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The Implication of Modernism in W. B. Yeats' The Second Coming

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a Master Degree in Literature and Civilization

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Dedication 1

*Before anything else, thank you Allah for enlightening my path
and strengthening me to continue
and fight to reach my goals and never give up.*

I proudly dedicate this dissertation:

To whom I miss so much

To the soul of my father Khalifa,

You are absent in my life but always present in my heart.

To my faithful mother

Who never stop believing in me, supporting me and encouraging me when I am about to
give up.

Thank you so much mum for giving me always reason to move on.

To my sweet sisters

Amal, Ahlam, Amina, and especially Embarka who has been always my great supporter in
my difficult times.

To my beloved brothers

Rachid, Kaiss, Abd Alkarim, and Lakhdar.

I love you all my family.

To all those who support me, love me and wish me the best of luck.

To my sweetheart

Who shared with me every moment to complete this precious work, my partner Mouna.

God bless you all,
Miss. Samia

Dedication 2

*Firstly and before anything else I would like to say thank you Allah for
giving me the strength to continue and never give up*

This paper is proudly dedicated:

To my mother
From whom I was far this Ramadan,
I do miss you Mum.

To my father
To the warm shoulder that is always there for me, no matter how old I am,
I love you Dad.

To my sweet sisters
Assia, Maroua, Imane and Rahma,
I love you dears.

To our handsome Ahmed and our winsome Amine
I miss you brothers.

To my closest friend
Whose great efforts made completing this study something possible,
Thank you Samia.

To my mother-in-law
Thank you for your support, I am really grateful to you.

Without forgetting the person who stood by my side during my hardest moments,
Your patience meant a lot to me,
Thank you my husband, I do respect you.

With my respect and love,
Mrs. Mouna DIDI.

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what they do not know*

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Abstract

The present study aims at investigating the implication of modernism in W. B. Yeats' *The Second Coming*. This study depends on the formalist approach in analyzing the poem. The characteristics of modernism; themes, techniques and form, pave the way to prove that *The Second Coming* is a modernist poem. Dividing the poem into two stanzas, Yeats devotes the first stanza for depicting the chaos and disintegration of post-World War I, and the second stanza for reflecting his pessimistic view to the world's end. He predicts the coming of a horrifying beast that will bring more destruction, depression and atrocity to the humanity. After going through the analysis of the poem's themes, techniques and form, this study reveals that the modernism's characteristics are implicated in *The Second Coming*, thus W. B. Yeats' *The Second Coming* is a modernist poem.

Keywords: Modernism, W. B. Yeats' *The Second Coming*, Themes, Techniques, Form.

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General Introduction

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

The early decades of the twentieth century were marked by the catastrophe of the First World War which tremendously destroyed the world in general and the European society in specific. Before the WWI, people expected a better future but unfortunately they were disappointed after the war because of the destruction, the huge number of deaths and the chaos that swept the world during that time. The psychological effect of World War I was as harsh as the physical effect. People believed that they reached that situation because of their traditional values. Therefore, they sought newness in all fields of life: literature, architecture, music, etc.

Furthermore, this era witnessed a great development in industrialization, technology and science. All these factors, in addition to the First World War, led to a change of society's life style as well as of people's thoughts and beliefs. They rejected their traditions and started to create new ones. This era was characterized by the emergence of a new movement which was known as "Modernism".

As a movement, modernism can be recognized in architecture, music, painting, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, science and literature. In literature, modernism rejected the tradition and sought to experiment new forms of expression. The aim was to reflect a new experience shaped by the devastation and chaos caused by World War I. Modernist writers desired to express the sensibilities of their modern time through using new ways and techniques totally different from the traditional ones.

Modernism's pioneers were Darwin (1809-1882), Marx (1818-1883), and Nietzsche (1844-1900) and its intellectual fuel was Freud (1856-1939). Those great theorists contributed in pushing the movement away from the conventional ideas to adopt new

thoughts and methods more appropriate for the rapid change of the modern society. Modernism reached its zenith approximately in 1920 with such great literary works as Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* (1928). The modernist period knew many important poets as William Carlos Williams (1883-1963), Ezra Pound (1885-1972), Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965), and William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) who was very famous at that time. W. B. Yeats was distinctive through his particular view about history, i.e., he believed that the history's process was a cyclic one. In his major 20th century works, especially in his poem *The Second Coming*, Yeats expressed this view so as to reflect the disintegration of modern world after the World War I.

The Second Coming, Yeats' famous poem and probably the best-known of all his 20th century works, was written in 1919, shortly after WWI. It depicts the destruction and the anarchy the European society lived after the horrific World War I and represents Yeats' prophetic vision about the world's ultimate end. The poem is considered a masterpiece of modernist poetry as far as it is thought to illustrate the way Yeats interpreted the cycle of history. It has been variously and widely interpreted by scholars whose aim was to resolve its complex symbolism and mythology.

2. Aim of the Study

This study aims to investigate to what extent Yeats' *The Second Coming* is a modernist poem at the level of themes, techniques and form.

3. Previous Studies

The Second Coming is considered one of Yeats' most famous poems. It is also one of his most variously and frequently interpreted and analyzed works. Many critics studied *The Second Coming* from different perspectives. For example, the critic Norman Jeffares, in *A*

Commentary on the Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats, studied it from a historical point of view remarking that this poem is highly concerned with the gloomy drama of modern war, including the Black-and-Tan War in Ireland, the Russian Revolution and the World War I. He also mentioned that Yeats himself described his poem as a reaction to “the growing murderousness of the world” to which these wars were warning him. Concerning this point, the critic M.H. Abrams, in his *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, added that the poem’s concern with war marks it as a modernist work. The critic Edward A. Bloom, in his “Yeats’ ‘Second Coming’: An Experiment in Analysis”, interpreted *The Second Coming* from a philosophical perspective. He saw that Yeats’ philosophy of historical cycles that he included in the poem made it “a masterpiece of complexity”. Interpreting the poem from a political point of view, the critic James Lovic Allen, in his “What Rough Beast?: Yeats’ ‘The Second Coming’ and A Vision”, said that *The Second Coming* can be considered a political poem, which is associated with the rise of communism. The critic Jewel Spears Brooker, in his “‘The Second Coming’ and ‘The Waste Land’: Capstones of the Western Civilization Course”, examined Yeats’ poem from a cultural perspective stating that the poem deals powerfully with the state of civilization in the twentieth century and suggests that civilization is falling apart. Nathan Cervo, in “Yeats’ ‘The Second Coming’”, studied the poem from a religious perspective exploring that the prophetic implications of Yeats’ masterpiece are regarded to Christian millenarianism.

4. Statement of the Problem

The 20th century era witnessed several changes such as the catastrophic WWI as well as the industrial, technological and scientific developments. Those changes highly affected all life’s domains, including literature. Modernist writers invented new styles and forms of expressions distinctive from the traditional ones. Therefore, this study seeks to

discover what those innovative techniques are in poetry generally and in *The Second Coming's* poem specifically.

5. Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study highlights the following main question: What is the implication of modernism in W. B. Yeats' *The Second Coming*? Attempting to find answer to this question, the study hypothesizes that *The Second Coming* poem is a modernist poem.

6. Research Methodology

This study depends on the formalist approach in analyzing the poem. The characteristics of modernism; themes, techniques and form, pave the way to prove that *The Second Coming* is a modernist poem.

7. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is theoretical. It discusses the concept of modernism briefly. The chapter also focuses on the impact of modernist society on poetry, and ends up by discussing the implications of modernism in poetry in terms of themes, techniques and form.

The second chapter is practical. It presents the biography of William Butler Yeats as a modernist poet. It also provides an overview of the poem, and investigates the implications of modernism in *The Second Coming* through discussing its themes, techniques and form.

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Modernism: Modernist Poetry

Introduction

Believing that people have suffered the Great War because of their own traditions, the modern men rejected their old values and wanted to change. The First World War was not the only factor that highly impacted the modern society, but the Industrial Revolution, the technological advancement and science have played a big role also. Not only on the economic level, but also on the psychological level too. A new version of movement has developed which is “modernism”. This chapter will discuss the modernism along with its implication in poetry.

1.1. Definition of Modernism

It seems quite difficult to provide an exact fixed definition to such an elaborated term as “Modernism”. Therefore, the focus will be more on its definition as a literary movement of the 20th century. First of all, modernism in its broader sense means innovation and novelty that is something which is in opposition to the old and thus expressing a certain belief in progress. Peter Childs states that it is the art of what Harold Rosenberg calls “the tradition of the new” (1). This implies that modernism brought some changes to the tradition that existed before its emergence. Peter Barry adds that modernism came as a rejection of all the pre-twentieth century traditional practices in literature and other arts such as music, painting and architecture (81).

Furthermore, modernism as a literary movement came as a revolution not only against the First World War but also against the traditional values that preceded war. Abrams states that modernism, in general, is referred to the new changes in literature produced after World War I (1914-18), and modernist works are characterized by the shift

away from traditions of Western culture and the use of new subjects, forms, concepts, and styles (167). As far as poetry is concerned, modernism reveals a break from the iambic pentameter and using instead free verse, symbolism and other new techniques (Childs 3). Those new techniques featured the modern poetry from the traditional poetry.

Modernism's tendency of experimentation in forms and techniques is due to the fact that traditional methods seemed outmoded in such era of great development in urbanization and industrialization as the era of the twentieth century. Therefore, modernists sought to experiment new techniques that suit their fully industrialized society. And this is confirmed by Pericles' saying that modernism "refers primarily to the tendency of experimental literature of the early twentieth century to break away from traditional verse forms, narrative techniques, and generic conventions in order to seek new methods of representation appropriate to life in an urban, industrial, mass-oriented age" (17). So, it is very important to go through the characteristics of modernist society so as to find justification for the rise of modernism and for its break with tradition.

1.2. Characteristics of Modernist Society

In the late 19th century and the early 20th century, many changes and developments took place in Europe and highly impacted individuals and the European society as a whole. The most prominent ones are the Industrial Revolution, technological advancement, science and the First World War. Those events contributed greatly in the rapid change of the society and the change of people's thoughts and beliefs as well. Moreover, all domains of life have been affected by the new economic, social and political circumstances including the domain of literature; in which they gave birth to a new literary movement called Modernism. Therefore, it is very important to give a general overview of the

modernist society so as to understand how its quick change led to the rejection of traditional values, and thus the rise of modernism.

The development of industrialization led to the increase of the workforce. The lower class of society overcrowded the slums. Bullock describes how they were seen by the eye of society as “lower order of humanity, and treated as such, valued only as the vast pool of surplus labor on which the social as well as the economy system depended” (61). Due to the Industrial Revolution, the period from 1870 to 1913 marked rapid expansion of the international economy compared to previous decades.

In addition, the technological advancement and urbanization played a big role in building the modern life. Those advancements facilitated people’s everyday life. But at the same time, they were destructive to some extent. For instance, Peter Childs mentions that the modern life was characterized by decay, renovation, fragmentation and the spread of insecurity, in addition to the development of transportation, travel and means of communication (14-15).

Moreover, the advancement of science and the emergence of many scientific theories “of such late nineteenth-century thinkers as Freud, Marx, Darwin, and Nietzsche” (Galens 495) made people lose their belief in their past social moralities such as religion, fidelity and love. Those theories rejected many common traditional values. They changed the people’s view to life and way of thinking. Consequently, the modern man began to believe solely in science’s principles.

The violent First World War was the final factor which destroyed their traditional beliefs. For the first time, people witnessed the explosion of bombs and the huge number of dead bodies. Such horrible scenes destroyed the survived people psychologically and made them blame their traditions and morals for causing this catastrophe. Bullock

describes the suffering of people and the misery they lived after the Great War which severely took a lot from European man but returned almost nothing. It caused cultural crisis which was impossible to be avoided by the Europeans (58).

All the previously mentioned factors contributed in changing the life style of modern people as well as their beliefs and way of thinking. For example, unlike the Victorian society which was collectivist and had a narrowed mindset in issues of sexuality, the modernist society started to accept androgyny and homosexuality. It started to shed the light more on individual interest as well as to accept untraditional people who had been ignored in the past such as the wanderer, the loner, the exile, restless and homeless people (McFarlane 82). Individuals started to focus on their own personal concerns ignoring prevailing social values. This was one of the major reasons behind changing those values.

Furthermore, the society was enormously impacted by the war. Its members were growing up far from their culture. In his *The Sun also Rises* (1926), Earnest Hemingway describes them as the “lost generation”, a given name by Gertrude Stein to the young Americans who migrated to Paris in the 1920s. Modernist period was known as an apocalyptic time in many modernist writings. For instance, in *The Name and Nature of Modernism*, Bradbury and McFarlane sum up all the factors that turned the society upside down in the following few lines :

It (Dada or Surrealism) is the art consequent of Heisenberg's 'Uncertainty Principal', of the destruction of civilization and reason in the First World War, of the world changed and reinterpreted by Marx, Freud and Darwin, of capitalism and constant industrial acceleration, of existential exposure to meaninglessness of absurdity (27).

The European culture was changed completely due to the catastrophe of the war. People who lived in the period of war were cut off from their cultural values. As a

consequence, there was a rapid degradation of social moralities. People tend to interpret the world from new perspectives different from the traditional ones. The past is often ignored and its traditions are no longer controlling the human spirit.

After going through the major factors that contributed in shaping the modernist society as well as changing people's ideologies and beliefs, it is worthy to note that along with the society's changes, literature and art have been changing as well. As a result, a new art was given a birth and it was named modernism. Modernism appeared as a new form of art different from the traditional one. In contrast to the Victorian morality and the romanticism writing whose one of its basic principles is the use of imagination, modernist writing was more realistic. Modernist men concentrated more on real life circumstances. Bradbury and McFarlane stated briefly the important features of modernism which lie in its shift away from Romanticism, experimentation of new forms and structures, and the use of myth (26).

Modernism involves everything that breaks down the Victorian era's basic rules. People started to free their thinking from the traditional boundaries. They experienced new ways of writings. For this reason, the modernist movement becomes a changing point in the English literature's path.

1.3. Impact of Modernist Society on Poetry

The twentieth century era marked a number of significant social, economic and political changes which highly affected individuals and society as a whole. These changes include industrialization, technological and scientific advancement and the catastrophe of First World War. Modernist writers as members of their society were also severely influenced by those changes in which their treated subjects and their writing style have

been changed as well. In poetry particularly, this is manifested in the rise of new themes, innovation in form and techniques.

The emergence of new themes reflects the alienation modernist poets feel inside due to the hopeless life they live outside, i.e., the life that was taken away by the violence of World War I. In their poetry, modernist poets expressed their feeling of alienation, depression and disappointment about their destructed world. Other themes represent the chaos and destruction that swept the world, the instability of the economic and political systems and the huge number of dead and killed innocents by the catastrophic First World War. However, some modernist poets expressed their hope for men to rebuild the world and for having a better future.

Modernist poets' experimentation and innovation in form, which were embodied through the use of free verse, were a result of the social changes' influence that already have been talked about in the previous element. In order to cope with the new reality, they invented a distinctive form of writing. This distinctive form of modernist poetry is the free verse. In contrast to the conventional poem whose verses have the same length and regular metrical form, Abrams states that the free verse's lines have irregular lengths, and sometimes they have fragmented musical rhythm, other times they have no rhyme at all (105).

Furthermore, along with the social changes, the writing style also changed. Modernist poetry was characterized by the use of such techniques as myth, symbol and image. As far as modernists rejected the history, it has been argued that they tended to use the timeless myth so as to substitute it. They were highly affected by the chaos and disintegration their society lived after the First World War. They found that myth gives order and structure to their disordered world as exemplified in T. S. Eliot's saying in his

review of *Joyce's Ulysses*, the use of myth is “a way of giving shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history” (Eysteinnsson 9).

Another technique that has been widely used in modern poems is symbolism. A symbol was used as a way of representing the conditions of post-war society. It gives the poets the ability to say all what they want in only few words. Therefore, the period after the World War I was prominent through the extensive use of symbols. According to Abrams, a symbol is an object or event that signifies something beyond its literal meaning (311).

The technique of image was also a noticeable feature in modern poetry. For modernist poets, the use of such technique is an effective way to reflect the crises in their modern life briefly in an image. This is demonstrated in Pound's saying that an image “presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” (Zach 234). Images have a great effect on readers' mind and emotion. They engage them into sensory experience so that to understand what an image conveys. By this way, readers can give various interpretations for an image.

The dramatic shift in modern poetry through the birth of new themes, the use of new form and techniques shows its after-effect by the twentieth century social changes. Modern poetry often depicts the characteristics of modern life. Between its verses, it describes the misery and destruction that surrounded its poets. It breaks with the conventional ideas and forms of the Victorian poetry and represents the traumatic effect of the First World War on people's mind and psychology, the weakness of human relationships and the fall of traditional thoughts and beliefs.

1.4. Implication of Modernism in Poetry

Each literary movement mirrors the period of its appearance. It is often influenced by the historical events of that period. The effect of those events on the literary movement shapes its characteristics which feature it from other movements. The modernist movement, growing out of the destruction of World War I and in a fully industrialized world, was characterized by using melancholic themes as well as using new techniques and form distinctive from the traditional ones.

1.4.1. Themes

The First World War played a big role in shattering the traditional beliefs. As a result, values, conventions and life style have changed. Charles E. Bressler states that the World War I marked a dramatic shift, especially in the arts. Growing out of the war's destruction, the arts started to represent society's new interests, stressing disintegration, loss, and disillusionment (91). In addition, due to this fact modernists saw themselves rootless because they rejected their old beliefs, styles and forms. In their writings, they reflected their psychological and social destruction, depression, sadness, and disappointment after the war. Accordingly, the remarkable themes of post-war era were about alienation, death, pessimism and chaos.

1.4.1.1. Theme of Alienation

Alienation is basically a humanistic phenomenon that is not concerned with a specific generation or an era. It is a complicated psychological state that belongs to the human. According to psychoanalysis, alienation is a psychosocial state that thoroughly dominates the individual making him/her either alienated from the self or isolated from the surrounding people and consequently making him/her disconnected from the social reality.

This feeling of isolation was experienced by people after the horrors of the WWI. They felt alienated and disconnected from their society. In addition, this feeling was evidently expressed in modernist arts. Childs states that modernism developed a series of art practices which stressed alienation, chaos, depression and disenchantment with culture, owing to the war (163). Therefore, the theme of alienation was prominent in major modernist works. Modernist writers focused on the individuals and their alienation relating this confused feeling mainly to three reasons: the loss of traditional values, the collapse of social and political system and the loss of faith in God.

Due to the war, the 20th century was known as the genocides' century. Having nothing but only destructed houses and families, people blamed their traditional values for causing this catastrophe. For that reason, they started to shift away from their traditions. As a result of this shift, the feeling of alienation from their social norms and moralities was originated.

Furthermore, there was a widespread of social and political disorder. The government lost control over individuals and society as a whole. People felt that they are separated from each other and there is no consistent system to unify them. Therefore, the feeling of alienation was strengthened among the community's members.

Moreover, the relation of people with their religion was getting weaker. Many of them lost their belief in the power of Christianity to save them from devastation and protect their harmony. This is why they changed it. Through his post-war writings, W. B. Yeats supports this claim pointing out that mankind is moving to Paganism from Christianity. Thus, people felt alienated from their religious beliefs.

1.4.1.2. Theme of Death

After the bloody WWI, modernist poets dealt widely with the theme of death. Specifically, they dealt with two types of death: concrete and abstract death. They meant by the concrete death the real death of soldiers, civil people and innocent children in the war while the abstract death stands for the death of values and principles which is similar to the death of human himself. One of the best modernist poems that dealt with these two types of death at the same time is T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

Death was the main theme of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. This is because the poem was written when the First World War had just ended leading the world to an era of depression, frustration, loss, destruction and ultimately of death. Therefore, the title "*The Waste Land*" represents the death of land and death of its inhabitants, i.e., all soldiers and civilians who died during the war. Also, it may symbolize the death of moral principles: love, peace and freedom in the modern period.

There are many techniques used by modernist poets so as to reflect the theme of death in their poems. For example, Loya Ariei mentions that, in his *The Waste Land*, Eliot used a set of fragmented extended images which seem unrelated but their implications are made by him to converge into a coherent whole (187-201). He used this technique as well as allusion which precisely and concisely reinforce the death's theme in his poem. In fact, what mostly characterizes the modern poetry is the representation of death as a dilemma that provokes terrible anxiety.

1.4.1.3. Theme of Pessimism

Poetry mirrors the real conditions of society. Definitely what influences society is represented in poetry; what is seen pessimistic in it is not more than the negative reality of

the society itself. The modernist poetry particularly was profoundly impacted by the horrors of the Great War. It expressed the people's sufferance after the war, i.e., their fears, hopelessness, pessimism and bitter reality. It also reflected their bleak outlook on life and future. Childs says that modernists, after the WWI, were noticeable by their pessimism and their sense of a failed and fragmented society (27). Therefore, pessimism was a dominant theme in the majority of modernist poems.

For modernist poets, pessimism is considered the most appropriate way by which they can reflect their inner despair, destruction and disillusionment in a chaotic society around them which is technologically developed but dangerously destructive. Justin Quinn states that:

Thomas Carlyle expressed his despair at the increasing mechanization of the world :
'To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility : it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb.O, the vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha, and Mill of Death !' (62).

The harmful war shattered people's hope for having a better life. Their world resembled a wasteland in which they are victims of a harsh fate striking to find a meaning to their existence. For this reason, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is also the best example of the pessimism's theme in post-war era.

In Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the contradicting picture of "April is the cruelest month" and the negative image of the city, display the poet's sadness and pessimism. *The Waste Land* sums up the gloomy circumstances of the European life after the World War I where a complexity of bleak feelings dominates the whole five parts of it. It reflects people's pessimistic view towards everything. For instance, they see the city as a source of anxiety,

isolation, despair, paradoxes and anarchy rather than a place of comfort and harmony. To effectively represent pessimism in his poem, T. S. Eliot depended extensively on metaphors.

1.4.1.4. Theme of Chaos

The twentieth century was considered the age of chaos and disorder. The huge destruction of World War I caused a widespread of social and political instability. The society's harmony was broken down and the social values and traditions were declined. People were totally lost and alienated from their society. Their anarchic life led them to cut off from their social norms and beliefs. In literature, modernist writers sought to reflect this anarchy through using modern styles and techniques. As Bradbury and McFarlane assert "Modernism is our art; it is the one art that responds to the scenario of our chaos" (27). Therefore, the chaos became a conspicuous theme of the 20th century modernist writings.

Modernist literature was highly influenced by the social chaotic circumstances people were living after the Great War. It deeply portrayed the chaos, loss and destruction of war, resulting in the degradation of social values and norms. Eysteinnsson Astradur states that modernist works reflected the modern chaos as a chaotic subversion of the communicative and semiotic norms of society (24). To powerfully represent this chaotic subversion, modernist writers used different techniques in their writings. For example, in novels they leaned on the fragmented narrative to reflect their break with the traditional chronological narrative. In poetry, modern poets utilized the free verse to show their liberation from the conventional form of poetry.

1.4.2. Techniques

Modernism, following Ezra Pound's famous claim to "make it new" (275), has no doubt made a profound impact on twentieth century English poetry. It pushed poetry towards using new styles of writing and techniques. Therefore, modern poetry sought to rebel against the tenets of Victorian Romanticism. For instance, it sought to speak through imagery and symbol instead of the personal voice. Among the major techniques practiced distinctively by modernist poets are the followings under the current study: language, symbol, imagery, metaphor, allusion and myth.

1.4.2.1. The Use of Language

W. H. Auden says a poet is a person who is in love with language (Goldstein-Jackson 122). The 20th century poets write their poems in new poetic dictions. Everyday language, for them, was more preferable than the standard literary language. They see that feelings and emotions are best expressed in the people common language. As T. S. Eliot says in his essay *The Social Function of Poetry* "the structure, the rhythm, the sound, the idiom of a language, express the personality of the people which speaks it" (19).

The language used by the modernist poets is common and familiar to all the society classes, but at the same time it is difficult and complex. They play with words to produce a fragmented text. For example, they are well famous by their use of the literary device "paradox". Therefore, their poetic language is known as the language of paradox. Abrams states that paradox is used by almost all poets (201). However, the element of paradox is regarded as a feature of poetic modernism. Such common, complex and fragmented language makes the reader attempt to find the missed words and hidden meanings.

In their poems, the modernist poets give a big attention to the word choice. For them it is the badge of being a successful poet because it is the key to create metaphors, symbols, myths, images and allusions. Although conventional poems include such literary devices, the modernist poet produces distinctive, fragmented and more difficult poetry. Therefore, the reader of modernism has to learn to understand unconnected, unfinished and incomplete text that the writer creates.

Another device that was used distinctively in the modernist poetry is repetition. The technique of repetition can be embodied in a poem in form of repetition of letters, words, phrases or verses. It is a poetic device that was used since the traditional poetry period but it became more familiar in the modern poems.

1.4.2.2. The Use of Symbol

When a man of literature wants to add a touch of ambiguity on his writing, “Symbolism” is the best technique to use. This literary device enables the writers to express their ideas in an indirect way. As Philippide says “symbolism rejects the direct expression and the accurate description” (164). The symbol can be an action, an event, a situation, a person or an object that represents another having a different meaning, in a particular context, which is much deeper and more influential. Writers use symbols to enhance their writings. Through the use of symbols a literary work can be given a richer and deeper meaning.

Symbolism is considered one of the first signs of modernism and modern poetry. It emerged as a deviation from romanticism. Using symbols develops the poet’s awareness of the need for new poetical language and novelty. Zafiu sees that symbolism offers the modernist poem “the consciousness of developing its own language” (10). One of the difficulties of the modernist poetry language is the way of associating the words meanings.

What is understood, at the first reading, as a mismatch is in fact a mechanism to make a shift in the words meanings. This is why ambiguity plays an essential role as a distinctive quality of this type of language.

A poet can double his poem's levels of meaning by using symbols. It can have a literal meaning that is ordinary and all the people directly understand or a symbolic meaning that is more profound and requires careful readings to be found. Symbols make the reader think beyond his level of ordinary consciousness. They make him interested to go inside the poet's mind, discover how he sees the common object and the world in an attempt to find the poem's inner meaning.

Poets best communicate the complexity of their thoughts and feelings to readers through using symbols rather than ordinary words. Simply, because symbols enhance the reader's understanding level of the poem's meanings. The modernist poets tend to present their themes not with direct statements but obliquely in symbolic words. For them, symbolism is the best tool to reflect their alienation, isolation and emotional stress because symbols give them the ability to say a lot about their complex emotions within a little space.

1.4.2.3. The Use of Imagery

Poetic imagery is as old as poetry itself; however, it occupied a very privileged status in modernist poetry. This is mainly because poetic imagery is essentially word-picture which adds significant meaning to the poem. According to Abrams, imagery signifies all the objects and qualities in the poem that can be perceived by sense whether through literal description, allusion, or through its devices: similes and metaphors (122). The image enables poets to express their experience and emotions. It is the best device to communicate ideas and feelings to readers engaging them into a sensory experience in

order to make the poem's meaning lucid for them. This is what modernist poets particularly sought for.

Modernist poetry rejected Romanticism, thus it tends to avoid the use of imagination and conventional imagery, that is to say the imagination that has no relation with reality and the images that are related with beauty, nature and gods. Modernist poetry was featured by the depiction of real life situations rather than the use of such imagination. It may often use some imagination but with connection to real state of human psychology, misery, sadness or feelings. To illustrate that, Pound's poem "*The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter*" includes some kind of romanticisms but it aims at reflecting how the village life is impacted by industrialization and urbanization. Also, modernist poetry attempts to portray real life scenes through using, for example, visual images. As Childs states the neglect of romanticism was due to its overemotional and metaphysical nature, whereas modernist poets see that the life should be represented through visual flashes or images (98).

The use of new images in the modernist poetry has become the landmark which differentiates the modernist poem from the traditional one. Unlike the traditional poetry which provides great details about the image, and then relates it to a philosophical idea or theme, the modernist poetry lets the image itself be the focus of the poem without talking about the theme behind it. In addition, the images in the modernist poems can be realized through an over use of unconventional metaphors and similes as well as the incongruous words. Modernist poets usually combine those devices in an abnormal style to produce a complex image through them. The images of alienation, city, and death have been enormously depicted by the modernist poets.

1.4.2.4. The Use of Metaphor

Metaphor has a substantial value in language use. No one can imagine any language without metaphors. T. S. Eliot argues that “Metaphor is not something applied externally for the adornment of style, it is the life of style of language” (Whitworth 108). Poets usually use a metaphor as an effective tool to make the meaning more clear, or a statement more vivid. It helps them to express their ideas and feelings. Moreover, the use of metaphor is highly significant in which it facilitates to realize more the images employed in a poem. Adonis says that metaphor is the highest stage of figurative language. An image has no power to provoke unless a similarity is made between two distinctive things. The more extreme the distance between the two compared things, the stranger the image appears and the more delight it arouses in the soul. An image is admired when through it a person can see two things as like and unlike, harmonious and divergent (46).

In traditional poetry, metaphor was employed as a decorative device. It was utilized in an analogy between two things, and to substitute one word with another. The poet borrows an expression, which literally denotes a specific meaning, and utilizes it for another expression which is not related to its literal meaning. For instance, “this boy is a lion” is a metaphor which implies that the boy is courageous. However, the modernist poetry was featured by the use of unconventional and exotic metaphors. In contrast to the conventional poetry which focused only on such metaphorical forms as telescoped metaphor, organic metaphor, subtle metaphor, complex metaphor and paired metaphor, the modernist poetry started to use new forms like surrealistic metaphor and psychological metaphor. For modernist poets, the more imaginative they are, the more sophisticated their metaphors are. They are now more interested in exotic metaphors, i.e., new metaphors that expand beyond their traditional function and are used to create new meanings rather than

merely creating verbal pictures. In the past, they used to avoid those metaphors but now they see them as the best to reflect their psychology, emotional complexities and spiritual reality. As Richards says “the metaphors we are avoiding steer our thought as much as those we accept” (92). Thus, metaphor and its particular uses seem to have always been at the center of any innovation in literature.

1.4.2.5. The Use of Allusion

The modernist poets embody their life’s complexities through their ambiguous poetry. The cause behind their verses’ ambiguous meanings can be traced back to the use of several literary techniques such as “allusion”. Generally, this device is understood as the use of previously written text in a new literary work. Abrams defines allusion as “a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage” (9). Simply, it can be seen as an outside reference in a text.

The modern poets allude permanently to mythical and historical figures through using different ways such as the use of foreign words and phrases. To illustrate that, in his *Sweeney Erect*, T. S. Eliot mentioned *Nausicaa* and *Polypheme* which are two Greek mythological characters from Homer’s epic *Odyssey*:

Morning stirs the feet and hands

(Nausicaa and Polypheme).

Gesture of orang-outang. (19)

A poet uses allusion to such mythical and historical figures for several purposes. For instance, this technique can be used for relating the present to the past. This enables the modernist poet to evoke a didactic aim from the past.

Thus, an effective allusion is a mixture of an old text and a new one. However, the meanings of this combination cannot be carried out by either text alone. The actualization of these hidden and ambiguous meanings is the reader's role. Though the writer supplies the allusion, he has no control over its meaning. Consequently, the reader is the one who makes the connection between the texts. Carmela Perri summarizes the reader's interpreting process of an allusion in five steps. Firstly, the poem's reader understands the allusion's literal meaning. Then he realizes that it is a reference to an already existing text. After that, he recognizes that there is a need for deeper interpretation. Subsequently, the reader evokes some meanings of the source text and finally he links the alluding text with those meanings to find the allusion's meaning (301).

1.4.2.6. The Use of Myth

The use of myth arose early in English poetry. It has been used since the Romantic and the Victorian eras. Generally, myth is defined as stories of ancient origin which people once believed to be true. It was used to explain why the world is like that and things happen the way they do. Additionally, myth is used to set the punishments for the rules that conduct people's lives (Abrams 170).

Myth has been distinctively used in modernist poetry. Unlike the traditional poetry which focused more on the use of history, the modernist poetry favored the use of myth. This is mainly because the history changes throughout time while myth is characterized by its vivid, unchangeable and flexible nature which allows its use in any period of time without losing its effect. Myth does not get affected by any social changes but rather adapts to those changes over time. To reinforce this claim, Abrams stated that Blumenberg suggests that myth is used to help humans to deal successfully with the harshness of a given reality. It is something necessary and not old-fashioned in an advanced scientific and

rational world. Myth develops according to the social changes proving that it is effectively able to deal with those environmental changes (170-171).

Modernist poets used what Eliot called a “mythical method”. This method refers to the past so as to provide meaning and understanding for what has been lost or destroyed in the present, by means of paralleling events in myth and events in the present. For them, this mythical method helps them to depict the chaotic post-war situation. Therefore, they started to emphasize the use of old myth in poetry. For example, Yeats has used Sphinx in *The Second Coming* and Eliot has used Teiresias in *The Waste Land*. Despite its highly imaginative and uncertain nature, myth has a spiritual influence on humans. It involves all parts of human culture such as the death of old values or the birth of new ones. According to Bell, “Myth could be many things, including nostalgia for a lost unity, a fascistic regression, or a literary structure, but its most important meaning was as an emblem of the human world as self-created” (14). The most prominent modernist poets who used myths in their poetry are Eliot, Pound, Auden and Yeats.

1.4.3. Form

Modernist poetry was profoundly impacted by Ezra Pound’s Imagism. The later excited modernist poets to experiment with poetic form, so free verse came to the fore. The use of free verse has become a significant aspect of most experimental poetry of the period. David Perkins comments that “Thanks mainly to Miss Lowell, free verse and Imagism made up the notion of modern poetry in the public mind. Controversy spread the news of free verse and enhanced its allure, so that more and more poets were tempted to try it” (314). In his Cantos 81, Pound says “To break the pentameter, that was the first heave” (538). This statement asserts the continual break of the iambic pentameter by the early decades of the twentieth century. As a result, there was a remarkable formal shift in the

English poetry at that period. This formal shift resulted in introducing a verse that was free of metrical structure. This verse was called the free verse.

The free verse is an open form verse which is organized in an irregular metrical form. According to Cuddon, the free verse has irregular meter and line length. It leans on the rhythms of natural speech and the counterpart of stressed and unstressed syllables (331). Abrams adds that it lacks rhyme or uses it intermittently (105). Based on those characteristics, the free verse was an unconventional form of writing in modernist poetry. This is because it reacted against the metrical tradition and the use of the iambic pentameter. Despite this fact, modernist poetry often breaks the rule. For example, the following verses, from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, have irregular lines and simultaneously have a musical rhythm:

April is the cruelest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire, stirring

Dull roots with spring rain. (3)

The first line has ten syllables but the second line has nine syllables. Also, the third line has eight syllables and the fourth line has five syllables. The words “breeding”, “mixing” and “stirring” provide a musical rhythm in the poem.

As far as poetic form is concerned, one usually gets the impression that modernist poetry is only for the free verse and totally against the traditional form such as the sonnet. This is too simple to be the case. However, the modernist poetics do not necessarily demand the rejection of the sonnet, nor were all the modernist poets against the sonnet.

Pericles Lewis comments positively on traditional form saying that “Not all modern poetry abandoned formal structure, however. For some of the greatest modern poets, the challenge was to use the traditional forms in ways appropriate to modern content” (144).

The most noticeable poet who did not abandon the traditional meter was W. B. Yeats. His mature work was usually considered modernist but he retained the traditional metrics in some of his poems. In fact, the history of W. B. Yeats reveals that he witnessed both the Romantic and the Modern eras. Therefore, he tends to merge between the traditional and modern form in writing his poetry. For example, Yeats included a lengthy sentence from Walter Pater’s essay on Leonardo da Vinci as an opening text for his edited book *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, and arranged this sentence as a poem in free verse:

She is older than the rocks among which she sits;

Like the Vampire,

She has been dead many times,

And learned the secrets of the grave;

And has been a diver in deep seas,

And keeps their fallen day about her;

And trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants;

And, as Leda,

Was the mother of Helen of Troy,

And, as St Anne,

Was the mother of Mary;

And all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes,
And lives
Only in the delicacy
With which it has moulded the changing lineaments,
And tinged the eyelids and the hands. (1)

William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot have been considered the major modernist poets who intensively employed the free verse in their poems. In addition, the inclusion of overheard speech, direct quotations from other poetry, allusions, or even the random juxtaposition of words were some of the radical attempts to break with the traditional poetry.

Conclusion

All the changes that characterized the early twentieth century European society highly affected the literature produced at that time. The advances of industrialization, technology and science led to a change in life style as well as people's thoughts and beliefs. The final attack that shattered the traditional values was the bloody World War I. As a result, a new literary movement emerged to reflect the new sensibilities of modern society. This movement is called modernism. Modernism came to revolt against the traditional forms and style of writings, resulting in the creation of new ones more appropriate to a life in a fully industrialized society.

Chapter Two

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Modernism in W. B. Yeats' *The Second Coming*

Introduction

After the horrors of the World War I, modern men felt disenchanted with their traditions, religion and morals believing that those old values led their world into a bloody warfare. Therefore, they discarded them. Further, their old vision towards the goodness of mankind became distorted. Modernism reflected this disenchantment through shifting away from old forms and styles, and consequently using new ones. Modernist writers became the representative voice of those depressed people. As the most effective and powerful modernist, W. B. Yeats thoroughly felt this disenchantment and manifested it in his poem *The Second Coming*. He also used new form and style of writing. This practical chapter discusses Yeats' profile and style along with the way he represented the characteristics of modernism in his poem in terms of themes, techniques and form.

2.1. Yeats as a Modernist Poet

William Butler Yeats is a famous Irish poet, dramatist and a prose writer who received the Noble Prize for literature in 1923. As a writer, Yeats knew a shift from late Romanticism to Modernism which dominated literature in the period between the two world wars. Yeats was well known through his poems which reflect the changes occurred in the world he lived in. Therefore, it is a quite interesting to give an overview of Yeats' profile and style so as to understand the effects of his life changes on his style and writings.

2.1.1. Yeats' Profile

William Butler Yeats was born in County Dublin on June 13, 1865. He was the son of John Butler Yeats, an artist, and a wealthy and conservative Susan Mary Pollexfen. Yeats' family moved to London when he was still young because of some requirements of

his father's work as an artist. However, Yeats was spending summers in County Sligo which is situated in Western Ireland. He was enjoying his mother's tales of the fairies and the supernatural spirits of her home in Sligo. This early exposure to the supernatural and the occult was embodied in Yeats' poetry in later years. Yeats passed away on January 28, 1939.

Yeats met his beloved, an Irish revolutionary woman whose name was Maude Gonne in 1889. She had a great impact on his life and poetry. She contributed in fuelling his nationalism that was to continue throughout his lifetime as a poet (Brown 47-52). He complimented her too much in the majority of his poems. Yeats proposed to Maude three times, but each time he received her refusal. At that time, Yeats produced Collections of poetry. The major two poems in the Collections were *The Rose* and *The Wind Among the Reeds*.

Furthermore, in 1897 Yeats met Lady Gregory, a member in the Gaelic Revival, who convinced him to start writing drama with Irish subject matter. In 1904 in Dublin, they established with George Moore and Edward Martyn Ireland's national theatre, The Abbey Theatre. In 1917, he married Georgie Hyde-Lee. His wife was also interested in the occult. Her ability of automatic writing "breathed new life into Yeats' old mysticism" (Stumpe). At that time, Yeats' works manifested his converging interest in philosophy, nationalism and literature, in addition to his return to myth. He abandoned the focus on Celtic mysticism and concentrated more on Christian myths and pagan Egypt. In 1933, Yeats and Georgie produced a notebook of spiritual thoughts named *A Vision*.

Another important fact about Yeats' life was his appointment to the Irish Senate by the Free State government in which he served two terms (Kelly 223). He was an active politician. Later, when the government was divided in the aftermath of the Irish Civil War

(1923-24), he left it. Yeats' concern with politics remained even when he grew older, though much of his status as the key poet of the early 20th century Irish Revolution is based on myth. He was greatly identified as an Irish nationalist, hoping for the unification of war-torn Ireland. Yeats' hate of war was expressed in his revolutionary poem, *Easter 1916*.

2.1.2. Yeats' Style

W. B. Yeats was a very famous poet in the twentieth century. Although he spent his childhood in London, Yeats' poems reflect his deep emotional attachment to his native land, Ireland. As a great supporter of Irish nationalism, Yeats devoted himself to write about native subjects. Thus, he wrote some novels and short stories with Irish characters and setting. The early twentieth century marked a great shift in Yeats' style of writing. This shift was caused by many factors, including his philosophy of gyres, his change of religion and his friendship with modernist poets.

Yeats' influence by the violence of WWI resulted in the development of his ideas for the political situation of contemporary world. Also, he had his own mystical view of the history and the future end of the world. So, he started to create the philosophy of gyres which had a great impact on his poetry. Yeats talked about this philosophy of gyres in his book *A Vision*. He explained that history consists of gyres, or cycles, that opposed one another. He confirmed that humanity was approaching the end of one of these gyres and thus about to enter the gyre antithetical to the Christian era. To clarify more, Yeats associated the primary gyre with democracy, goodness, and peace while the antithetical gyre was related to aristocracy, evil and war. To convey his personal belief in the history of cycles, Yeats borrowed images from several theories and religions.

Furthermore, Yeats' philosophy of gyres included Christianity as an important factor in his life. Yeats was raised as a Christian but later he changed his religion from Christianity to Paganism. This change was due to his loss of faith in the power of Christianity to save people from the violence and destruction of the war. In addition, he was highly interested in spirituality seeking a philosophy of life, which eventually led him towards occultism and a sort of religious faith in the power of words (Gordon). Yeats' loss of religious belief was deeply manifested in his poems. He depended on many religious and mythological allusions in his poems in order to reflect his religious concerns.

As Yeats grew older, he developed a friendship with great modernist poets such as Ezra Pound. The latter pushed Yeats away from his lyrical and mystical style into something more modern. Arguably, his most famous collection *The Tower* (1928) comprises political poems as well as a more modernist return to mythological topics like *Leda and the Swan*.

Those three factors contributed in Yeats' transition to be a great modernist poet. He was noticeable through his use of English language as an effective tool to convey the harsh social conditions England in specific and Europe in general lived after the harmful World War I. Child states that Yeats was an eminent modernist poet whose writings are aesthetically radical including innovative techniques (2). Yeats used such techniques as symbols, allusions, imagery and myths to reflect the modernist effect on his poetry. For instance, he used symbols and mythical images to represent the social and moral decay which became prevalent after the First World War. Yeats also experimented with free verse in his poetry but at the same time preserved some of traditional forms.

Yeats was called the chief exponent of symbolism in England. His poetry was rich in symbols. In his earlier poems, Yeats' symbols were simple and easy to understand.

However, in his later poems, they became individual, personal and complex. Some of the frequent symbols that Yeats used too much in his later phase were titles of his poetic writings such as *The Gyres*, *The Winding Stair*, *The Tower*, etc. They are used in different senses in different poems. For Yeats, symbols are the best tool to convey his visions and inner experience which cannot be communicated in any other way. Yeats prefers to take his symbols from a variety of sources such as his own plays, folklore, history and the Bible.

In addition, Yeats was a great myth-maker in modernist period. Abrams says that he constructed his own systematic mythology which he explained in *A Vision* (1926) and reflected in a number of prominent lyric poems such as “*The Second Coming*” and “*Byzantium*” (171). Concerning this point, Sharma adds that Yeats creates new myths or tries old ones in different contexts, or invests them with a new significance. For example, in the poem *Magi*, the old biblical story, Yeats modified it presenting the Magi as transported to stars looking down at “bestial floor”. One of the significant reasons behind Yeats’ extensive use of myths is his willing to educate the Irish public about their own culture which lay hidden in their folk tales. Because at the time when he was writing, Britain was controlling the educational system and the church doctrines did not give Irish folklore a room in the curriculum. Therefore, Yeats’ poetry was used as a tool to teach Irish men about their Irish heritage.

Yeats also highly experimented with different forms of verse and various stanzas. He used the free verse combined with the traditional meters and stanza-forms. Yeats did not like too much the use of free verse in his poetry. Even when he used some of free verse poems, he employed the form only to reject it “because he associated free verse with dejection and sterility” (Longenbach 214). The form of Yeats’ poetry is more chaotic with

no restricted form. This is what characterized Yeats' stanza patterns which correspond with the flow of thought and emotion.

2.2. Reading of the Poem

Shortly after the WWI, and exactly in 1919, William Butler Yeats wrote such a miraculous poem that is *The Second Coming*. At first, the poem was printed in *The Dial* in November 1920, and at a later time it was contained in Yeats' 1961 *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* from which the analyzed poem is taken. When William wrote *The Second Coming*, he was worried because of the problems that his land, Ireland, was going through. Seiden says that "'The Second Coming' was written during the Black and Tan Troubles in Ireland" (234). In general, the poem describes the darkness that captured not only Ireland, but also the whole world after the Great War. *The Second Coming* has been variously and widely interpreted by scholars whose aim was to resolve its complex symbolism and mythology. It is considered a masterpiece of modernist poetry as far as it is thought to illustrate the way Yeats interpreted the cycle of history:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all convictions, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.

The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out

When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born? (1-22)

The poem's title evokes the Christian prophecy of "The Second Coming" which anticipates the coming back of Jesus to the earth to reign after the end of the world. However, Yeats' poem describes a very distinctive vision of a "Second Coming" that will be guided, not by Jesus Christ but rather, by a "rough beast":

If we hold rigidly to the notion that only the poet's full mental experience can give the adequate symbol for the idea the title suggests, then we must not call up some conventional painting of Christ in a glory. No; we must pronounce the words "The Second Coming!" and follow precisely Yeats' own experience when he writes: I began to imagine, as always at my left side just out of the range of the sight, a brazen winged beast that I associated with laughing, ecstatic destruction (Stauffer 229).

The poem is divided into two stanzas. The first stanza describes the destructed European society after the First World War. Through this stanza, W. B. Yeats tends to depict the chaos and the violence that the people experienced during that harsh era, suggesting that modernity led to the society's decay rather than its flourish. This stanza starts by the following two verses:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The falcon cannot hear the falconer; (1-2)

Unlike many historians and thinkers who have ordered the historical events chronologically in a straight line, W. B. Yeats has a cyclical view of history. He has his own theory of history which he speaks about in his book *A Vision*. This theory is embodied in a diagram of “gyres”, i.e., two cone-shaped spirals, one inside the other, that is the largest part of one spiral rings around the narrowest point of the other. In his *Notes to The Poems*, Daniel Albright presents Yeats’ own description of the “gyre’s system” by stating that “All the progress of the human soul and the progress of history can be analyzed mathematically as the movement of two interlocking spinning cones, the apex of one screwing into the centre of the base of the other” (619). Yeats divided each gyre into sections, and each section represents a particular kind of period in history. According to him, every two thousand years a gyre ends and a new one begins, that is to say, a new historical era begins when another era ends.

In *A Vision*, Yeats stated that the gyres are cone-shaped. Since the falcon turns from the gyre’s lowest point, which represents the birth of the Christ, to its widest part, which indicates the era’s end, he gets farther and farther away from the falconer’s command. As the falconer, which represents the social moralities and the religion’s control, stands at the narrowest point, the falcon can no longer hear the controlling centre as he is getting higher in the gyre. Such symbols are used to suggest that the religious faith and social values are being neglected by the people gradually, as time goes by. This is the history’s gyre by which Yeats means that any period of civilization and order is followed by a chaotic period, after which a new era begins.

Literally, a gyre means a spiral, but symbolically it represents the life's move toward the inevitable chaos:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, (3-4)

The loss of control led to the falling of the political, religious and social systems. The situation was uncontrollable and the government lost control over the people. There was a moral decay and a wide spread of anarchy all over the world. Dublin witnessed a series of bloody events. A lot of people were arrested and the ones who were outside the prisons were already dead on the streets. According to *A Vision*, these are the characteristics of a historical era's end.

Yeats blamed the political systems for committing atrocities in the Europe. "Daniel Albright quotes Yeats telling to Ethel Mannin in 1936 to "look up a poem called *The Second Coming*. It... foretold what is happening... every nerve trembles with horror of what is happening in Europe'" (Disu 213). And so he did, William created a poem that horribly illustrates how imperialism would do almost anything in order to achieve its goal:

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The best lack all convictions, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity. (5-8)

Human beings were never much better at killing each other as they were in the twentieth century. At that time, the technology progressed beyond the man's control. Yeats was worried because of the utter cruelty and violence that mankind was able to cause due to technological advancement. The world had never seen such brutality like that of the World

War I. The huge loss of human life shocked the people. Everything was turned upside down. There was neither logic nor order. The rulers, who were designed to be the “best” and to do something about the destruction, lost conviction whereas those who were supposed to be the ruled falcons felt confident to speak out in the name of peace.

In the second stanza, W. B. Yeats offers a glimpse into the nature of the coming era in which chaos will replace order. He saw that humanity was turning toward the worse and the First World War was only the beginning. He was sure that the war’s violence was a sign of an approaching nightmarish apocalypse.

Surely some revelation is at hand;

Surely the Second Coming is at hand.

The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out

When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi

Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert (9-13)

In the exhaustive circumstances of the war, an image full of hope appeared in front of the poet’s eyes. It was a revelation of a new age: “Surely some revelation is at hand; /Surely the Second Coming is at hand” (9-10). Unfortunately, Yeats’ hope was disturbed by a “vast image of the Spiritus Mundi” (12), an ancient being, rather like the Sphinx.

The poet looked into the supernatural in order to escape the ugly reality. There, he found a creature “with a lion body and a human’s head” (14):

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,

A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,

Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it

Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds. (14-17)

The sphinx-like creature, with its “gaze blank and pitiless” (15), is moving slowly on the desert sands, while shadows of desert birds stagger about it. The birds’ disturbance by the sphinx-like rising suggests that the inhabitants of the modern world will be disturbed by its coming also. The analysis of the indignant desert birds’ image can be done simultaneously with the image of the falcon in the first stanza. Here, the word “desert” suggests a hard place to live. This means that people lived a harsh life and were not happy about their situation at that time.

The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born? (18-22)

Although the darkness drops again over the eyes of the speaker, he knows that something awful is about to happen. The sphinx-like creature’s twenty centuries of stony sleep have been made a nightmare by the rocking cradle’s movement. After it has been roused by the rocking cradle, the “rough beast” makes its way toward Bethlehem, the Christ’s birthplace, in order to wreak havoc on this world. By these verses, Yeats forecasts that this era will be ended and a new horrible age will begin by the rough beast’s birth.

In this poem, W. B. Yeats expresses his distrust in the reassuring traditional belief of the Second Coming. He can see no light at the end of the tunnel, but more dreadful anarchy. He was sure that all the signs indicate the approaching collapse of the society. Yeats ends his poem by a long deep question about the nature of that coming supernatural beast, whose birth will end everything.

2.3. Investigating the Implication of Modernism in The Second Coming

2.3.1. Themes

2.3.1.1. Theme of Alienation

The Second Coming is a poem through which W. B. Yeats wanted to reflect his society's destruction and complex feelings. It presents how modernity, which is supposed to lead the society to its flourish, led to a catastrophic war that made the individuals feel hopeless and alienated from the whole world. This feeling of isolation was well depicted in Yeats' poem.

In the first verses, William described how the loss of the conventional values threw the modernist society into a "turning" gyre that separated its members from each other. He stated that the falcon can no longer hear the falconer suggesting that the people have no connection neither with their social traditions nor with their religion. Growing up cut off from their culture, the individuals lost their identity and became known as the lost generation. Also, *The Second Coming* shows that the spread of anarchy everywhere led to a political collapse. Having no ruling system to unify them, the feeling of loneliness and alienation was strengthened among the modern society's members.

The verses three and six of the first stanza give another example of alienation. They state that "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold" and "The ceremony of innocence is drowned". Through these two verses, Yeats wanted to say that since "the centre", which represents the hierarchy, no longer has any power, this indicates the degradation of the modern society. This degradation made people feel alienated and unattached from their society.

Before anything else and as a modern man, Yeats was concerned with the depiction of his society's terrifying circumstances. He stated that the loss of the society's traditions

and the religious beliefs as well as the chaotic situation of the post-war world made the individuals feel alienated.

2.3.1.2. Theme of Death

The theme of death appears as a predominant theme in Yeats' poem *The Second Coming*. The darkness in his poem emerges from the painful circumstances in the contemporary society. His prophetic vision about the world ultimate end was haunted by the thought of death especially with the horrific beast that he predicted his approaching. Yeats expressed the suffering, darkness, despair, loss and death that dominated post-war European society in different ways, including the imaginary way to present clear images for the readers to experience the feelings themselves. He embodied two types of death: the death that involves the loss of real souls and involves the loss of traditional values and religious faith.

The second line of the first stanza demonstrates that the violence perceived during the era contributed to the people's abandons of their traditions and Christian religion. For example, the image of the falcon, no longer under the falconer's control as it flies ever higher, indicates that the modern man is no longer under the traditions' influence. Moreover, the association between the falcon and the falconer may be interpreted as the relation between the religion and the society. This suggests that Christianity has lost its power upon its followers, i.e., the people lost their faith in the power of Christianity to order their life and protect their unity. So, this line indicates the death of traditions and religious beliefs among modern men.

Furthermore, when Yeats wrote that "things fall apart" (3), he was recognizing that the old values which shaped the world are no longer able to keep "things" together, that "the centre cannot hold" (3). This verse particularly points to the degeneration of the

society since it was swaying away from the tradition and adopting new ideas instead. Thus, it indicates the death of traditional values. The next verse, “Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world” (4), represents the present chaotic situation of the post-war world.

Elsewhere, Yeats refers to “the blood-dimmed tide” (5). Here, the mentioning of “blood” suggests the massive violent deaths in the World War I, i.e., the death of many civilians and soldiers. Yeats continued “The ceremony of innocence is drowned” (6) showing that the utter cruelty and violence of the war washed away purity. In such chaotic world, Yeats revealed that “the best lack conviction” (7), i.e., wise and good people are reduced to uncertainty and self-doubt; however, the worst of people became passionate, probably, more powerful.

The whole second stanza reflects Yeats’ horrific prophecy of the beast’s coming to destroy the mankind and the entire world. This line “the Second Coming is at hand” (10) predicts the impending of the world’s end. The frightful image of the sphinx-like creature suggests the approaching of humankind’s death and destruction as well as the world’s demise.

2.3.1.3. Theme of Pessimism

The pessimism’s theme is one of *The Second Coming* poem’s major themes. The poem describes the gloomy and dark atmosphere that dominated the whole world after the WWI. Yeats has written it to foresee how the second coming brings repression and horror to the world. He took into speculation that the future will certainly bring further darkness than is already present in the current world. Through employing various allusions and symbols, Yeats asserted his claims of the world’s ultimate demise and made the poem possible to reflect his point of view of the civilization’s downfall with a bleak future.

The poem's pessimism is apparent in the second stanza when Yeats described the second coming. The following line "Surely the Second Coming is at hand" (10) conveys a sinister vision, suggesting that the history's end might not be heralded by the coming of Christ, but by the Antichrist's coming - a symbol of violence and chaos in the world. Yeats pessimistically predicted that the coming days before a new era or a new "cycle" of history will be more disorderly than the present because life will become a repetition of the distant past.

In the line eighteen "The darkness drops again but now I know", the darkness refers to an unknown mystery which might cause upheaval in the world and lead to the second coming. Further, it described how the world will meet its horrid demise. Here, Yeats alluded to the birth of the new world's fate that will also bring dark havoc and repression.

The last lines "And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,/Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?" (21-22) assert that the Second Coming is not a positive image. It is rather a "rough beast," slouching "towards Bethlehem to be born." The coming of such a terrifying creature indicates that the new era will be worse than the Christian era preceding it.

It can be noted that *The Second Coming* poem reflects Yeats' pessimistic view to the world's ultimate demise. His belief in the cycle of history makes him predict that the destruction, chaos, and repression, which the world witnessed after the catastrophic World War I, will be repeated again in the future. Therefore, the pessimistic tone dominates the whole poem, reinforcing Yeats' point of view of the civilization's downfall with a gloomy future.

2.3.1.4. Theme of Chaos

Yeats' poem *The Second Coming* depicts a complete anarchy that was caused by the breakdown of society in post-war world. The poem is thought to reflect a disillusioned

expectation for the post World War I resurrection. It is not only an impression of individual's misery and gloom, but a panoramic perspective of the total spiritual and moral loss that has surpassed the modern world. Yeats devoted the first stanza for describing the present social and political chaos that haunted the post-war world. He used an urgent tone in order to reflect the theme of chaos in his poem.

In the opening line of the first stanza, the "widening gyre" evidently refers to Yeats' opposing historical gyres that he talked about in his book *A Vision*. These gyres refer to the impending change of historical phases, the end of one time and the beginning of another. This is the poem's central premise that when one time or a gyre is reaching the end, another wretched and chaotic time is just beginning. Also, as the word gyre is connected with the word widening, this means that the spinning will be more turbulent. It seems that Yeats may have wanted to say that the problem of social degeneration and political instability is getting more and more out of control, as time passes.

Furthermore, the second line states that the "falcon cannot hear the falconer". This indicates that the hierarchical relationship between the falcon and his controlling master the falconer is damaged because the falcon is no longer able to follow the commands of his trainer. This line draws a powerful image of the natural order coming apart. The separation of the falcon and the falconer exemplifies the confusion and disorder in the world after the WWI. Another interpretation of this line suggests that the falcon may represent the modern man and the falconer represent the corrupted political system that is controlled by the tyrannical constituents of the early 20th century: nationalist, fascist, communist, etc., with no exception. Yeats believed that the random atrocities and the irrational violence of World War I are committed by these political regimes. Thus, in the poem, the flying of the falcon away from the falconer reflects modern man's refusal to follow the commands of the tyrant political leaders.

Still in the first stanza, Yeats used “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold” (3) to refer to an uncontrolled society where every organ of balance is affected by indiscipline and chaotic situation. The fact that the centre of control and order no longer functions signals a sinister message of doom. “The centre”, in this line, represents the traditional social hierarchy and since it no longer has any power, it suggests the disintegration of society. Probably out of all the previous lines of the poem, the line “mere anarchy is loosed upon the world” (4) is the line that gives the poem a political flavor. Including the word “anarchy” alone is almost sufficient to lead readers to think about the political instability in post-war era. Reading Yeats’ *The Second Coming*, during that time, demonstrates that the poem is also about activists, insurgencies, revolutions, and the likes.

2.3.2. Techniques

2.3.2.1. The Use of Language

Progressively, the reader of Yeats’ poem is led through a series of ominous prophecies that are related to the society’s discord. Those prophecies are driven from familiar biblical images and expressed in common religious expressions.

2.3.2.1.1. Diction

Much of the opening section’s power comes from the simplicity of its language dictions that are combined together to make deeper and more complex meanings. Such dictions are falcon, falconer, widening, anarchy, blood, innocence, etc.

Like the other modernist poets, Yeats gave a special attention to the “word choice” in his writings. Throughout his poem, he was ingenious in his choices. He used the simile “a gaze blank and pitiless as the sun” (15) to say that the coming beast will be a retribution, for the modern society’s crimes, just like the merciless burn of the desert sun. Also, Yeats’ use of verbs was suitable for conveying his prophecies. In the first stanza, Yeats used

several dramatic verbs such as *turning, widening, fall apart, loose and drowned* in order to depict the image of a system that is out of control. Furthermore, in order to show the darker aspects of the technological progress and to convey the sense that the twentieth century catastrophic events will continue to happen in the future also, Yeats leant on some progressive verbs. For instance, he used the word “widening” intentionally to present the modernity’s expansive and infinite damage on humanity.

In *The Second Coming*, W. B. Yeats emphasized his theory of cycles by relying heavily on repeating certain words. He reinforced the poem’s prophetic atmosphere by repeating words such as “Turning and turning” (1), “falcon” and “falconer” (2), and “Surely some revelation is at hand; / Surely the Second Coming is at hand” (9-10). The repetition of those words contributed to the poem’s foreboding and ominous mood. In addition, Yeats used the repetition of words like “turning,” “surely,” and “Second Coming” to build a sense of rhythm that replaces the traditional rhyme scheme.

In short, it can be seen clearly that Yeats’ use of language is a modernist use. The language’s dictions were common and familiar to all the society classes. Yeats chose each word carefully so that the image of the terrifying beast and the devastated society will be well drawn in the readers’ minds. More than that, he employed the literary device repetition, whose use became more familiar in the modernist poems, to serve different purposes.

2.3.2.2. The Use of Symbol

In his poem *The Second Coming*, Yeats predicted that the coming days will surely bring more darkness than is already existing in the present world. He leant extensively on various symbols in order to enable the readers to understand his prediction of the world’s end. The prominent employed symbols are the gyre and the cradle.

One of Yeats' major symbols, the "gyre" (1), is used systematically to show the destruction of the current civilization and the emergence of a new one. It symbolizes history or life cycles of men. The continuing "turning and turning" of the gyre illustrates the last breath of a period of history and its plunge into a new repressive world. This means that the disintegration of the gyre points to the end of time.

In the line twenty, the mention of the "cradle" plays a significant role in the poem since it symbolizes the manger in which the Jesus Christ was born. This symbol suggests that the beast will be born in the place of the Christ which represents a threat to the humankind and the world as a whole.

Yeats' extensive use of symbols in his poem helps him in communicating his ideas and views to the reader. The symbols have different meanings depending on the interpreter. Thus, employing symbols enables the interpreter to associate the poem's different aspects and understand the greater meaning that Yeats is attempting to convey.

2.3.2.3. The Use of Imagery

Yeats is a master of visual imagery. He employed many dark images to reflect his disillusionment with the idea of modern man as being innately good. Those images also convey the overall dark tone of the poem. *The Second Coming* utilizes Christian imagery concerning the apocalypse so as to portray the conditions in post-war Europe. In the first stanza, Yeats portrayed the decline of the world after the war, and in the second stanza, he anticipated the end result; the second coming and the downfall of humanity.

The first stanza's opening line represents the picture of uncontrollable and chaotic society with the imagery of the "widening gyre" (1). This image brings forth the idea that the direction of things is spiraling out of control. This is why the falcon was not able to follow the guidance of its falconer anymore. The image of the falcon "cannot hear the

falconer” (2) evokes horror and confusion because the falcon becomes lost, just as the humanity’s sense of morality seemed lost after the WWI. Interpreting the poem according to its biblical connotations indicates that the falcon flying away from the falconer is the man who has deserted the religious values.

The image of the “centre”, in line three, represents the foundation of order. However, the idea of its inability to hold reflects the breakdown of society’s foundation and the spread of chaos and turmoil. The image of “Things fall apart” (3) also suggests that the political and moral structure that used to guide and control people have been broken in the war time. In the following lines, Yeats drew up a horrifying picture of destruction and death as he stated “The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere/ The ceremony of innocence is drowned” (5-6). These lines refer to the devastation and the bloodshed brought on by the war.

In the second stanza, the repetitive image of “The Second Coming”, in lines nine and ten, reflects Yeats’ urgent tone which brings immediacy and fear to the poem’s overall condemnation of the modern world’s chaos. Yeats leant heavily on twisted and horrific animal imagery to symbolize an aspect of the world’s imminent end, without salvation. He painted an image of “Spiritus Mundi” (12) which he himself defined as “a general storehouse of images which have ceased to be a property of any personality or spirit” (Dicu 214). Yeats, here, predicted the coming of the beast which represents a threat to the humanity. Furthermore, the line “A shape with lion body and the head of a man” (14) has been interpreted by many scholars as the sphinx. Through the powerful image of sphinx, Yeats predicts that more destruction and death will be brought in the future resulting in the end of the world.

Yeats’ successful use of imagery helps him to set the dark mood of the poem. His unique employment of animal imagery appeals not only to the readers’ sense of sight, but

also to their sense of unease, regrets and fears over the approaching apocalypse. By this way, Yeats communicates his message to the readers much more effectively.

2.3.2.4. The Use of Metaphor

W. B. Yeats was famous by his socio-religious ideas that *The Second Coming* conveys. In his poem, Yeats used metaphors as a literary device to emphasize those ideas. The first metaphor is about a falconer and his falcon. It can have more than one possible interpretation. One view sees that since falconry was considered a traditional noble sport, flying farther and farther away from the falconer represents the modern society's leaving and rejection of its traditions. Other view claims that the falconer represents the social rules and the religious moralities that control the individual while the falcon embodies the modern man. By saying that the falcon can no longer hear the controlling centre, Yeats attempts to clarify that the society has lost control and its belief in God. Generally, this metaphor describes how humanity has lost its direction what led to the society's destruction.

In the following verse, "The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere" (5), the word "tide" is another metaphor that suggests a big quantity of blood indicating the death of many people during the war. Yeats continued to say "The ceremony of innocence is drowned" (6); the word "ceremony" is a metaphor that suggests, in this context, a negative state indicating that the individual's purity has been corrupted by the anarchy caused by the social morals deterioration and how the value of life has been died in the eye of the modern society.

In the lines "That twenty centuries of stony sleep" (19) and "Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle" (20), Yeats used the metaphor "stony" to reveal that the two thousand year of sleep were strong and so deep without movement, suggesting that

along the past twenty centuries, people had gone through hard times that were not easy to pass. Also, the metaphor “rocking” signifies the birth of the beast which is inhuman. Although the poem can have more than one interpretation, the metaphors point to one socio-religious idea that the order was lost and the anarchy occupied the society which has lost faith in God.

2.3.2.5. The Use of Allusion

The Second Coming poem is an example of the despair and fear of the future that many felt after the horror of World War I. Yeats was able to powerfully capture the mood through his use of many allusions, most of which have religious nature. He mainly borrowed his allusions from the Bible. The most central and prominent ones are the second coming of the Christ as referred to in *Matthew 24* and the beast of the apocalypse which is taken from *the Book of Revelation*. Yeats’ use of these biblical allusions serves his prophetic masterpiece about the world’s ultimate demise.

The title “*The Second Coming*” is a biblical allusion to the returning of the Christ to the earth. The second coming that Yeats meant in the poem does not bring to the mind the joy that Christ the Messiah will return to end all the misery and evil, it rather recalls the horrible events that took place before. So, the second coming here alludes to more terrifying events that will happen in the future.

Yeats used allusions to show how society was becoming undone. In the first stanza, he stated that “the worst are full of passionate intensity” (8), which is an allusion to the notion of irrationality in the modern era. In the second stanza, Yeats made several other religious allusions. He referred to the “*Spiritus Mundi*” (12), which means the spirit of the world. The *Spiritus Mundi* shows Yeats’ belief in spiritualism and mysticism that he expressed in his book *A Vision*. The image Yeats gets from the *Spiritus Mundi* is that of

the “Sphinx”, another allusion in the poem. The sphinx is an allusion to the coming of the antichrist and since it was described as a lion with human head, its presence is certainly frightening and alluding to something horrible that is coming to destroy the world as just the World War I did.

Furthermore, Yeats mentioned “the rocking cradle” (20) and “Bethlehem” (22). They are both allusions of Jesus Christ. The cradle represents the manger in which he was born and the holy city of Bethlehem was his birthplace. Yeats’ description of the rough beast as being slowly approaching Bethlehem suggests that it is coming to be born in the place of the Christ. Another allusion is the “rough beast” (21) which is probably to be an allusion to the beasts mentioned in the Bible. Those beasts appear as a symbol of corruption and evil. So, the approaching of this horrific beast truly signals the beginning of the world’s demise.

The use of allusions throughout the whole poem helped Yeats to powerfully convey his prophetic vision about the coming days. Particularly, employing biblical allusions to the apocalypse enabled him to capture the pessimistic and bleak mood of his contemporaries following WWI. His unique use of these religious allusions made his poem resonant to a larger audience and more profound to the interpreter.

2.3.2.6. The Use of Myth

As it does with the most complex poetries, myth plays an essential role in W. B. Yeats’ poem. Harold Bloom says that “Yeats was always writing mythologies” (210). In his poem, Yeats represented the society’s decaying moralities, which became prevalent after the war, by using mythical images inspired from the Irish culture. *The Second Coming* depicts well his use of mythic vision, what emphasizes the modernist effect in his writing.

Yeats used history in *The Second Coming* in order to make it a contemporary mythological literature. The period during which Yeats wrote his poem was marked by bloody events such as the civil war in Ireland and the World War I in Europe. He believed that those events indicated the Christian era's approaching end. He stated that every two thousand years a new era begins. According to his mythological-historical theory, the end of a historical era is indicated by the beginning of a dreadful war and the birth of a new spiritual leader to which he referred, in *The Second Coming*, as being a rough beast that is slouching towards Bethlehem to be born.

By reading the title, it is expected that the poem would speak about the Christ's second coming, but by reading the second stanza, the reader understands that W. B. Yeats prophesies the antichrist's coming. In this poem, Yeats used the myth which says that the antichrist will be born in the same birth place of the Christ. The mythological stories were used by William to unify the antichrist with the stone sphinx in the Egyptian desert, slowly coming to life and "moving its slow thighs" (16). Yeats alluded to the sphinx, a horrible creature taken from the Greek mythology, and gave him the effect of being evil and terrifying by using words such as "slouches" and "rough".

Through using the sphinx's myth, the poet added to the poem the impression of horror and evil. Yeats is horrified by the vision of the rough beast. He saw that the world is moving towards a new phase that will witness more decay and destruction by the birth of this creature. As shown above, the poet unified myth with history in order to create the sense of pessimism and death in his poem.

2.3.3. Form

The poem "*The Second Coming*" consists of 22 lines divided into two stanzas. The first stanza has 8 verses and the second one has 14 verses. The poem is written in blank verse, which means that it has a consistent meter but it lacks rhyme scheme (Shmoop

Editorial Team). This type of verse is so representative for English lyric poetry and so often preferred by Yeats instead of the rhymed one, showing his intention to better portray the disintegration of civilization. The meter is in a rough iambic pentameter; however, it is so loose and the exceptions are so frequent what makes the poem resembles the free verse with frequent heavy stresses (Khader 30). The iambic pentameter was the favorite meter in all English poetry from Shakespeare and after, in which each line has five feet and each foot contains unstressed syllable followed by stressed one. So, each line nearly has ten syllables: **da DUM / da DUM / da DUM / da DUM / da DUM**. This rule of the iambic pentameter is not consistent in *The Second Coming*. For example, the following lines start with stressed syllable followed by unstressed one:

Line 1: TURN ing / and TURN / ing in / the WIDE / ning GYRE

Line 9: SURE ly / some RE / ve LA / tion IS / at HAND

Line 22: SLOU ches / toward BETH / le HEM / to be / BORN

Moreover, the pentameter is clear and solid only in few verses such as in the second verse “The falcon cannot hear the falconer”. However, that clear and solid pattern is lost in other verses. To illustrate that, the first verse “Turning and turning in the widening gyre” has only four strong stresses while the six and eight verses of the same stanza “The ceremony of innocence is drowned,” and “Are full of passionate intensity” shorten the rhythm which has been established in other verses.

In addition, the poem has irregular lines’ length, i.e., it often contains over ten syllables per line. For instance, the eleventh line “The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out” has eleven syllables and the fourteenth line “A shape with lion body and the head of a man,” has thirteen syllables. This irregularity of lines’ patterns asserts that the poem does not follow a particular formal tradition.

The poem lacks regular end-rhymes. Even when they occur, they are coincidental like “man” and “sun”. Also, there is a great use of parallelism which means the repetition of words, phrase structures, images, etc. This technique is one of the striking features of free verse. In the poem, many repetitions and echoes appear in the following lines:

1st line: Turning and turning...

2nd line: The falcon... the falconer,

9th line: Surely... at hand

10th line: Surely the Second Coming... at hand

11th line: The Second Coming!

Altogether the effect of all these inconsistencies of the form supports and echoes *The Second Coming*'s theme of chaos when the centre is lost.

The analysis of *The Second Coming*'s formal features manifested the following main points: the poem has irregular rhythm and length, lacks end-rhymes, and relies highly on repetitions. Those features assert that *The Second Coming* is closer to free verse more than the traditional form. However, it is quite important to clarify Yeats' use of the pentameter in the poem. His mixture of two distinctive writing styles, in one poem, can be justified by Yeats' living in two different eras: the end of the Romantic era and the beginning of the Modern era.

Conclusion

Yeats' life deeply affected his style and poetic writings. He was strongly inspired by his theory of historical cycles, believing that the history repeats itself. Thus, he was predicting that more chaos and destruction will take place in the future. Yeats' view of history was represented in the poem's themes. It reflected the horrible chaos that swept the world after the WWI, suggesting that the future will witness more havoc. Other themes,

which depicted the melancholic post-war situation, were the themes of alienation, death and pessimism. In his poem *The Second Coming*, W.B. Yeats foretold a frightening scene which he saw as the coming of the world's end. He employed a combination of techniques so as to create a horrifying backdrop for his poem. He utilized powerful language, symbols, images, metaphors, allusions and myth to communicate his message of an impending apocalypse. The poem's form seems to not follow a particular formal tradition. Its formal features manifested that it is closer to the free verse more than the traditional form.

General Conclusion

After analyzing *The Second Coming* poem, we conclude that Yeats' poem is a modernist poem. W. B. Yeats as a modernist poet experimented new techniques and forms of writing different from the traditional ones so as to represent a new experience shaped by the devastation of the World War I in a fully industrialized world. Yeats' personal life also highly affected his style of writing. For instance, his early exposure to the supernatural and the occult made him use myths in his 20 th century works. Modernism's characteristics are implicated in *The Second Coming* at the level of themes, techniques and form.

Through the analysis of *The Second Coming's* themes, we remark that they deeply depict the anarchic and depressed atmosphere that haunted the post-war world. They also reflect Yeats' disillusionment with the present chaotic world as well as his bleak vision to the world's future. The overall devastation of the world due to the horror of the World War I contributes in the gloomy and dark tone of the poem. The major themes, which are analyzed in the poem, are the theme of alienation, death, pessimism and chaos. These themes embody the darker aspects of the modern life in the early twentieth century, thus we conclude that they are modernist themes.

Moreover, after analyzing the techniques that are used in the poem, we find that Yeats mainly used modernist techniques in order to evoke his prophecy of the world's ultimate demise. He predicted that the future will witness the coming of the beast to destroy the world's peace. Yeats' horrifying vision was risen from the darkness of the post-war time, i.e., the time of merciless killing, destruction, social and religious degeneration and political instability. Through using a combination of such modernist techniques as powerful language, symbols, images, metaphors, allusions and myth, Yeats communicates his message of the impending apocalypse successfully.

Furthermore, in our analysis of *The Second Coming*'s formal features, we notice that the poem has irregular rhythm and length, lacks end-rhymes, and relies highly on repetitions. Thus, we conclude that the poem's form is closer to the free verse more than the traditional form. Knowing that Yeats lived in two different eras, the end of the Romantic era and the beginning of the Modern era, justifies his use of the pentameter in *The Second Coming*.

After going through the analysis of the poem's themes, techniques and form, we can say that modernism's characteristics are implicated in the poem. So, we conclude that our hypothesis, which claims that *The Second Coming*'s poem is a modernist poem, is confirmed.

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ملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى تفصي تضمين الحداثة في شعر العودة الثانية لوب.ياتس. ت عتمد هذه الدراسة على المنهج الشكلي في تحليل الشعر. تمهد خصائص الحداثة المتمثلة في المواضيع والتقنيات والشكل الطريق لبرهنة أن العودة الثانية هو شعر حديث. من خلال تقسيم الشعر إلى مقطعين، يخصص ياتس المقطع الأول لوصف الفوضى والانحلال الحادئين في العالم بعد الحرب العالمية الأولى والمقطع الثاني لعكس نظرتة التشاؤمية حول نهاية العالم، حيث يتنبأ بقدم وحش مرعب والذي سيجلب المزيد من الدمار والبؤس والوحشية للبشرية. بعد تحليل مواضيع وتقنيات وشكل الشعر، تكشف هذه الدراسة أن خصائص الحداثة متضمنة في العودة الثانية وب القالي فإن العودة الثانية لوب.ياتس هو شعر حديث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحداثة، العودة الثانية لوب.ياتس، المواضيع، التقنيات، الشكل.