

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

He was born in Dublin in 1865 into an anglo irish protestant family, when he was a child his family moved to London but he used to spend many holidays in Sligo, a town in Western Ireland that he loved and wrote about. He grew up feeling as much Irish as English and in Sligo he developed a passion for the Celtic past and also an interest in the occult and the mystical.

In 1880 his family moved back to Dublin where he studied art but he soon realised that his real passion was poetry. He abandoned art as a profession in favour of literature.

In 1889 he met Maud Gonne, she was a beautiful actress and she was his first love, he deeply fell in love with her but his love was not returned, she admired his poetry but she refused his offers of marriage. She came to represent for Yeats the ideal of beauty.

In the 1890s he became involved in the Irish nationalist movement, he met Lady Gregory, an Irish nationalist and playwright, they became close friend and together they founded the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 1904 which became the most important cultural centre of the Irish literary renaissance.

In addition to his poetry he devoted significant energy to writing plays, but his theatrical production lacked dramatic values, the essential qualifications of a dramatist.

In 1917 he got married with Georgie Hyde Lees, she was a medium who shared his interest in the occult and soon after their wedding she developed the power of automatic writing.

She began to utter strange phrases and she thought that these phrases were dictated by spirits from another world.

Yeats copied down these fragments and he incorporated them in his prose work "A Vision" in 1925. In this work he also exposed his complex system of ideas.

Between 1922 and 1928 he became a senator in the Parliament of the recently established FreeState.

In 1923 his greatness received international recognition with the Nobel price for literature.

He died in France in 1939 just before the outbreak of World War II.

We can divide his literary production into 3 periods:

1) **EARLY PERIOD (1886-1900):** influency of Romanticism, Aestheticism and French Symbolism, they are also pervaded by a Celtic mysticism, he looked for his themes in Irish legends, interested in the simple impulses of men. The best remedy for the emptiness of the present seem to lie in a return to the simplicity of the past.

2) **MIDDLE PERIOD (1900-1916):** his poems became more and more rooted in reality, in particular in the political situation of Ireland, which was under the British rule. It is in this phase that he becomes a true modern poet, his poetry is no longer concerned with the representation of a personal suggestive dreamlike world. His poetry became concerned with the search for truth. He confronted reality and imperfection, his poetry showed a gradual movement away from Escapism of his previous works. He shows a growing carriage in considering the modern problems.

3) **LATE PERIOD (1917-1939):** it is his maturity. His poems became more introspective, meditating on memory, old age and death. Symbolic interpretation of history and man's destiny. He was a symbolist and his poet is not simple, he adopted a complex system.

This was developed from his study on mystic ancient philosophy, esoteric, astrology and magic. After his marriage he started to experiment automatic writing, they used to sit together for writing sessions during which they believed to be guided by a spiritual world. He wanted to resolve the contradictions of the modern world.

THEMES

He deals with a wide variety of themes, one of the reasons for his greatness is that we can identify many different aspects in this author. He is a multidimensional poet, not characterised by a single approach to poetry.

-THE FAITH IN BEAUTY AND ETERNITY OF ART= this was developed under the influence of the Romantic poets Keats and pre-Raphaelites.

-RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE POET AND IRISH PEOPLE AND TRADITION= this developed from a very early age, he felt a deep connection to Ireland, with a strong interest in Irish mythologies.