female element of the deity allies it with other occultisms which attempt to return the female principle to God. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1941) and *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (Schocken Books, 1965). One of the important sources of Cabbalistic writing in the Middle Ages was Abraham Abulafia. Scholem refers to Abulafia's work as "a Judaized version of Yoga". The difference between occultism and orthodoxy is often the difference between rational knowledge and an experimental knowledge which attempts to transcend subject and object.
4. Leo Frobenius, *Indische Reise* (Berlin: Verlag von Reimar Hobbing, 1931) pp.21-25. Quoted in Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Oriental Mythology*, pp.153-154. Frobenius says about the ancient neolithic culture: "...discoveries show that a brilliant cultural life has animated the world from of yore, beyond the pale of the ruins of the higher cultures. ...I would call this great group of cultures 'the invisible counterplayers' in the history of the culture of mankind."
5. Scholars generally agree that this union of opposites is one of the central tenets of Indian religion. Danielou says "...divinity has been defined as 'that in which opposites coexist.'"
6. Campbell, *Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, pp.25-26.
7. A number of studies have been done of Yeats's knowledge and use of Indian ideas. Two are book length and rather thorough. Both demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt that Yeats knew a great deal about Indian ideas and that he used them extensively though indirectly. Harbans Rai Bachchan's study (originally a dissertation under T.R. Henn) has a good discussion of Yeats's use of Indian thought and an analysis of *The Herne's Egg*, Yeats's

- most explicit use of Indian ideas. N. Guha wrote a dissertation under the direction of Richard Ellmann. The work is thorough and interesting and is available from University Microfilms. (N. Guha, *W.B. Yeats: An Indian Approach*, 1967).
8. Yeats apparently arrived at a knowledge of Tantrism late in life, though his theosophical dabblings brought him very close to essentially Tantric ideas. After the works of Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe) began to be published it is likely that Yeats gained very specific direct and indirect (through friends) knowledge of Tantrism. Avalon's *Principles of Tantra* (London, 1914) was in Yeats Library. See Bachchan, p.140 n.
 9. W.B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions* (New York: Collier Books, 1961) p.429.
 10. Joseph Campbell has written extensively in *Masks of God* about the indigenous elements of Western culture. The connections between, for example, Irish and Indian art and ideas are quite startling. See also Henrich Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, Chapters II, III, and IV.
 11. W.B. Yeats, *The Ten Principal Upanishads* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1937) "Introduction," p.11.
 12. Campbell, *Occidental Mythology*, p.297.
 13. *Ibid.*, p.298.
 14. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions*, p.28.
 15. Campbell, *Occidental Mythology*, p.298.
 16. Campbell seems irrevocably committed to Western notions of "individuality" and assumes that "matriarchal religion" must necessarily create a climate of static fixed forms or absolute determinism. At times he steps away from that point to see the difficulties within Indo-Aryan and other Indo-Europeans civilizations, but generally he is pushing a thesis which holds the superiority of Western forms. Nevertheless, the material for a quite different conclusion seems to be present in his work.
 17. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions*, p.431.
 18. *Ibid.*, p.432-433
 19. *Ibid.*, p.482-483
 20. The classical source for understanding Kundalini is the book *Serpent Power* by Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe) (Madras India: Ganesh and Co., 1964 First edition, 1918). Kundalini is the goddess Devi (Sakti) seen as a coiled serpent in the lowest bodily centre (the mulhadra, between anus and genitals): "She is aroused in that Yoga which is named after her." "Kundalini is the Divine Cosmic Energy in Bodies." The goal of the Yogi is to raise Kundalini, forcing her to ascend through the cakras (bodily centres) to the highest centre in the brain, thus uniting spiritual force with cosmic energy. See also Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1970), and M. Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality, and Freedom* (Princeton: University Press, 1969), pp.245 ff.
 21. Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, p.129.
 22. See H.R. Bachchan, *Yeats and Occultism*, Chapter IV, "Purohit Swami and the Upanishads".
 23. See Danielou, p.256. He traces the history of the gradual assimilation by the Aryan Vedas of indigenous elements having their origins in worship of the mother goddess. This assimilation finally stabilized as Śakti worship. Śakti is seen as balanced with her consort Siva in an eternal sexual embrace generating the world.
 24. The most difficult argument to counter in tracing Yeats's sources is the assumption that we can trace his ideas more readily to occultisms, to Blake, or to other esoteric sources than we can to Indian thought. I argue the importance of Indian thought to Yeats on two grounds: a. It represented for the first time a coherent cosmology which helped Yeats tie up the loose ends and give him more confidence in his own system. b. The method of Yoga is psychoexperimental rather than rational or gnostic, so that it answered Yeats's needs for something "more concrete".
 25. See Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: the Man and the Masks* (New York: E.P. Dutton Co., 1948), p.274. It is interesting to note that Yeats was reading D.H. Lawrence at this time and that Lawrence was now beginning to get into the study of the Cakras. See William York Tindall, *D.H. Lawrence and Susan his Cow* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1939).

26. The Right Hand Way and the Left Hand Way are different routes to the same goal, liberation. The Right Hand Way is the more spiritual and ascetic (and more orthodox). The Left Hand Way, on the other hand, has as its cardinal principle that liberation is to be gained through enjoyment, e.g. "Enjoyment is the grasping of the form of what is perceptible" (Danielou, p.383). The Left Hand Way is usually associated with service to the goddess.
27. See Danielou, p.6. He divides Hindu philosophy into three parts or "outlooks": (1) the experimental outlook and its corroborating method, logic, which envisages the 'impermanent' or destructible form of things; (2) the cosmological outlook and its corroborating method, direct supramental perception, or Yoga, which studies the 'enduring' or permanent laws of things; and (3) the metaphysical outlook or Vedanta and its corroborating method, the dialectic and semantic study of language, which tries to grasp the nature of the changeless substratum of all forms and laws." [N.B. Yeats first encountered number (3) and had much trouble with abstraction. Tantra combines mainly (1) and (2), more congenial for a poet.]
28. Danielou, p.18.
29. *Ibid.*, p.19.
30. *Ibid.*