

THE POETRY OF W.B. YEATS AND ZEN MEDITATION

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CHAPTER I

THE INFLUENCE OF MEDITATION ON YEATS' POETRY

Meditation intrigued Yeats. After his intensive involvement in the order of the Golden Dawn in 1890, Yeats practiced meditation because of his belief in its potential power to awaken his deeper Self. After his break with the Golden Dawn, his study of diverse methods of meditation continued, and in 1931 he came to read The Secret of the Golden Flower, a book of Chinese meditation. In his Memoirs, Yeats himself reveals his debt to meditation: "I learned a practice, a form of meditation that has perhaps been the intellectual chief influence on my life up to perhaps my fortieth year" (27). The impact of meditation is reflected in his major poems.

Some scholars have noted the influence of meditation on Yeats' poetry and tried to interpret the poems in the context of meditation. Louis Martz, George Bornstein, and Jane Gerety argue that many of Yeats' poems are patterned after the process of meditation. Yet their studies show no consensus as to what kind of meditation Yeats follows for the model of his poetic structures. Western methods of meditation, romantic meditation, meditation on traditional symbols, Tarot meditation, and symbolic ritual meditation have been recognized as possible models for the structure of Yeats' poems. A brief survey of critical studies on Yeats' meditative poetry will help us to see a relationship between Yeats' poems and the procedures of diverse schools of meditation.

In The Poetry of Meditation, Louis Martz examines Yeats' poems in terms of the process of Western meditation.¹ After studying all the treatises on Western meditation published during the latter half of the sixteenth century, Martz identifies the fundamental procedure of meditation. According to Martz, the Western process of meditation consists of three steps, which he terms "composition," "analysis," and "colloquy." Martz says that such Yeats' poems as "Byzantium," "Sailing to Byzantium," "Coole Park, 1929," "Coole and Ballylee," or "The Tower" open with the description of a place which Martz expresses as "a composition of place." The physicality of the place evokes the poet's memory which constitutes the main concern of the poem. The second part of the poems deals with Yeats' intellectual evolution which the poet experiences through the "analysis" of his main concern. In the final parts of the poems, Yeats expresses a moment of illumination by achieving "Unity of Being." Martz links the moment with "colloquy" because it is the poet's answer to his conflicts.

George Bornstein sees Yeats' poems from the view point of transformed romantic meditation, and Meyer Abrams analyzes romantic meditative poems to extract his theory of the out-in-out pattern in "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric." Coleridge's "Eolian Harp" is an ideal poem to illustrate the out-in-out pattern: the poem begins by describing the landscape around the cottage (out), enters into meditation (in), and returns to the original scene (out). By modifying this theory, Bornstein identifies a three-part format of description-vision-evaluation in his Transformations of Romanticism in Yeats, Eliot, and Stevens. Bornstein writes: "I would substitute "vision" for "meditation" to emphasize the poem's structure as determined by

shifting mental modes from observation to increasingly active imagination and then to its subsidence in an interpretative conclusion" (50). Bornstein explains that mental action in "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" follows the program of description-vision-evaluation. The poem begins with a meditative description of the poet's present situation in the tower. The poem moves into a vision by summoning the images, "discoverers of forgotten truth," "companions," and "all things the delighted eye now sees." At the conclusion, the question, "what made us dream that he could comb grey hair?" leads the speaker to an evaluation.

Finally, in her unpublished doctoral dissertation, Poetry and Magic: A Study of Yeats' Poems of Meditation, Jane Gerety explicates Yeats' poems in terms of the three methods of meditation Yeats learned during his lifetime. The three methods of meditation, according to Gerety, are Meditation on traditional symbols, Tarot meditation, and Symbolic ritual meditation. She explains that the general structure of these methods of meditation is modeled on the three steps: 1) concentration on a geometric figure, or a symbolic scene, or a natural scene, 2) identification with certain images either natural or symbolic, 3) a spiritual realization. Gerety connects this tripartite process with the typical patterns of Romantic meditative poems:

This three-part structure--concentration on or interaction with an image, an enraptured moment, and a realization of the power to bless--constitutes the general form of Yeats's meditative poetry. This structure has obvious affinity with the greater Romantic lyric, which, in its typical out-in-out pattern, begins in observation, moves into vision, and ends

with evaluation. (158)

The three-part structures of "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes" and "Among School Children," as Gerety points out, loosely match the threefold procedure of meditation Yeats learned. The two poems begin with the meditator's concentration on certain images and move into the idea of interaction or identification with image and end with spiritual realization. The three-step process of these various meditations is conducive to a better understanding of Yeats' poems' meditative structures.

In addition to the influence of these methods of meditation on Yeats' poetry, in my view, such Yeats' poems as "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes," "Among School Children," and "Byzantium" reveal their debts to the Eastern method of meditation,² particularly Zen meditation. In this study, I will explore how the three poems mirror the essence of Zen meditation. Not only are the poems patterned after the progressive procedure of Zen meditation, but they also reflect the fundamental concerns of Zen meditation, such as the problem of duality, the concept of time, and an aspiration for freedom from the limitation of this life.³ These features of Zen meditation are expressed through the use of specific symbols, the implications of setting, and various poetic techniques. The purpose of this study is to provide another way to read the three poems by analyzing them in the context of Zen meditation.

CHAPTER II

ZEN MEDITATION AND SELF-AWAKENING

What is meditation? How does it work? And what is the ultimate purpose of meditation? A comprehensive knowledge of meditation is crucial to reading Yeats' meditative poems. In this chapter, I will first discuss the method of Zen meditation, which I believe, provides us with comprehensive and clear guidelines for reading some of Yeats' meditative poems. After exploring the nature of Zen meditation, I will also examine the purpose of Zen meditation. Although Zen meditation tells us that the aim of meditation lies in the realization of self-awakening, we need an in-depth discussion to come close to the concept of self-awakening, because it is a very complex state. An exploration of a meditative procedure, the workings of the mediative mind, and the idea of self-awakening will pave the way for a reading of Yeats' three meditative poems, "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes," "Among School Children," and "Byzantium."

Yeats' meditative poems can be best understood in the context of Oriental meditation. They reveal the essence of Eastern meditation: an aspiration for the state of Unity which exists beyond human language, intellect, and logic. There are a great many different schools of meditation in Oriental countries. Although each method is different from the other, depending upon the specific techniques of meditation such as the breath, visual images, Chakra Yoga, and mantra, they all share the

characteristic feature of Oriental meditation, a dwelling upon aconceptual states. In most cases, these various meditative schools refuse to disclose their own meditative systems to outsiders. One of the few methods to which we can get access is Zen meditation. Thanks to modern psychological studies of Zen meditation, we have come to understand how it operates in the human mind and what it strives for. A perusal of analyses of Zen meditation by psychologists and Buddhist scholars helps us to develop a more comprehensive picture of meditation.

What is Zen? In the first series of Essays in Zen Buddhism, D.T. Suzuki, who first introduced Zen Buddhism to Westerners, elucidates the meaning of Zen:

Zen in its essence is the art of seeing into the nature of one's own being, and it points the way from bondage to freedom. By making us drink right from the fountain of life, it liberates us from all the yokes under which we finite beings are usually suffering in this world. (13)

Thus, the ultimate purpose of Zen meditation constitutes no more than "seeing into the nature of one's own being" through mental concentration. According to Zen teaching, the successful contact with our own nature hidden in each of us, brings about salvation from the endless agony of human life. In order to help the meditator attain the goal of Zen, Zen Masters contrived the method of meditation.

There is no way of knowing the exact process of meditation unless we have a direct experience of meditation. Fortunately, however, we can indirectly participate in the meditative process and get a glimpse of it through an illustrated version of Zen meditation by Po-chang Huai-hai (720-814). He painted the process of Zen meditation on ten pictures

titled, "The Boy and the Ox"; each of them depicts the gradual development of the meditator's search for his own nature or Buddhahood. To explain the meaning of each picture, I will repeat the commentary of D.T. Suzuki and Willard Johnson, since both scholars in the first series of Zen Buddhism and Riding the Ox Home have already done an excellent job of revealing the meaning of each picture in relation to each stage of meditative development.

The ten paintings called "The Boy and the Ox" describe the allegorical progression of self-transformation in Zen Buddhist tradition. In these ten pictures, we see a boy who tries to find his lost ox. The boy symbolizes spiritual immaturity, and the ox symbolizes his inmost self.⁴ The first picture shows the boy trying to look for his ox, which has disappeared. As Willard explains, this points to the state of an immature man who is spiritually lost and confused. The second picture represents the boy's finding traces of the ox. By the aid of mental concentration, he finds the traces of the ox, his inmost self. The enormous power of the ox can be either destructive or constructive depending upon whether it can be disciplined. The third picture (Seeing the Ox), the fourth picture (Catching the Ox), the fifth five (Herding the Ox), and the sixth picture (Coming Home on the Ox's Back) show the progressive steps of the boy's attempts to meet, to train, and ultimately to reconcile himself with his inmost self. These stages indicate the meditator's step-by-step effort to reach oneness by reconciling the image of ox with his conscious psyche.

The seventh picture shows that the ox is forgotten, leaving the man alone. This expresses the boy's success of integrating his inmost nature into his consciousness. At this stage, the boy becomes a man as

a result of his spiritual maturity. The integration of one's inmost nature into the conscious psyche liberates one from the limitation of one's finite being. Jung's theory of the archetypes is of relevance to the idea of liberation. He writes:

If the translation of the unconscious into a communicable language is successful, it has a redeeming effect. The driving forces locked up in the unconscious are canalized into consciousness and form a new source of power. (315)

In the literature of Zen Buddhism, the experience of liberation or attaining a new source of power is called self-awakening.

The eighth picture depicts the most enigmatic stage, since it contains nothing: both the ox and the man are out of sight. The emptiness conveys the idea that all confusion is set aside, and serenity alone prevails. The state of Mu (nothingness) in the eighth painting well expresses the experience of mystical ecstasy. According to Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, the word, ecstasy, itself means driving a person out of (ek-) one's place (histanai). This word highlights the blissful moment of dissolving the antinomies. The emptiness also points to the moment of timelessness. From that moment on, there exists no form of dualism for the meditator. This mystical experience is always transmitted through a paradoxical expression.

The ninth picture expresses the man's return to the nature. In this scene, ox and person are still forgotten, but something has appeared: plum blossom, rock, and squat bamboo, beside a gently flowing stream. Here, according to Suzuki's commentary, the Man is integrated with nature, which is pure and immaculate. This shows that the man comes to see his original nature, which has never been defiled. The last

picture shows the man entering the City with Bliss-bestowing Hands. He comes to know who he really is and this knowledge of himself enables him to save people who suffer.

There is another picture in Zen meditation which symbolizes the dilemma of finding the ox. In this picture, we see a man who is looking for the ox which is already underneath him. This sums up the interplay between the boy and the ox, which symbolizes the relationship between such dichotomous elements as subject and object, and body and soul. In the beginning, according to Zen teaching, there is no such duality as the boy and the ox. However, one fails to see the unity between the boy and the ox due to one's deluding senses or the limitation of human language. So the man in the Zen picture is seeking for the ox while he himself is on it. Through meditation, he tries to reconcile the problem of duality to regain the state of unity. In a word, the ten pictures of Zen meditation represent a mental process of reconciling the antinomies in the human world to arrive at self-awakening. From the ten stages of Zen meditation, we come to understand how Oriental meditation works in terms of its motive, the symbolic significance of the boy and the ox, and meditative process, and its final aim.

For the convenience of my discussion, I will simplify the ten stages of Zen meditation to four which, I believe, cover all the important procedures in the meditation. The first step is confusion. Zen meditation begins with a sense of confusion, because the meditator realizes the state of spiritual confusion, chaos, and darkness from which he wants to escape. A sense of confusion results from the meditator's perception of duality. As long as we are under the influence of time, according to Eastern religious teaching,⁵ we are destined to be torn

between the two extremes such as the young and the old, body and soul, and so forth. The second step is immersion. In order to solve the problem, the meditator sets out on his meditative journey into his mind to search for clues. The meditator attempts to reconcile the antinomies of the world for himself because he learns that his confusion results from the duality of the world.

The third step is union or seeing the vision, which is followed by a mystical experience of the oneness of the antinomies. We should remember that Zen meditation is different from Yeats' system in that in the former, the union takes place between the subject (the boy) and the object (the ox), whereas, in the latter, the mystical marriage (between the abstract concepts such as intellect and love) takes place before the eye of the meditator. Eastern religions teach us that the state of union takes place only outside of time. The fourth stage is return; the meditator returns to his origin as a more mature person blessed with the power to save his fellow human beings.

To sum up, Meditation is a way of training mental concentration to raise one's consciousness from the lowest state of confusion (similar to the first phase of moon in Yeats' system of the Great Wheel) to the highest state of seeing the vision of unity (similar to the fifteenth phase), which exists beyond the influence of time. The highest state means self-awakening.

The ultimate purpose of Zen meditation constitutes a realization of self-awakening. But what is self-awakening? The idea of self-awakening is troubling because it exists beyond intellect, reason, and language. Zen meditation shows it takes place outside of time. It signifies the state of unity. And it is expressed through paradox. We

are unable to recognize any of these three concepts; they simply defy logical thinking. Although we cannot grasp the notion of self-awakening, we can get a feeling of what self-awakening possibly means. And we should study the implications of self-awakening from a religious view point, since self-awakening is a religious concept. All the great religions of the world involve the same kind of self-awakening in their final religious objective, although they use different expressions such as "enlightenment," "entering into the kingdom of heaven" or "meeting with God." A comparative study of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity reveals that they use the same concepts of unity, a timeless moment, and paradoxes to delineate the state of self-awakening or "meeting with God." This state is often discussed in terms of mystical tradition of religions. We can align Yeats' concept of Unity of Being with this line of mysticism, since it retains the same characteristic features of self-awakening.

In order to understand the implications of self-awakening, we should begin with a discussion of self. The Upanishads, the quintessence of Hindu doctrine, is the best source to explore the concept of self; it constitutes the record of human discovery of self. As Yeats writes in *A Vision*, he forms his concept of self from the Upanishads. According to the Upanishads, there are four types of self: (1) the physical self, (2) the self one can see in dream, (3) the self which exists in deep sleep, and (4) the self which exists beyond waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. The third state of self has something to do with the return to the source, to the root, to the ground of being. By analyzing Oriental meditative systems, Jung identifies the third self as the unconscious which contains archetypal memories of a forgotten

prehistoric past. Yeats calls these memories the Anima Mundi, which he defines as "a memory independent of embodied individual memories" in his Autobiographies.

After this comes the fourth state of self which is called pure (cosmic) consciousness, or the Great Self, existing beyond body and soul, feeling and thought, and even unconsciousness and time. In the Upanishads, the Great Self is called Brahman. Although no words can express what this Brahman is (it is nothing, and everything), it is related to the consciousness of unity. This unity constitutes the vision of Vedic man. By making a contact with this Great Self, the person awakes to his true being, resulting in self-awakening. When Socrates asks us to know ourselves, he means that we should know this Great Self. Karl Jaspers, one of the leading existentialist philosophers of modern times, in his Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus says: "Socrates' self-knowledge is the way to knowledge of God. Socrates saw that man can approach the divine only with a pure spirit, untainted by earthly passions" (18). Yeats himself writes about his understanding of the Self in his "The Mandukya Upanishad":

In its fourth state, symbolical of or relevant to the Self, the mind can enter all or any other of the previous states at will; joyous, unobstructed, it can transform itself, dissolve itself, create itself. ... It is the old theme of philosophy, the union of Self and Not-Self, but in the conflagration of that union there is, as in the biblical vision, 'the form of the fourth.' (477)

Yeats' meditative poems are his manifestations of his aspiration for meeting with this Great Self. Bernard Levine comes close to defining the concept of Yeatsian self. In The Dissolving Image, the spiritual-

esthetic development of W.B. Yeats (sic), Levine states: "The Self represents the one perfect symbol the poet can evolve: the selfless image the poet makes of himself. But such a symbol necessarily lies beyond grasp of the intellective or the poetic imagination" (24).

Through a process of a mental concentration, Levine adds, Yeats came to "experience the ultimate reality in which antinomies in human experience dissolve. The result is an absolute, transpersonal self-awareness" (25). Levine's expressions of "selfless image" or "transpersonal self-awareness" accord well with the religious meaning of self.

What then happens to the person who experiences the great Self, resulting in self-awakening? Interestingly enough, as I have briefly mentioned, all the great religions share common ground in terms of defining the state of meeting the Great Self, although they use different expressions. In Hinduism, the person who gains self-awakening is called Purusha. Bede Griffiths, Benedictine monk and scholar of comparative religions, in Marriage of East and West, explains who Purusha is:

Purusha is the cosmic person, who contains the whole creation in himself and also transcends it. He is the spiritual principle, which unites body and soul, matter and conscious intelligence in the unity of a transcendent consciousness. (71)

The unity of transcendent consciousness indicates the ultimate reality or enlightenment. In Buddhism, as D.T. Suzuki, one of the premier Zen masters, explains in his The First Series of Essays in Zen Buddhism:

Enlightenment we can thus see is an absolute state of mind in which no 'discrimination'...takes place, and it requires a great mental effort to realize this state of viewing all things 'in one thought.' (125)

We also find the same concept of unity in the Gnostic tradition of Christianity. As Harold Bloom points out in Yeats, Yeats was "always a kind of Gnostics," whose salvation "from the start lay in the encounter with the Other, or daimon as Yeats named him (46-47). We see the concept of unity coming from one of the apocryphal gospels. In the Gospel of Thomas 22, we read: "When will the kingdom of God come?" and the answer is given "When the two shall be one, when that which is without is as that which is within, and the male and the female shall be one." Likewise, we can connect Yeats' concept of the "Unity of Being" with this religious tradition of seeking the state of oneness. In Yeats' poems, "Unity of Being" is expressed through the symbolic image of the Dancer. In Romantic Image, Frank Kermode precisely characterizes the image of the Dancer:

For this Dancer is one of Yeats's great reconciling images,
containing life in death, death in life, movement and stillness,
action and contemplation, body and soul. (48)

Although Kermode defines the image of the Dancer as a Romantic image, the concept of unity (symbolized by "the Dancer") already existed in the tradition of the great religions.

When we come to the supreme reality, the Great Self, we come upon paradox, because at this point all distinction between subject and object disappears. This is the cosmic unity, one yet manifold, unseen but seeing, unheard but hearing, unperceived but perceiving, unknown but knowing. In a similar vein, Gautama says, trying to teach the meaning of enlightenment, that "nirvana is neither an existent thing nor an unexistent thing." Fudaishi, a Japanese Zen master, also translates his experience of self-awakening into a paradoxical language:

Empty-handed I go and yet the spade is in my hand
 I walk on foot, and yet on the back of an ox I am riding:
 When I pass over the bridge,
 Lo, the water floweth not, but the bridge doth flow. (115)

As a means of conveying the state of self-awakening, paradoxes seem to be apt, first because the word-formation itself ("god is all-being and no-being") shows the integration of two conflicting concepts, and secondly, because paradox carries the idea that mystical experience is incompatible with logical thinking. As D.T. Suzuki says in The First Series of Essays in Zen Buddhism, the experience of transcending one's finite condition is "outside the ken of logical reasoning" (129). For these reasons, mystics employ paradoxes to express the state of self-awakening or enlightenment. In the same manner, we can understand why the last parts of Yeats' meditative poems are filled with the language of paradoxes such as "they were dead yet flesh and bone," "death-in-life and life-in-death," and "an agony of trance."

Why does the meditator strive for unity? Just as both Eastern and Western religious leaders emphasize the importance of achieving unity, so they agree with each other in explaining the reason for it. D.T. Suzuki elucidates:

In fact, our logical as well as practical consciousness is too given up to analysis and ideation; that is to say, we cut up realities into elements in order to understand them; but then they are put together to make the original whole, its elements stand out too conspicuously defined, and we do not view the whole in one thought. (125)

In The Marriage of East and West, Bede Griffiths provides us with a similar explanation:

Human reason is a discriminating power. It is the power to distinguish, to analyze, to objectify, that is to make an 'object' distinct from the 'subject.' This is the great divider, which separates man from nature and man from himself. It creates a world of duality and destroys the original paradise in which man had lived in harmony with nature and himself. But when reason has done its work of division and separation it can return to itself, it can re-discover its original unity, it can learn to know the Self. (64)

According to the teachings of the world's great religions, the state of unity takes place outside of time. As to the moment of timelessness, D.T. Suzuki succinctly remarks:

When time-conception enters, enlightenment, which is negatively the dispelling of Ignorance, loses all its character of finality, and we begin to look around for something going beyond it. The Fetters [the trap of time] would ever be tightening around us, and the Defilements would be our eternal condition. (130)

That is, time conception has something to do with limitation, and self-awakening points to freedom from the restriction of time.

An acute sense of the problem by the meditator touches off a meditative voyage. The problem which I call confusion has also something to do with a concept of duality, or the limitation of time. In this world, we cannot satisfy both body and soul at the same time. The restriction of time divides the young and the old, which causes pain to us. Meditator begins meditation in an attempt to solve this sense of

confusion. The solution lies in the realization of the union between body and soul, the young and the old, and intellect and love. The achievement of union or seeing the vision of the moment of union invites self-awakening. Eventually, the meditator returns to his world as seer. Yeats' three meditative poems reflect a comprehensive picture of Zen meditation by incorporating the operation of meditative mind, the four representative stages of meditation, the problem of duality and time, and the implication of self-awakening.

CHAPTER III

YEATS' POETRY OF MEDITATION

A close reading of "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes" "Among School Children" and "Byzantium" reveals that these poems reflect the essence of Zen meditation. The poems are generally patterned after the progressive steps of Zen meditation, and mirror the poet's aspiration for the achievement of unity to free from the limitation of the life which reminds us of the main goal of Zen meditator's.

Let us begin our discussion with an analysis of "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes." We first need to understand Yeats' use of setting in his meditative poems, which is slightly different from that in the seventeenth century or romantic meditative poems. All meditative poems begin with a specific place or symbolic landscape, which Louis Martz calls "a composition of place" in The Poetry of Meditation. All the great romantic meditative poems, as Meyer Abrams points out, also begin with the description of outside scenery. In a similar vein, many Modern meditative poems set out on their meditative journey from a particular place. Yeats' meditative poems are no exception to that principle. This is not simply a rule, but a symbolic expression of the first meditative stage. The physicality of landscape symbolizes the limited state of the human being from which the meditator tries to escape to attain the experience of the unlimited state (or Unity of Being). In line with this symbolic concept, Yeats' meditation starts with

a specific place, "On the grey rock of Cashel." However, Yeats' choice of setting is distinctive in the sense that his setting is associated with the image of union which involves the goal of his meditative journey. This strategy recalls the Zen picture in which the man looks upwards searching for the ox which is already underneath himself. Yeats' use of setting may signify his artistic rendering of the human dilemma: the truth is always near men.

We see that the setting of this poem is closely related to the ultimate theme of the poem: the union between dualities. Yeats chooses "the grey rock of Cashel" as a place for meditation because the ancient stone retains the image of union. In "Cashel Revisited: W.B. Yeats: 'The Double Vision of Michael Robartes'," Carmel Jordan maintains that "the grey rock of Cashel" signifies the cultural union (16). Jordan explains Cashel as a landscape symbolic of union because the magnificent Cashel round tower epitomizes not only the union between soaring human imagination and artistic perfection, but also the union of pagan and Christian religion. The image of union reflected in the ancient stone can be connected to the dissolution of duality which the poet tries to achieve in his mind through meditation.

The first stage of meditation begins with the sense of confusion. Similarly, "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes" begins with the state of utter confusion and spiritual darkness:

On the grey rock of Cashel the mind's eye
Has called up the cold spirits that are born
When the old moon is vanished from the sky
And the new still hides her horn

This is the scene of elemental chaos where total darkness prevails and no living creature exists. So Yeats continues:

Under blank eyes and fingers never still

The particular is pounded till it is man.

When had I my own will?

O not since life began.

The poet as the meditator tries to come to terms with his mental chaos, confusion, and spiritual darkness. His mental chaos is also related to the lifeless state which deprived him of his will. His rebirth as a new person with his own will, will enable him to illuminate darkness, and set aside his confusion. Until then, the state of chaos goes on:

Constrained, arraigned, baffled, bent and unbent

By these wire-jointed jaws and limbs of wood,

Themselves obedient,

Knowing not evil and good;

Here we have the state of confusion which is associated with existence without either will ("obedient"), or consciousness ("Knowing not evil and good"). The poet maintains his living death, because the cold spirits "do not even feel, so abstract are they, / So dead beyond our death."

The second section of the poem starts with the meditator's search for a clue to solve his confusion, a search which I call immersion into his mind, and ends with seeing the vision which can be paralleled with the third stage in Zen meditation. Here, the poet first comes to see the faint trace of the unified image he needs for his rebirth as a new man. First, the poet sees "A Sphinx," and "A Buddha," then the image of the Dancer between the two. In his mind, he tries to piece together the exact meaning of what each symbol represents. Gradually he comes to

grasp the implication of what each symbol represents. In the beginning of section two, Yeats leads us to a symbolic landscape within the human mind:

A Sphinx with woman breast and lion paw,

A Buddha, hand at rest,

Hand lifted up that blest;

Here, "A Sphinx," as the Grecian image of the female Sphinx, represents Western civilization (reason, intellect); "A Buddha" Eastern civilization (intuition, love). In a sense, "A Sphinx" is itself a unified creature in that it consists of man, woman and animal. Likewise, "A Buddha" also signifies an integration of opposites by his symbolic gesture, "hand at rest,/ Hand lifted up," meaning yin and yang. However, the meditator is puzzled, not knowing what these two enigmatic images symbolize.

Next he sees a girl who is dancing "right between these two." Although he thinks he finds a clue in these puzzling images that will solve his confusion, he does not know how to piece them together. This reminds us of the boy who struggles to catch and tame the ox after finding its trace. For the poet, the three images highlight the un-solid nature of imaginary state:

Although I saw it all in the mind's eye

There can be nothing solidier till I die;

He says that he "saw it by the moon's light,/ Now at its fifteenth night." According to Yeats' esoteric book, A Vision, the fifteenth night indicates loss of conflict. Here, the meditator finds another clue to solve the problem of these puzzling images. That is, he sees the possibility of reconciling the two images through the image of the

Dancer. He gradually comes near to the heart of the symbol by going back to each of the three images:

her eyes lit by the moon
Gazed upon all things known, all things unknown,
In triumph of intellect
With motionless head erect.

Here, the meditator sees the intellectual aspect of the Sphinx, which embodies Western civilization. He returns to the image of the Buddha,

That other's moonlit eyeballs never moved,
Being fixed on all things loved, all things unloved,

At this point, the meditator also comes to catch the symbolic meaning of Buddha, love, representing Eastern civilization. What he finds next, naturally enough, is the image of the dancing girl who reconciles the duality of intellect and love. Love and intellect should be integrated, because love without intellect is fertile but blind; intellect without love is intelligent but sterile. The harmonious reconciliation of the two invites the power of salvation. The Dancer, as I have suggested in chapter II, perfectly conveys the idea of fusion between dichotomous factors such as movement and stasis, and subject and object. Step by step, the meditator comes close to the state of unmoved moving which is nicely expressed by the image of a spinning-top.

For what but eye and ear silence the mind
With the minute particular of mankind?
Mind moved yet seemed to stop
As 'twere a spinning-top

At last, the eighth stanza of the second section highlights the experience of oneness:

In contemplation had those three so wrought
 Upon a moment, and so stretched it out
 That they, time overthrown,
 Were dead, yet flesh and bone.

Yeats's word choice, "time overthrown," suggests that the operation of the meditator's mind should be free from the limitation of finite being. Only in a state free from time can the meditator attain the mystical marriage of dichotomous factors. The Sphinx, the Buddha, and the Dancer transcend time ("time overthrown") and overcome the duality of life and death ("they were dead, yet flesh and bone"). Through this paradoxical expression, like the mystics of the great religions, Yeats indicates the blissful state of union between intellect and love, and death and life.

The third section of "The Double Vision" is loosely similar to the fourth stage in Zen meditation in terms of dealing with the meditator's return to the mundane world. The return stage in Zen meditation points to meditator's success in transforming the experience of union into self-awakening, but this poem demonstrates that the meditator cannot translate the vision into his enlightenment. The vision of the Dancer instead disorients him. Initially, the contact with the vision allows the meditator to experience physical exhilaration: "A crazy juice that makes the pulses beat." But such a joyous moment is completely depreciated since it is linked with his frustration :

As though I had been undone
 By Homer's Paragon

His frustration is followed by his experience of mental lapse:

"To such a pitch of folly I am brought." After return, he finds himself again being trapped between duality:

Being caught between the pull

Of the dark moon and the full

Although the meditator ultimately fails to achieve spiritual freedom, his glimpse of the vision of the Dancer has given him an expansion of his consciousness:

The commonness of thought and images

That have the frenzy of our western seas.

This commonness is completely different from the commonness of the meditator before experiencing the vision, because it has "the frenzy of our western seas," which is powerful enough to sweep the earth. With his new awareness of the tension between oneness and duality, the meditator arranges his experience in a song.

Lastly, Yeats' employment of poetic techniques in "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes" seems to be related to the meditative scheme of the poem. The major concern of Zen meditation is to reconcile the dichotomous factors which are represented by the boy and the ox. The accomplishment of the union of the dual elements leads the meditator to reach "self-awakening." Throughout the poem, we see the meditator trying to fuse such antinomies as love and intellect through the image of the Dancer.

Yeats' line scheme symbolically suggests the interplay between the duality throughout the poem. That is, every stanza (except the first) consists of two long lines and two short lines. As Fung Yu-Lan writes in A Short History of Chinese Philosophy, in Oriental philosophy, the antinomies of the world are represented by Yin and Yang. When the

two are expressed through a sign, Yin takes a short line (--) and Yang a long line (----). Yin, as the feminine principle, is regarded as softness, quiescence, and cold, whereas Yang, as a masculine principle, is considered as hardness, movement, and heat. Yeats' line scheme in the poem may remind one of this interplay between Yin and Yang. In addition, when we look into the long lines, pursuant to the concept of Yang, in most case, they represent movement (for example, "The particular is pounded," "Constrained, arraigned, baffled, bent and unbent," "I suddenly saw," "danced her life away," "One lashed her tail," "fling into my meat.") On the other hand, the short lines, in keeping with the concept of Yin, usually signify quiescence (for example, "So dead beyond our death," "For now being dead it seemed," "With motionless head erect," "Were dead yet flesh and bone.") The interaction between Yang and Yin, recalling us to the image of the boy and the ox, seems to symbolize the process of meditation, through which the meditator attempts to reconcile the duality of this world in order to reach the state of self-awakening.

"Among School Children" constitutes another great example of meditative poetry. While "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes" mainly deals with the essential stages of meditation, "Among School Children" concerns the fundamental problems faced by the the meditator: the concept of time and the problem of duality. In ordinary conditions, human beings are destined to live in the world of duality because they are governed by time. Time makes a division between the young and the old. The meditator in "Among School Children" tries to come to terms with duality and time throughout the poem. Through meditation, the meditator strives to enter into the timeless moment where he sees

the dissolution of antinomies, or the vision of unity. By this vision, the meditator gains spiritual freedom.

Although "Among School Children" does not faithfully follow the four stages of Zen meditation, the structural patterns of the poem can generally be discussed in terms of the four steps. The beginning of the poem, like other meditative poetry, deals with an idea of place. In the first stanza, we have a specific place ("the long schoolroom"), a particular event (an inspection tour by a government official), specific people ("a kind old nun," "the children," and "a public man"), and definite actions ("walk," "replies," "learn," and "stare upon"). The concrete images symbolize a bounded state from which the poet tries to escape in order to experience the state beyond the imagination. Such clear-cut and palpable images, especially this poem, are governed by the present tense. Time-present plays the metaphorical role of imprisoning real but limited experiences into a box, implied by "a schoolroom." The poet wants to escape from such a finite and limited state through meditation, because the limitation of time brings forth the concept of duality which causes him agony.

In the beginning of the poem, we find again the first stage of Zen meditation: confusion. The sense of confusion in this poem is closely related to the tyranny of time. The poet is bewildered because he does not know how to come to terms with his old age. The presence of young children forces the poet to think about the old age from which he cannot escape:

---the children's eyes

In momentary wonder stare upon

A sixty-year-old smiling public man.

So, in the first stanza, we have the typical beginning of a Yeatsian meditative poem in terms of a specific place, the poet's confusion, and a hint of the solution: reconciliation between the young and the old.

The second to the seventh stanzas are loosely similar to the second stage of Zen meditation, immersion, in which the meditator sets out on his meditative journey to achieve the unity of the dichotomous elements. In this part we meet instead the meditator who begins his meditative journey by contemplating the problem of antinomies from which time prevents him escaping. As I shall discuss, the process of the meditator's contemplation is reminiscent of the developmental stage of Zen meditation in that it symbolizes an elevation of the meditator's consciousness from the basic level to the highest level. The meditative movement also symbolizes breaking the trap of time.

From the second to the fourth stanzas, the meditator dwells upon the relationship between female and male. He conjures up the image of his once ideal woman:

I dream of a Ledaen body, bent
Above a sinking fire, a tale that she
Told of a harsh reproof, or trivial event

The meditator starts thinking about the body of the beautiful woman. In his imagination, he feels as if the image of woman's flesh led to the union of female and male yoked by sensual love ("it seemed that our two natures blent / Into a sphere from youthful sympathy"). The sensual relationship between female and male is the most basic element of duality in that it points to the physiological needs of human beings. The physical love between female and male provides the meditator with only "fit of grief or rage," because the flesh is the most fundamental factor

of limitation. Flesh decays as time goes by. Hence, the image of his once ideal beauty in the third stanza gives way to the image of hag and "old scarecrow" in the fourth stanza. The meditator is troubled again:

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?

Both she and Yeats once retained their youthfulness ("I though never Leadean kind / Her pretty plumage once"), but now they are old and mere scarecrows. Physical passion helplessly surrenders to the power of time.

These three stanzas also disclose how the meditative mind works, symbolizing the meditator's concern for freedom from time. Let us go back to the beginning of the second stanza. The line, "I dream of a Ledean body," indicates the initial movement of the meditative journey which is triggered by the image of "the children's eyes" in the first stanza. That is, the image of the young (present beauty) leads the meditator to recall the memory of his ideal woman (past beauty). In the same way, his contemplation upon his once ideal woman brings him back to the present scene of the young in the third stanza:

And thinking of that fit of grief or rage
 I look upon one child or t'other there
 And wonder if she stood so at that age--

Here we have an imaginative movement of meditator's mind, which moves without being constrained by time, from the present to the past, and

from the past to the present again. This imaginative time travelling symbolizes the meditator's aspiration for freedom from the limitation of time.

In the fifth stanza, the meditator comes upon a world of true love between mother and son. Now his contemplation is elevated from the female-male relationship yoked by sensual love to the mother-son relationship bonded by true love. This relationship provides another example of duality in terms of creator and creation. The image of sexual love in the previous stanzas smoothly leads to the notion of creation on the part of the female. However, even in the state of true love the poet believes to exist between mother and son, Yeats acutely senses the cruel power of time. So he rhetorically asks: "What youthful mother .../ Would think her son, did she but 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?"

The sixth stanza reveals that the meditator enters into a world of philosophy. This is another example of a dichotomous relationship in the sense that philosophers (creators) have their own system of philosophy (creations). Obviously, the creator-creation relationship is developed from the mother-son relationship. We may say that the former is upgraded by one level from the latter because philosophy occupies the ideas of men, while true love finds its place in the heart. Here we have world famous philosophers who create their own philosophical systems to explain duality. Plato thought nature was a mere appearance ("spume") veiling the ultimate spiritual and mathematical reality ("ghostly paradigm"). Aristotle believed that form was really inherited through nature, and thus nature itself had reality. The mention of Pythagoras'

interest in mathematics and the mathematical study of music suggests his dealing with the relationship between math and music. All these Greek philosophers had their own ideas about matter and spirit. But they also had to kneel down before physical reality because they could not control aging. Once again, Yeats laments the curse of time: "Old clothes upon old sticks to scare a bird."

In the seventh stanza, we are led to the religious world in which we see another example of dichotomy: worshiper and worshipped:

Both nuns and mothers worship images,

But those the candles light are not as those

That animates a mother's reveries

This is the highest possible realm (because it deals with a spiritual world) in which the meditator contemplates the relationship between the two conflicting elements. However, in this state, too, the meditator experiences heart-break. The icons nuns worship hold the ambience of distance, repelling their attachment. To emphasize this distance, Yeats describes the icons as cold, though ever-lasting (the image of marble or a bronze repose). Therefore, he writes, "And yet they too break hearts -- O presences / That passion, piety or affection knows." Therefore, nun, mother, philosophers, and the poet, are always mocked by their ideals, which, in Yeats's expression, are "self-born mockers."

As we see from the second to the seventh stanzas, the meditator elevates his consciousness by contemplating antinomies from the lowest to the highest level (sensual love, true love, philosophy, and religion). The four distinctive modalities of human experiences are meant to exhaust all the possible cases of dichotomous elements. Within the realm of human experiences, the meditator repeatedly confronts the same

agony because he is limited by time. The use of tense in each stanza continues to indicate the meditator's free movement through time. Stanza five integrates three tenses (present, past, and future) into one sentence, stanza six is concerned with the past, and stanza seven again returns to the present tense. The meditative journey through time can be interpreted to suggest the meditator's wish to transcend the limitation of time. Thus, there are two imaginative axes in the poem. One is the vertical axis from the lowest to the highest in terms of human experience. The other is the horizontal from the past to the present, and from the present to the future. These two axes expand as the meditation develops, symbolizing the expansion of the meditator's consciousness. Finally, in the eighth stanza, the meditator enters into the timeless moment where he clears up all his confusion through seeing into the vision of unity.

The final stanza is analogous to the third stage of Zen meditation, where the meditator achieves mystical union. (Here we do not have the return stage.) As in "The Double Vision," Yeats finally finds his solution through the vision of the Dancer. As has been noted, the moment of union takes place only outside of time. And the timeless moment is expressed in paradoxes. So we have paradoxes in the beginning of the eighth stanza:

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.

The first line ("Labour is blossoming or dancing") implies a paradoxical state in the sense that labour implies physical toil. Labour suggests

physical pain. In this stanza it relates back to the second line, "The body is not bruised." The paradoxical state is only possible where there are none of the antinomies of human existence. In this world, the body is sacrificed to please soul; beauty is the product of agony or despair; human wisdom comes out of long endless nights. That is to say, this world is governed by the fundamental principle of duality. We have the young because of the old. In this world, you cannot have both body and soul. However, outside of this world of time, you can have both because you don't have to bruise the body to please the soul. In that state, labour (agony) is dancing (trance), as in the end of "Byzantium." Reaching the paradoxical state, the meditator sees a vision of unity. Yeats declares:

O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,
 Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
 O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
 How can we know the dancer from the dance?

It is impossible, as Yeats says, to call the leaf a chestnut-tree. Only in the integrated state of the three things--a leaf, a blossom, and a bole--can we call it a chestnut-tree. Likewise, we should see life not as a part but as a whole. If we harmonize two discordant features such as body and soul, we will get what Zen master calls "a third eye" with which we can see life as a unified state. For Yeats, the image of the dancing girl, as many scholars agree, constitutes the state of oneness, which he expresses through the question: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" However, the omission of the return stage makes it difficult to tell whether the meditator really reaches his self-awakening.

In this meditative poem, Yeats employs three poetic techniques to reflect the essence of Zen meditation. First of all, almost all the nouns Yeats uses in the poem can be divided into two groups (one including body, youth, abstraction, and creator; the other soul, old age, the concrete, and creation). The conflicting images of the poem, reminding us of the relationship between the boy and the ox, show the world of dichotomy in which, without a reconciliation of duality, we are destined to suffer. In addition, by using ottava rima, he symbolically tries to reconcile, as in meditation, the conflicting images. In this pattern, we can sense a kind of dialectical progression in which the last two lines constitute the synthesis (c) out of thesis (a) and antithesis (b).

Another technique which successfully goes with the meditative scheme of the poem is Yeats's carefully planned arrangement of the images. He arranges them to ascend: the poem begins with concrete images, and then, goes on to sensual, affectionate, philosophical, religious, and finally mythical images. Also, his perfectly appropriate employment of enjambment makes it possible for those images to move back and forth throughout the entire stanzas. The movement from the physical to the final mythical image is very similar to the developmental progress of Zen meditation which climaxes in the eighth stage with the mythical experience of oneness. Furthermore, his use of an eight-line, eight-stanza poetic form also symbolically fits into the process and the ultimate meaning of meditation. That is, our mental concentration, if correctly trained, helps to lead us from the finite state as a human being to the infinite state of the Great Awakening as if they were chained. The number eight is considered to play the symbolic role of a chain. It is also interesting to note that the mystical experience takes

place at the eighth stanza, as in "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes (the eighth stanza of section two), which can be associated with the eighth picture of Zen meditation. Again, the number eight, like the dome of Byzantium, symbolizes the perfect state of union, which does not have a beginning and an ending. The employment of these techniques, symbolically expressing the process and the ultimate concern of meditation, nicely correspond to the poem's main theme: the poet's spiritual journey to attain Unity of Being.

Unlike "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes," and "Among School Children," however, "Byzantium" cannot be interpreted in a specific context. There may be no final reading of "Byzantium," partly because of its symbolical richness, and partly because of its complicated language and complex syntax. However, it seems to me that "Byzantium" also contains some meditative elements which we can link with the major characteristic features of the meditative poem.

As Harold Bloom points out, the meaning of Byzantium holds the key to the interpretation of the poem. Byzantium represents the world of art, while "Sailing to Byzantium" expresses the poet's yearning towards that world. But Byzantium may also be viewed as a "spiritual world" into which Yeats, like Zen meditators, incessantly aspires to enter. What makes this conjecture plausible is Yeats' treatment of time in "Byzantium," which is reminiscent of a similar treatment in "Among School Children." In the first and last stanzas in the poem, Yeats associates time (gong) with the limitation of the finite world. So, in the beginning, the "great cathedral gong" limits human actions, laying bare their mere complexities. In the end, the poet returns to the same negative image of time by referring to the "gong-tormented sea."

However, the image of Byzantium in this poem points to eternity, "in glory of changeless metal," disdaining the imprisonment of time. That is, one can escape from the limitation of time by entering into the state of Byzantium. Or by reaching Byzantium, one can break the imprisonment of time. If this argument has any validity, then we may regard Byzantium as a spiritual world in which Yeats always longs to dwell so that he may free himself from the restraint of time.

Byzantium is often regarded as a timeless aesthetic realm where the poet accomplishes artistic completion. However, in my view, the world of art is but a part of Byzantium. In *A Vision*, Yeats himself reveals the true nature of Byzantium: "I think that in early Byzantium, maybe never before or since in recorded history, religious, aesthetic and practical life were one" (279). In *The Lonely Tower*, T.R. Henn explains that Byzantium stands for "the unity of all aspects of life, perhaps for the last time in history" (223). The unity is possible outside of time or in a state which reflects "time overthrown," as is the case with the two previous poems. This unity can then be connected with spiritual freedom. The experience of spiritual freedom, or escaping from the fetters of time, enables the meditator to be reborn and to unlock artistic creativity. In other words, in "Byzantium" the world of art is subordinate to the spiritual world. Thus, Byzantium may be associated with Yeats' "Unity of Being." This is not to say that Byzantium means Unity of Being, but to say that we cannot have the former without experiencing the latter. The structures of the poem are loosely patterned after a typical process of meditation through which the meditator reaches Unity of Being.

The first stanza of "Byzantium" exhibits some typical features related to its meditative scheme. It also begins with the description of a specific place (a starlit or moonlit dome of Byzantium) and a state of confusion ("All mere complexities," and "The fury and the mire of human veins"). This sense of confusion is different from the confusion we have talked about in the beginning of "The Double Vision," and "Among School Children." In "Byzantium," we have another sense of confusion which the meditator "disdains" because of its "mere complexities," "the fury," and "mire." The strong negative feeling of these word choices is sharply contrasted with the positive image of a simple circle (a starlit or a moonlit dome). That is, the meditator strives to purge these images of confusion through his meditation. Thus, in the first stanza, we have a familiar setting as the foreground of meditation in terms of a specific place and confusion. The setting of the poem (Byzantium) involves an answer to the quest of the meditator, because it symbolizes the unified aspects of life and the image of perfection.

The second to the fourth stanzas are equivalent to the second stage (immersion) and the third stage (union or seeing the vision) of meditation. As his meditation begins, the meditator tries to grasp the image which is floating from his mind. He is not sure about the exact nature of that image:

Before me floats an image, man or shade,

Shade more than man, more image than a shade;

The poet's verbal expression cannot convey the exact image which operates in his meditative world, because only his mind can seize such dream-like images. Here, Yeats is trying to express the aconceptual image occurring in a meditative world through the insufficient means of

language. Thus, Yeats falters; his poetic language cannot exactly seize whether it is image or shade or man.

As is the case with Michael Robartes, the meditator gradually catches the image of the ghost with the aid of a symbolic clue:

For Hades' bobbin bound in mummy-cloth
 May unwind the winding path,
 A mouth that has no moisture and no breath
 Breathless mouths may summon;

The ambiguity of language of the first two lines can lead us to interpret them either in a negative or in a positive way. These lines may have a negative connotation in that "Hades' bobbin" points to the predicament of the poet who is trapped in the two opposing gyres. Yet, they also can suggest a positive meaning. As Unterecker suggests, "Hades' bobbin" indicates "the purified spirit which has already unwound the winding path of its human incarnations" (218). And he articulates that the image of ghost "may breathlessly summon the breathless mouths of those spirits about to be freed from life's complexity and the round of reincarnations" (218). Similarly, Whitaker remarks on that "the speaker moves on his winding path or whirlpool-turning toward the timeless, through the sea of generation toward the condition of fire, which descends to meet him by way of its own gyre or winding path" (102). I would further these positive interpretations by associating "Hades' bobbin" with the fourth self, or the Great Self which the meditator strives to meet. Hades is the classical underworld to which spirits pass after death. By Hades, Yeats seems to mean a spiritual life after death. The spirit escapes from the bondage of time (bound) by unwinding "the winding path." The Great Self comes into being when the meditator

escapes the limitation of time. The ghost-like image summons the meditator to enter into the world of the Great Self by his "Breathless mouths." The meditator tries to respond to the summons of the ghost, endeavoring to proceed into the fourth state.

When he finally seizes the image, he comes to see a vision of unity. Here, the vision of unity is expressed through the image of mummy in that the mummy integrates life and death. Mummy in this poem is dead, yet alive. When the mummy is bound in mummy-cloth, it is dead. But, the meditator sees the mummy unwind the winding path meaning the mummy cloth. Moreover, the mummy summons the meditator with its breathless mouth. In this living dead mummy, the meditator captures the image of the superhuman transcending the limitation of life and death. The image of the superhuman may be linked with that of the Dancer. As Frank Kermode points out, "This Dancer is one of Yeats' great reconciling images, containing life in death, death in life" (48). The dissolution of dichotomous elements is the moment of mystical marriage which perplexes human logic and understanding. The contact with the mystical union of death and life, as we see in meditative stage three, invites miracle (the liberation from the restraint of time), creative power, rebirth, and the ability to bless.

In this poem, the meditator dwells upon the moment of miracle and rebirth longer than in other poems by stretching it from stanzas three to four. To begin with, the meditator experiences a "Miracle," a freedom from the limitation of time, because "Miracle" scorns "aloud/ In glory of changeless metal." After "Miracle" comes a "bird" which can crow "like the cocks of Hades." As D.J. Gordon and Ian Fletcher comment, the image of a "bird" seems to be linked with the idea of

rebirth. And finally, the meditator can tap the artistic creativity implied by "golden handiwork," which is eternal, reigns over nature, and scorns "all complexities of mire or blood."

In the fourth stanza, the meditator finally attains his enlightening rebirth, which is again expressed through paradoxes. Thus, most of the poetic diction in the fourth stanza indicates paradoxical ideas:

Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,

...

Dying into a dance,

An agony of trance,

An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.

Here we have paradoxical fire which burns without fuel.

We have such paradoxical expressions as "Dying into a dance" and "an agony of trance." And a final paradox: a flame which "cannot singe."

In this poem, the image of fire reinforces the enlightened state of the meditator. The function of fire, as Yeats reveals in his Diary, is to purify. However, the image of fire operates on another symbolic level: the moment of ecstasy which the meditator feels when being purified. Having studied the history of meditation, Willard Johnson connects the rise of meditation with the image of fire:

I imagine these long-distance proto-human ancestors of ours being drawn into the dancing flames of their fires, being entranced by their protector and falling into the first ecstatic state, the first 'meditatively' altered states of consciousness. That so many early religious used fire in ritual and symbolism confirms the powerful sway this elements hold over human consciousness, a remnant of

those first confrontations with this mystery reveling "substance" (26).

Gaston Bachelard, the French phenomenological philosopher, echoes Johnson's idea. Bachelard analyzes the psychological impact of fire in The Psychoanalysis of Fire:

We are almost certain that fire is precisely the first object, the first phenomenon, on which the human mind reflected; among all phenomena, fire alone is sufficiently prized by prehistoric man to wake in him the desire for knowledge, and this mainly because it accompanies in him the desire for love. No doubt it has often been stated that the conquest of fire definitely separated man from the animal, but perhaps it has not been noticed that the mind in its primitive state, together with its poetry and its knowledge, had been developed in meditation before a fire (55).

Although it is not easy to verify these hypotheses about the relationship between fire and meditation, these scholars' explanations provide a plausible rationale for the origin of meditation. Apart from the validity of these ideas, we can think of the fire image as apt to carry the notion of ecstasy, which the meditator experiences when he reaches the state of unity. From that moment on, "all complexities of fury" of the human world disappear. There no longer exists a difference between the agony of death and the trance of dance because agony is trance. In "The Dance as Vision in Blake and Yeats," Rachel V. Billigheimer strengthens this view by arguing:

Rebirth occurs from the dance of the agonizing tension in the mingling of contraries. The tension that arises from the conflict

Yeats experienced within himself becomes unified at the climatic point of ecstasy, 'Dying into a dance.' (15)

The meditator is reborn as a result of meeting the superhuman who, like the Dancer, reconciles death and life.

Finally, the last stanza parallels the final stage of Zen meditation (return). The meditator returns to "the unpurged image" of city, where he sees the suffering people "Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood." Traditionally, the dolphin is a symbol of love and soul. However, here the image of the dolphin, as M.L. Rosenthal glosses, "is also associated with mire and blood of the disdained physical world" (220). Thus, the dolphin seems to constitute an emblem of duality. That is, the picture of people astraddle on the dolphin implies the agony of human beings caused by the problem of duality. At this stage, the meditator is blessed with the power to save his fellow human beings. His creativity (represented by "the smithies") helps to "break the flood," which suggests not only the endless cycles of birth and rebirth, but also the troubles of the world. The infinity of his ecstatic experience (denoted by "Marbles of the dancing floor") also helps to "Break bitter furies of complexity." Whenever he breaks the images of "bitter furies," however, he is beset by another: "Fresh images beget"/ "That dolphin-torn, gong-tormented sea." As to the meaning of the last line, G.S. Fraser writes in "Yeats's 'Byzantium'" :

The gong is the great cathedral gong of the first stanza; it is only a real sea, not a marble sea, that its beatings could torment or disturb. (3)

F. A. C. Wilson in Yeats and Tradition says that the last line may mean:

The sea is 'torn' by dolphins and reverberates with the echoes of St. Sophia's gong; the surface of man's life is split asunder by the passion of love and the desire for perfection, and is endlessly tormented by the idea of death. (243)

Their interpretations help us to see the "dolphin-torn sea" hints at the world torn by agonies of human beings and "gong-tormented sea" suggests the world caged by the limitation of time. This last part may imply, as Elizabeth Huberman argues, a rejection of ideal perfection in favor of the blood-begotten complexities. It seems to me that it demonstrates Yeats' view of the person who experiences "self-awakening": the savior cannot save the world of troubles.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes," "Among School Children," and "Byzantium," we see the reflection of Zen meditation. The structural patterns of the meditative poems generally correspond to the four stages of Zen meditation: confusion, immersion, union or seeing the vision of the unity, and return. Yeats' use of poetic techniques such as line scheme, use of number symbolism, and the arrangement of stanzas are closely associated with the meditative scheme of the poems. In addition, the major concern of the poems is reminiscent of that of Zen meditation in that they confront the problem of duality, which sets up the occasion for meditation. The agony of duality results from the concept of time. Thus, the meditator tries to reconcile the dichotomous elements, resulting in the state of freedom from time.

More than anything else, the purpose of Yeats' meditative poems lies in the poet's aspiration for self-awakening, as in Zen meditation. The poems are Yeats' records of his life-long efforts to meet his "fourth self" or Great Self. A comparison between Yeats' use of symbols and Buddhist and Christian symbols reinforces this argument. The most important symbols in Buddhism include the Mandala image (a circle with a tendency to combine with a square) and the lotus symbol. Needless to say, the single most important Christian symbol is the image of the cross. According to Jung, the Mandala image symbolizes "the

archetype of wholeness," and in the same way, we can think of the lotus and the cross image as symbols of wholeness. The outside form of the lotus represents the emanation of spiritual energy. The inside form of the lotus, showing emptiness, indicates centrality. Likewise, the four different directions of the cross image demonstrates the emanation of Christian spirit. The center of the cross points to centrality. Hence, both religious symbols retain two conflicting concepts: emanation and centrality. Thus, we may safely argue that the religious symbols represent the idea of unity by integrating the two dichotomous elements. In "The Religious Symbol," Paul Tillich elaborates the meaning of religious symbols:

They [religious symbols] must express an object that by its very nature transcends everything in the world that is split into subjectivity and objectivity. A real symbol points to an object which never can become an object. Religious symbols represent the transcendent but do not make the transcendent immanent.

They do not make God a part of the empirical world. (77)

Tillich furthers the idea that religious symbols contain the idea of paradox by yoking the two conflicting images into one. The meditator in some schools of meditation uses religious symbols for meditation because of the innate power of the symbols which will awaken his deeper self. In "The Significance of Symbols," Rollo May argues that "symbols and myths are means of discovery" (45). An analysis of Yeats' use of symbol in his meditative poems arrives at a similar conclusion. The poet's frequently-used symbol, the Dancer, is very similar to the religious symbols of the Mandala or the image of the cross in the sense that the Dancer contains the idea of wholeness, the unity between body

and soul, movement and stillness, and life and death. In addition, a bird's-eye view of the Dancer will tell us that it contains both emanation and centrality. Yeats' use of the "spinning top" image can be considered in the same context. Thus, Yeats' employment of symbolic images such as the Dancer, and the "spinning top" can be linked with religious symbols. The purpose of contriving such personal symbols reflects Yeats' concern with the discovery of the Great Self.

In Yeats' three meditative poems, we see the poet's use of setting, poetic techniques, stanza development, employment of symbols, and fondness for paradoxes, and his yearning for the state of self-awakening all fuse into powerful examples of meditative art. The three poems manifest how strongly the poet aspires for "eternity of artifice" in which he is exultant for his liberation from the limitation of time, for his eventual rebirth, and for his creative power.

NOTES

1. Claudio Naranjo remarks on the fundamental difference between Western meditation and Eastern meditation. According to Naranjo, Western meditation "dwells upon certain ideas, or is engaged in a directed intellectual course of activity." On the other hand, Eastern meditation "Concentrates anything but ideas, and with the attainment of an aconceptual state of mind that excludes intellectual activity." Seventeenth century meditative poems, as we know well, are mainly concerned with a conceptual state (meditator's sense of sin, his/her repentance and God's grace), while Yeats' poems seek an aconceptual state ("Unity of Being") by exploring the world of imagination.

2. In her unpublished doctoral dissertation, W.B. Yeats: Poetry As Meditation, Vara Sue Tamminga Barker studies the influence of the eastern method of meditation on Yeats' poetry, although she does not specify which school of eastern meditation. Barker argues that the thematic concern of Yeats' latter period poems parallels with the aim of eastern meditation: the integration of nature with the meditator's consciousness. Hence, instead of focusing on the relationship between Yeats' poetic structures and meditative process, Barker tries to examine the development of Yeats' poems with focus on their thematic concerns. According to Barker, in Yeats' early years, the poet "sought a window into supernatural realms" through experimenting with meditation. In his middle period, meditation disoriented Yeats. Barker argues that the disorientation of Yeats is exemplified by his "The Double Vision of

Michael Robartes." In the poem, Barker contends, "we can easily see the disorientation of the speaker[Michael Robartes], a distress perhaps caused by the whirlwind surrounding the spinning dancer, by the indifference of Helen of Troy "(211). However, Barker maintains that "by the end of his life, he [Yeats] saw and practiced meditation as a means of integration both within himself and with the world around him, focusing upon the concrete, physical reality of nature" (17).

3. Precisely speaking, all the great religions of the world concern themselves with the problem of duality, the concept of time, and an aspiration for freedom from the limitation of this life. Zen meditation, when compared with other methods of meditation, deals with these concerns by employing systematic methods of breaking logic. Zen Buddhists believe that the problem of duality and the concept of time are closely related to the human logic.

4. It would be useful to compare the concept of inmost being, or Great Self to that of Yeats' Mask and Daimon. It seems to me that the implication of inmost being is closer to Daimon than Mask. The fundamental difference between Daimon and Mask lies in that the former is associated with the absolute value, while the latter points to the relative value. The concept of Mask presupposes that one has two selves. One is an ordinary self we have, and the other is an idealized self we strive to have. An idealized self constitutes the Mask of an ordinary self. However, the reality does not lie in either of these two opposite selves, but in the interplay between the two. The interaction of the two is further linked with the alternating cycles of history, the subjective and objective, and the Antithetical and Primary. On the other hand, Daimon, signifies the ultimate self, the eternal being or Soul,

existing in timeless unity. These epithets of Daimon are similar to those of inmost being, or Great Self. But, the difference is that Daimon is active and dynamic, whereas inmost being is passive and static. The imagination of Western people enlivens Daimon to act like "stage manager," to use Yeats' expression. Daimon makes one vacillate between self and anti-self. And Daimon also leads one to cut the endless cycles of vacillation, resulting in a new incarnation. That is, Daimon has a power over human beings. On the contrary, in Oriental meditative system, one can meet the Great Self through the training of one's mental concentration, and the contact with it frees one from the endless cycles of agony. In other words, human beings have power over the Great Self.

5. The desire for freedom from time can also be found in Christian belief. Although Christianity is regarded as Western religion, we may also call it an Eastern religion in the sense that it originated in the Middle East.

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