

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS' "THE SECOND COMING" AS A MODERN POEM

By

Marie-Antoinette VUVU DIKUMBANZILA

Senior Lecturer and M.A. Candidate

*Department of English Letters and Civilization, Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences,
University of Kinshasa*

ABSTRACT

*This article is concerned with man and society being the two main subject matters making the existence of literature valuable. It entails that literature depicts man's deeds in society and in different periods. For that sake, it can be stated that literature evolves all along with man's progress and failure in society. Indeed, it is the waves that blow in different period of man's history that gives the shape to the kind of literature to be produced in that specific time. This fact brings literature to be divided into different periods characterizing man's deeds and philosophy, and it constitutes the kernel point to be discussed in **The Second Coming**. In fact, it is question to demonstrate whether this work is a modern poem or not.*

In regard to trends, literature can be categorized in different isms such as, Pleiades, classicism, romanticism, symbolism, naturalism, realism, surrealism, imagism, expressionism, impressionism, Dadaism, futurism, modernism, post-modernism, etc. All these trends had special features which characterize them due to the way deeds faced by people during the different periods of time were portrayed, the techniques used to understand the way a work of art was conceived, and the reason for what this work must be portrayed in that way.

Key words: *Man, Society, Literature, Second coming, Man's deeds, Progress, Failure.*

RÉSUMÉ

*Cet article s'intéresse à l'homme et à la société comme étant les deux principaux sujets qui font la valeur de l'existence de la littérature. Cela implique que la littérature dépeint les actes de l'homme dans la société et dans de différentes époques. Pour cela, on peut affirmer que la littérature évolue tout au long des progrès et des échecs de l'homme dans la société. En effet, ce sont les vagues qui soufflent à différentes périodes de l'histoire de l'homme qui donnent la forme au type de littérature à produire à cette époque spécifique. Ce fait amène la littérature à être divisée en différentes périodes caractérisant les actes et la philosophie de l'homme, et constitue le point central à discuter dans **The Second Coming**. En fait, il s'agit de déterminer si cette œuvre est un poème moderne ou non.*

En ce qui concerne les tendances, la littérature peut être classée en différents domaines tels que la Pléiade, le classicisme, le romantisme, le symbolisme, le naturalisme, le réalisme, le surréalisme, l'imagisme, l'expressionnisme, l'impressionnisme, le dadaïsme, le futurisme, le modernisme, le post-modernisme, etc. Toutes ces tendances ont des traits particuliers qui les caractérisent en raison de la manière dont les problèmes rencontrés par les personnes au cours des différentes périodes ont été représentés, des techniques utilisées pour comprendre la manière dont une œuvre d'art a été conçue, et de la raison pour laquelle cette œuvre doit être représentée de cette manière.

Mots clés : *Homme, société, littérature, second avènement, actes de l'homme, progrès, échec.*

INTRODUCTION

This article aims at demonstrating whether Yeats' *The Second Coming* is really a modern poem. Indeed, it is question to depict through the reading and analysis of this poem elements which characterize it as a modern poem.

1. The Problem

The problem in this study is to demonstrate how *The Second Coming* fits in what we experience in the modern time; though the poem was written long ago, it is still modern because we are able to see what it predicted nowadays.

2. Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to prove that *The Second Coming* foretold the fearfully amazing events unfolding in the universe today. The latter is torn by sorrows, wars, tribulations and troubles everywhere.

3. Hypothesis

The hypothesis to this article might be stated that *The Second Coming* is actually a modern poem depicting the fearfully amazing events unfolding in the modern time when man behaves far more than an animal. As a consequence, after the WWI and WWII resulted in man's invention of machinery and weaponry, man's life would be destroyed by the same appliances made by his own hands.

4. Research Methodology

For a better achievement of this work, I resorted to the reading of written materials pertained to the topic. However, for a better analysis and interpretation of this work, a glance was directed to a number of approaches that helped for the understanding of the poem, among others, the sociological approach, the structural also known as linguistic or formalistic approach, the psychological and psychoanalytic approaches, the discourse analysis approach, the pragmatic approach, the hermeneutic approach, the reader-response approach, and so on.

I. PRESENTATION OF *THE SECOND COMING* AS A MODERN POEM

I.1. The Author

William Butler Yeats is considered as one of the outstanding seeds of modernism, by the fact that he had influenced his contemporary fellow writers. He is the most paramount modernist writer whose works inspired so many modern writers in the world. Most of his sentences are exploited in works written by other writers of modern and postmodern periods. The 1st line: *Turning, turning in the widening gyres*. This was taken as title by Robert Parker in 1973 (Parker Website). Achebe with *Things Fall Apart* (1958), drawn from his apocalyptic title, *The Second Coming*. *The center cannot hold* inspired ELYN SAKS's *My Journey through Madness* (2008), *The Second coming: A pre-Mortem on Western Civilization*. In a nutshell, this work has become an international affair.

This poem keeps on influencing people even today. Whenever and wherever there are troubles in a given spot of the world, people do not forget to resort to Yeats' verses from *The Second Coming*. Yeats is seen as a prophet who predicted disorder and anarchy which would characterize the world in the coming days. Even the world organization, NATO resorts to Yeats' verse to describe the condition in which the world is found today. An illustration can be seen through articles issued by NATO, articles entitled *Slouching towards Sirte: NATO's war in Libya, and other African countries*. Politicians also resorted to this poem; illustration can be read through the saying of a right-wing, or capitalist moral hectoring: *Slouching towards Gomorra*. Other examples can be read through different titles provided by many people such as a memoir entitled *Slouching towards Adulthood*.

Spiritus mundi influences NORTHROP Fryes in his *Spiritu Mundi, Anyone?* *The rough beast* can be seen for instance in Seth Chamber's short story collection *What a Rough Beast?* And in Hunter Fox's *Rough Beast*.

This borrowing of Yeats' *The Second Coming* phrases by other writers really demonstrates that the problem treated in this work had affected the whole modern humanity. The exploitation of those elements just confirms that Westerners feared to face other ceremonies of violence. They wrote to drive people understand that violence is something to be avoided, since it just brings chaos in the community, as it is excerpted in the lines of the first stanza of the poem.

Indeed, as described above, violence does not construct but rather destroys. It separates and creates hate within people living together. Ceremony of love cannot be seen within a community where people do not speak the same language and view things in different ways. In this kind of society nothing can work. This is what is described in this poem, even the church was found unable

to provide solution to the fact that had brought disorder in the world, and Yeats belonging to the protestant church, and as a good reader of the Bible understood that some churches had contributed a lot to the destruction of mankind, as it is claimed from the 4th up to the last lines of the second stanza of this poem:

*When a vast image out of the Spiritu Mundi
Troubles my sight: a waste of desert sand;
A shape of lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while about it
Wind shadows of the indignant desert birds*

In fact, his poem constitutes a spring from where lots of modern writers draw data today to depict all the hard conditions that man is being experienced in this contemporary context. Indeed, man by himself or by the influence of his environment is reduced to the animalistic level. He does not think to commit an act any longer. He just performs what his drive prompts him to do without thinking of the danger that this can generate in the community.

Indeed, the higher improvement of technology and science, has corrupted man's drive and developed a feeling that brought the disintegration of world's communities. Today, man thinks of satisfying his own needs and interest, without taking into account his fellows' welfare. He has become materialistic, selfish, killer, machiavelist, and the like, as shown in the first stanza, from lines 4 up to 8, and second stanza of this poem from lines 4 up to 9.

Yeats portrays the situation of the contemporary world with lot of vigor by using a style which brings the audience to understand the gravity and seriousness of the situation that people faced and keeps on facing up today. It is this aspect which makes the poem to be more emotional, realistic, and attractive. He uses devices that contextualize the work in each condition of hardship that people faced in the world. This can be seen through the use of Monologue, the disruption of chronology, exaggeration, antithesis, metaphor, etc. This way of portraying the situation by resorting to the literary devices mentioned above made him be considered as the greatest writer of the modern period.

Indeed, apart from what is stated previously, his way of caricaturing vices such as: man's exploitation by man, oppression, tyranny, dictatorship, megalomania, etc. makes the work be seen as the source of inspiration for other writers who dream to write about injustice, man's exploitation, anarchy in the world, and the like.

Yeats for all his expertise in attracting the audience and portraying modern situations is declared to be the seed of modernism. He had influenced writers

such as Ezra Pound, T.S Eliot, W.B. Auden, D.H. Laurence, and others. Like other modern poets, Yeats' works revolved around Love, History, and mysticism.

However, as a true modernist, his works, mostly his poems and plays were focused on criticizing the misdeed brought by science and technology in the world, and the consequence that this left behind people and societies. People's minds are affected by the wounds left by the wars, oppressions, discrimination, injustice, violence, and crimes performed in the world during the modern time. As it is described in the 15th -19th lines of 2nd stanza:

*A gaze of 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 I know
That the twenty centuries of stony sleep*

This has become myth for modern people. Indeed, wherever they are they always face situations which do not leave them experience peace as expected, they are always disturbed by situations which affect their mind. That is, today, modern people drives are deeply affected by traumatic situations which make them behave like madmen. For that, Yeats being influenced by Signum FREUD and Carl JUNG portrays the mind of modern people as the one of those whose life is meaningless, i.e. the mind of those who lost hopes. As demonstrated in the three last lines of the first stanza:

*The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lacks conviction, while the worst
Are full of intensity.*

As excerpted through these lines of the poem, it can be seen by the way he depicted the damage caused by the WWI and other revolutions and his predilection of the WWII from the 18th up to 22nd lines of the 2nd stanza of the poem under study:

*The darkness drops again but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by rocking cradle
And what rough beast, its hour comes round at last,
Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?*

I.2. The Poem

The Second Coming has lots of features proving to be a modern poem. It is a twenty-two-line poem written in free verse. In fact, a free verse is a poem which does not follow the conventional rules set for presenting a poem. Free verse originated from the philosophy proclaimed by modern writers, philosophy

based on making things new. It was a way for modern artists to free themselves from the established theories pre-elaborated by those who had the monopoly of power. It has an unrhymed pattern. Prentice-Hall (1989:1061) argues that free verse is a poem with no clear defined metric pattern or rhyme schemes. Kadege (2003:36) in the same token points out that free verse lacks regular line length. It relies on natural speech rhythms of the language.

Apart from what is stated above, *The Second Coming* was written and published at the beginning of the 20th C., a period which broke the link with the Victorian period Ngwaba (2016-2017). Besides, the issue treated within the text revolves around the WWI that is, it is ranked in the category of war poem. It can be seen through the different lines of the poem.

Turning turning in the widening gyres describes the troubles that characterized the world in that modern period. It was a period of lawless. When the falcon could not hear his master the falconer. It was a chaotic period when the inferior could no longer obey his master. Everybody was the master of himself. For Yeats, that civilization should be replaced by another which would bring order, peace, and justice, and harmony within people of the world. Otherwise, the whole humanity would disappear. Indeed, Yeats describes the 20th C as the cycle of atrocities. Everywhere, in the world people were fighting each other. These atrocities are well excerpted in the all the lines YEATS's poem *The Second Coming* in the first stanza. In its first line, 2nd line, 3rd line, 4th line, 5th line, ... the 8th line. In the 2nd stanza: 4th line, 5th line, 6th

This poem describes the great fear that characterized people during that time. They lived in the deepest psychosis, which brought world people lose faith in one another. It is the spot when all the isms propounded in the world were proclaimed to demonstrate the scene of force. Communism, Socialism, as well capitalism, Nazism, fascism. Indeed, each, on its side, worked for protecting its position in the world scale, and displayed how powerful it was. Each wanted to show that he was the strongest, and the consequence was that, the weakest were sacrificed and paid the price of this lots of fights which were and are still imposed by the so called most powerful people. As it can be read through these lines: 4th...8th; 12th ...14th; 15th ...22nd.

The poem depicts where humanity would arrive with all this force of demonstrations, and foretold that the second coming is at hand. That is, it wanted people to know that rough things are coming with the appearance of the antichrist who were being born. This is argued from line 19 up to 22.

In fact, it alludes to what is stated in the book of Daniel 7:13 and of Revelation 13:1- and 22:10 in the bible. This rough beast is the incarnation of all evils that the world is going to live. It epitomizes the Great beast who is going to have the leadership of the world and who is going conduct cynic actions

thanks to the war machines invented by scientists and which would destroy third-quarter of the humanity in a short period of time, as it can be seen from the 19th line up to 22nd of the last stanza.

Indeed, the beast incarnates the devil. His first coming was when he was thrown on the earth to harm people while his second coming is when he is coming for sealing all mankind to be at his service. All the hardships faced by modern people are just the result of what the rough beast will impose on humans to destroy peace and serenity between people of the world. He will introduce system based on killing innocents, imposing rules that cannot help weak people to live in good standards (capitalism), changing the pre-established God recommendations to evils. That is, what can be seen in Dadaism, where people were painted naked to show that man has lost all his reason, homosexuality, etc. Indeed, Dada artists exploited this attitude to display their reactions of what the post war has left as scars on the youth in all the aspect of life. This demonstrated that wars have sacrificed a whole generation called the lost generation, mostly the youth. The lines of this poem can be read as illustrations:

The ceremony of innocence is drowned: in the 6th line of the 1st stanza.

The best lack all conviction, while the worst: in the 7th line of the 1st stanza.

Are full of passionate intensity.....: in the 8th line of the 1st stanza.

When a vast image out of the spiritus mundi: in the 4th line of the 2nd stanza.

Troubles my sight: somewhere in the desert: in the 5th line of the 2nd stanza.

A shape of lion body and the head of man... in the 6th line of the 2nd stanza.

A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun, in the 15th line of the 2nd stanza.

In fact, the situation depicted in the poem really reflects the conditions in which man lived in that period. It is just the mirror of what occurred in the world. Not only Yeats explains the eschatological conditions the world would live after the WWI and II but also he predicts what would come later by describing in the 21st line *the rough beast*, which is moving towards Bethlehem to be born.

Indeed, Bethlehem which is question here is not the one located in Israel, the spot where Jesus Christ was born, but rather the world where this beast which is the incarnation of evil would impose his hegemony over the whole humanity and would destroy innocent souls. This reality was true since after the WWI and the WWII other terrifying situations were set up in the world such as colonization and neo-colonialism, apartheid in South Africa, racial discrimination in America, dictatorship, rebellion, and terrorism all over the world, revolution in different parts of the world, etc. All these are the seed sowed by that beast in order to destroy the world peace, as quoted from the 18th line to 22nd.

Symbolism is one of the artistic trends propounded by some western writers and artists, mostly the French such as Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Valérie, Paul Verlaine, Gustave Flaubert, Stephane Mallarmé etc. as a modern trend, symbolism took its dawn in France and was spread later in other European countries as the Great Britain, Ireland, etc. this movement was born from the disgust that Western artists felt of the ugly and brutal realities generated by European industrial civilization. To avoid being caught by the misdeed brought by these scientific and technological progress, those artists resorted to use symbols as a means of expressing ideas. This trend was seen as one of the most difficult, since the readers were compelled to endeavor to get in the mind of the author to understand the message he wanted to convey in the text. It was a reaction against naturalism and realism. Symbolism stressed on sensation or the representation of something from the mind, before the latter be presented physically.

Symbolism is a doctrine of presenting a reality through the use of symbols. Yeats is one of the modern writers for whom symbols incarnate reality hidden in the secret of the minds. For him, the world is guided by spiritual forces that the physical senses cannot see. To depict them he resorted to symbols, myth, and occultism that epitomized them in order to give the shape that could be seized by human minds. He viewed for instance, man's history as a series of cycles. The *gyres* used in the first line of the first stanza of the poem the Second Coming express the successions of periods that characterized the world history. The opening of this first stanza with the widening gyre really demonstrates that a monster was thrown on the earth to disturb the world system. *The falcon* symbolizes supersonic and sophisticated machines, mostly planes invented by Western scientists during the dawn of the 20th C. planes which caused damage to humanity and that the manufacturers were unable to control their use because of their sophistication. Mazour (1994:600) states that *World War I changed the lives of ordinary people in the West enormously. It introduced more powerful weapons of destruction than the world had ever seen.* The same thing can also be read in the lines below:

*Turning, turning in the widening gyres
The falcon cannot hear the falconer
Things fall apart. The center cannot hold*

This just means that before that period, there was communication between the falcon and the falconer. The Falcon here is the new civilization made by scholars who are portrayed here as falconers. The latter is unable to control and provides advice to what he has himself invented. Today, it is this machinery which leads him. Man is found in the situation that he is brought by hurricanes that he cannot stop. This falcon also epitomizes rebels or stubborn people who

do not respect the rules established by the institutions to keep peace among people in the world.

The *center cannot hold* symbolizes the world system which is completely disturbed and destroyed by what science and technology have brought in the world. It incarnates the doom that the world is facing and is going to face in the recent future. This doom can be seen through the killing and other violent actions that are going to be conducted by fascist regimes in the world, as it is stated in these lines:

*Mere anarchy is loosed in the world; the bloody-dimmed is loosed
And everywhere the ceremony of innocence is drowned.*

In fact, the anarchy depicted in can be read in the first, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th lines of the poem. The ceremony of innocence referred to the peace, love, justice and everything of that kind that existed before this cynical period characterized by the industrial revolution. This period has given place to the one characterized by massive killings and violent actions. The case can be read from the cynic actions committed by Hitler, Mussolini, and other imperialists in the world. As it can be read in the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th lines, line of the 2nd stanza.

In this stanza, the speaker presents the condition in which lives modern people. This anarchy is well expressed by the movement made by the falcon in *turning turning in widening gyres*. Indeed, each society is guided by laws. However, when this order is broken, this leads to a chaotic situation which brings misery and disarray within the society.

The image of *the center cannot hold* is the symbol of the result brought by the disorder or anarchy brought by science and technology. Indeed, politically and morally speaking, all the structures are destroyed. The only thing that remained was the anarchy installed by this disorder caused by those different chaotic situations. This situation made the innocent, i.e. good people lose hope and the wicked be full of wickedness to sew chaos in the world, as it can be read in the 4th line of the 1st stanza.

Other symbols are seen in the 3rd stanza, 3rd line: *when a vast image out of the spritu mundi*. In the 4th line of the 3th stanza: *somewhere sands of desert*. in the 5th line of 3th stanza: *A shape with lion body and the head of man*. in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th lines of the 4th stanza:

*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
Those twenty centuries of stony sleep*

In the last stanza: were vexed to nightmare by a *rocking cradle*: symbolizes confusion caused by the monster depicted in the previous stanza.

And what a rough beast, its hour comes round at last: the rough beast incarnates devil force that is going to impose his authority in all the world system.

It is a terrifying and horrible creature which is going to spray all kinds of violence in the world. The world is going to be ruled under his control. This beast is a human being who has the capacity of imposing his rule over the whole humanity as stated in the Bible, precisely in the book of Daniel and in the one of Revelation 20:19-21

Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born? Bethlehem which is question here is the world or the earth where the devil is going to be born for destroying the world, and this Bethlehem is the antithesis of the real Bethlehem where Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior was born.

The Second Coming is itself a symbol entailing not the second coming of Jesus Christ, but rather, the one of the antichrist, who is the devil who is going to bring suffering or cynical situation in the world. In fact, this symbol demonstrates the coming of terrifying figures who are going to bring desolation through their cynical doctrine as Nazism, fascism, and the like. Among them are mentioned the German, Adolph Hitler, and the Italian, Mussolini. Nathanael Greene (1968:113-116) those two people have disturbed the cycle of the world system, as excerpted in the 2nd and 3rd lines of the second stanza of the poem.

The author is considered as a naturalist since his philosophy met the one of naturalists such as Emile Zola and others. He is also viewed as a naturalist since he first resorts to nature as the source of his inspiration. This can be seen from the way he depicts the condition of the nature in the modern time. The use of lexemes such as: falcon, widening gyre, falconer, and the center cannot hold, the rough beast, spiritus mundi, etc. all these bring the audience to read Yeats attachment to the nature. His sorrow of noticing the way this nature is destroyed by forces built by man for his own interest. As stated in the lines 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 of the 1st stanza:

*Turning turning in the gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drown.
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity*

Indeed, Yeats' use of naturalism is described from his **pessimism** that can be read in his way of portraying the modern period with all the chaotic deeds that brought the world into disasters. In fact, Yeats presents the situation without providing the solution. He leaves this task to the readers to react, as it can be seen in the lines 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, where it is shown a vast image of the spirit which is running the world:

*When a vast image out of Spiritu Mundi.
Troubles my sight: a waste of desert sand;
A shape with lion body and the head of man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Wind shadows of the indignant desert birds.*

In fact, as a naturalist, William Butler Yeats first resorts to nature as his prior source of inspiration. This can be seen from the way he depicts the condition of the nature in the modern time. The use of lexemes such as: *falcon, widening gyre, falconer*, in the 1st and 2nd lines; the center cannot hold: in the 3rd line; *bloody-dimmed tide* in the 5th line hold, *spiritu mundi*, in the 12th line; *sand of desert* : in 13th lines, *lion body and the head of man*, in the 14th line; *a gaze pitiless as the sun* in 15th line; *reel shadow of the indignant birds* in the 17th line; *the darkness drops again* in 18th line; the twenty century of stony sleep in 19th line; *what a rough beast* in the 21st line; and *Bethlehem* in the last line of the poem.

All these elements portrayed above, demonstrate plainly Yeats attachment to the nature, and his sorrow of noticing the way this nature is being destroyed by the forces manufactured by man for his own interest and glory. All these made Yeats pessimistic and unable to provide therapy, as stated from the 19th up the 22nd lines of this poem.

Surrealism is one of the forms of art produced in the beginning of the 20th c. it was proclaimed by the French writer André Breton in 1920's. Surrealism is defined in *The Surrealist Manifesto* as a pure state of mind that allows someone to express thoughts freely and without the encumbrance of rational thoughts and societal rules. As it can be seen in indeed, this movement was expressed in all kinds of artistic works produces in the modern period. It was born with the effects of WWI left on people, mostly in Europe. Lot of people believed that the conflict originated of the accumulation of excessive rational ideas, materialism, and machiavelism developed by the aristocratic class.

For surrealist artists, truth is not to be found in reality, but rather in what is not visible. That is, truth is hidden in unconscious desires. Indeed, like other a surrealist artist, Yeats used dream imagery to paint the drive of modern people dominated by violent situations. This is also sustained by Carl Yung who put stress on the archetype as an element characterizing people's minds.

For Jung, dream constitutes the focal element which defines man's reactions. Yeats portrays modern human conditions as facts or tools which have corrupted modern people's psyches and this has become an unconscious archetype as propounded by Jung. These unconscious archetypes generated what incarnate the antichrist in mankind. This can be seen through the scene of violence lived by man as described in the five last lines of the 2nd stanza of the poem:

*The darkness drops again but now I know
Those twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour comes round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*

These last lines mentioned above completes the first stanza which opens with ceremony of violence which has characterized the world during the beginning of the 20th C. indeed, this period was characterized by violence described in the WWI, Russian Revolution, and other political disorders lived by Europeans and other people of the world. Yeats own country was victim of that. This can be seen through the conflict opposing Ireland to the Great Britain. And in the last stanza, Yeats shows what is going to happen in Europe.

In fact, another scene of violence and anarchy is going to be lived by Europeans and this would spread in all other countries of the world. For that, Yeats, as a Viconian/Freudian writer, suggests a solution which should derive from the bible, that is people should resort to the bible to prepare themselves for the true second coming of Jesus Christ, the coming which is going to bring salvation, peace, justice and equity within the world, since the second resorted to in the poem is the one of the Antichrist and not of Jesus Christ.

This poem is at once a call and warning about the danger which is looming the world on the horizon. In fact, the WWI and WWII had passed but other horrible and terrifying situations are coming. Armageddon, the WWIII. People should prepare themselves for not being victims of these coming plagues. For that people should be stuck to Jesus Christ the true provider of peace and justice. The biblical allusions resorted to by Yeats is just for telling people not to dream but to be stuck to the Almighty God, the provider of true peace and justice. This is the only way of escaping the catastrophe that will bring damage within the world.

Indeed, the beast here incarnates all the negative forces which have destroyed the world system. This includes not only the oppressive regimes such as Nazism, communism, fascism, but also all what science and technology had introduced in the world as chaos. The beast can be seen in all the atrocious situations that marked the history of the world: the bombing of IROSHIMA and NAGASAKI, Jewish holocaust, Stalin regime (communism), colonialism in Africa, racial discrimination in the USA, sustained by the KU KLUX KLAN, racial segregation in South Africa, etc.

Like other modern trends mentioned previously, futurism is a literary and philosophical movement born in the dawn of 20th C. in 1900. It is an avant-garde modern movement founded in Milan in Italy by the Italian Poet Marinetti. The futurist philosophy was exposed for the first time in the futurist Manifesto on 5th February 1909. This will be reproduced in the French daily newspaper on 20 Feb, 1909. (Wikipedia free encyclopedia).

The outstanding of futurist figures were apart from Marinetti, Umberto Boccioni, Carl CARRA, etc. futurism as ideology spread all over Europe, especially in France, Germany, The Great Britain, etc. Like other modern trends, futurism was seen in all the artistic forms: music, architecture, dance, sculpture, literature,

Futurist artists always painted modern cynic events. This is sustained by what is depicted in Yeats's *The Second Coming*. As a futurist poem, *The Second Coming* puts stress on word autonomy that is, Yeats had created his own language characterized by free syntaxes and use of free expressions, as it is demonstrated in the following lines:

*The falcon cannot hear the falconer
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The boom-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of intensity.*

Besides, as a futurist poem Yeats resorted to the feature such as violence, youth, technology, rapidity, cars, aero planes, etc. Elements of speed and technology can be read in the first stanza, from 1st up to 4th lines:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,*

The falcon quick fly is one of the characteristics of futurism that can be read in *The Second Coming*. The falcon embodies this sophisticated and supersonic planes invented by Westerners who is embodied by the falconer. The falcon flies far in the way that even its inventors lost control over its.

Violence is repeated in most of the lines of the poem. It can be seen in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 19th, 21th lines and 22nd line.

It is a trend born as reaction against the traditional way of viewing things. Biblically speaking, this trend interprets eschatological deeds that will lead to the end of the world (wikidictionary). *The Second Coming* as a futuristic poem describes the coming events which are going to destroy peace and harmony within the world.

Yeats portrays the conditions in which the world is going to be found, if man does not pay attention. The antichrist who slouched towards Bethlehem being born has gone there to prepare something which is going to fire the world and no one is going to be able to stop it, as it is quoted in the lines 19, 20, 21, and 22 of the 2nd stanza of the poem.

Imagism is a trend propounded by the American modernist Ezra Pound. It uses images to convey message. It is based on the exploitation precise language to help readers catch the message. This literary trend inspired lots of modernist writers such as William Butler Yeats as is stated in Prentice-Hall (1989:944). In *The Second Coming*, this can be read through the use of images such *widening gyres, the falcon, the center*, in the first, 2nd, 3rd lines of the first stanza. And *vast image, sand of desert, a shape with lion body, the sun, desert bird, stony sleep; rocking cradle, rough beast, Bethlehem*, in the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 9th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th lines of the second stanza.

Expressionism, like other trends listed above, is one of the trends characterizing the modern art. This trend consisted in duplicating the inner thinking of characters' mind. This put stress on what was hidden in characters' psyche rather than in what they really experience in their everyday life. This technique parallels the stream of consciousness pioneered by Freud, Jung and William James and whose implementation was materialized by Wolf, Faulkner, and Joyce. This is sustained in Yeats' the *The Second Coming* in the 1st line, 4th, 5th ...22nd lines of the second stanza.

History is something that people cannot neglect. Giambattista VICO, the Italian scholar and state man states that history starts at home no one can claim to know the history of others if he does not know his own Yeats being aware of that element resorted to the History of his own world to explain what happened in the world of the beginning of the 20th C.

Indeed, *The Second Coming* as fact is based on the description of the historical facts which had characterized the world around the First World War, and the predilection of the Second World War and its consequences in the world, as it can be read throughout the following lines of the 1st stanza, and in the 1st, and 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 7th, 10th, 11th, lines of the second stanza.

*Turning and Turning in the Gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,*

The Second Coming is also said to be a modern poem since it portrays modern historical issues that occurred in the beginning of the 20th C., notably the Boltchevick Revolution of the 1917, and the First World War of 1914, and other political troubles that occur in the world. In fact, history remains the very source from where Yeats' drew data to depict the situation that terrified the world at the beginning and the middle of the 20th C.

Giambattista Vico's, as well as Frederick Nietzsche's writings inspired William Butler Yeats a lot to describe the Gyre which constitutes for him the starting point of any anarchy brought in the world. The Gyre epitomizes the cycle, period, in this context, the Gyres represent the different periods which had passed and marked the history of the world. These are well stated from the 1st up to 8th lines of the first stanza. Prentice-Hall (1989).

Turning turning in the widening gyres describes the troubles that characterized the world in that modern period. It was a cycle of lawless. A period dominated by troubles. Professor NGWABA (2016-2017: 67). This period when the falcon could not hear his master the falconer entails chaotic period when no one could obey the other. Everybody was the master of himself. For Yeats, that civilization should be replaced by another which would bring peace and justice, order, and harmony within people of the world. Otherwise, the whole humanity will disappear. Indeed, Yeats describes the 20th C as the cycle of atrocities. Everywhere, in the world people were fighting each other. These atrocities are well excerpted in the 4, 5, and 6th lines of the first stanza, and in the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th ...11th and 12th lines of the second stanza.

*Mere anarchy is loosed in the world.
The blood-dimed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned*

Myth is also one of the elements characterizing Yeats' poem *The Second Coming*. Indeed, myth is defined as the explanation of fact taking place in the world. CUDDON (1999:525) points out that *myth is something which always concerns creation. Myth explains how something came to exist*.

Indeed, Yeats as a modern poet made much use of mythic elements to justify the reason of facts which characterized the dawn of the twentieth century. Indeed, for Yeats, science and technology are the focus of what happened in the world in the beginning of the 20th century. Those elements of myth can be seen in the following lines: 1st, 2nd, 9th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 21st, and 22nd.

Apart from the different aspects of modernism portrayed in this poem, other elements of modernism are seen in the use of techniques in the poem to convey the message. Among those techniques can be numbered:

- **Monologue and an I-protagonist**

In fact, in the poem the story is told from the point of view of an I-narrator. This speaker is the poem who speaks alone by sending the message to the implied readers to inform them about the danger of the war. As it can be read in the 12th, 13th, 18th, and 19th lines:

*When a vast image out of the spiritus mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of desert
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep*

- **The chronology is not respected**

The speaker speaks as the idea flows from his mind without paying heed to their order. That is what is called *stream of consciousness*. This way of depicting situation by modern writer just shows the need of freedom in their way of

expressing their mind. Indeed, for modern things should be portrayed as they low from the mind without being stuck to the logical representation of ideas in the mind. This technique was pioneered by Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and William Faulkner Prentice-Hall (1989: 987). This idea goes along with Freud's discovery of the unconscious and the mind's inner working. <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-conscious-and-the-unconscious-mind>. Professor NGWABA points it out in his Seminar of *Modern Literature* 2016-2017. Indeed, in this technique, it is the reader who has the responsibility of rearranging ideas of the text and gives it a meaning according to his understanding and interpretation. This can be noticed in the way the narrator presents the situation depicted in the poem. Ideas are portrayed in a disrupted way. This is shown from the beginning up to the end of the poem, *the Second Coming*.

However, concerning the literary devices, Yeats uses symbols such as widening gyres, desert, a shape with a lion body, the sun; hyperbaton: full of passionate intensity, the darkness, stony sleep; allegory: falcon, lion body, the rough beast, and metaphor: widening gyre, falcon, stony sleep, Bethlehem; allusion: some revelation, the second coming, twenty centuries, the rough beast, Bethlehem.

The selection of the devices mentioned above helps to capture the readers' minds. People can recognize his artistry and craft. These elements depicted above prompt the readers state that Yeats was a prophet, a visionary, a man who could see and understand the condition in which people lived and predicted what would occur in future. The use of hyperbaton was just for showing the degree of animosity that characterized the world and with that, he wanted people to get conscious and avoid cynic situations that can generate other conflicts and anarchy and that can bring once more the world to doom.

II. YEATS' POEM CONTRIBUTION TO MODERN LITERATURE

Yeats is one of the Irish writers who revisited the modern Irish poetry. In fact, as Irish were considered by the oppressors (English people) as subjects, Yeats' literary publications brought a new wave to this literature, since his work, mostly poetry and plays contributed to rejuvenation and rehabilitation of the Irish culture and literature distorted by the British.

However, for his use of perfect English written in higher style, with modern techniques, such as the use of sophisticated symbolism, metaphor and hyperbaton, Yeats is claimed to be one of the most famous English writers of the modern Irish Literature (Sussel et al. 1999: 57). Yeats broke the vision that English people had of Irish. His last poetry: *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), *Michel Robartes and the Dancers* (1921), *The Tower* (1928), *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933), and *The Last Poem and Plays* (1940) published posthumously made him one of the most outstanding poets of the modern time. Besides, from 1910, Yeats' dramatic art shifted into highly poetical, static and esoteric style. He was influenced by the Japanese Noh plays Horst FRENZ (1969).

CONCLUSION

Literature is and remains the way par excellence to express and depict situations that man faces in society. In fact, what man lives in his environment constitutes a myth whose explanation is to be found in the context surrounding him. Each period is characterized by events and theories of literature which provide materials to writer to be exploited, and this prompts writers to adopt techniques that can define the structure and content of the work. In regard to that, *The Second Coming* is ranked in the category of war poem, since it was output during the period characterizing the end of the WWI.

The Second Coming is a modern poem because of the different features found therein. Firstly, concerning the structure of the poem, it is written in free verse. It does not respect the conventional way of presenting poem. Secondly, it resorts to modern techniques invented by modern artists, techniques such as The Stream of Consciousness, monologue, the disruption of chronology. The topic itself revolves around the modern event that has marked the world history at the dawn and middle of the 20th C; the WWI and the predilection of the WWII.

Another aspect of modernism is the fact that within this poem, Yeats mingled the features of lots of modern trends. That is through this poem, it can be seen the aspects of: romanticism, naturalism, futurism, symbolism, realism, Dadaism, surrealism, expressionism, impressionism, myth and description of modern historical facts (WWI and WWII) etc.

The last element is the fact that phrases from *The Second Coming* inspired a great deal of modern artists in the world and different artistic fields.

Yeats was among those writers who respected the norms in regard to period the work was produced. He did his best to make his poem *The Second Coming* be ranked in the category of the outstanding literary works produced at the beginning of the 20th C. in fact, this poem displays all the features required to modern poems.

William Butler Yeats being a talented writer had collected data from what occurred at the dawn of the 20th C to portray the world conditions and the place of man in that kind of society. Indeed, man's values and personality were encroached by a series of machinery generated by technology and science. The engines developed in man the thirst of dominating others. The scientific inventions have completely corrupted modern people and brought them in the situation that prompted them to lose self-control. Man had become more animalistic than animals themselves.

Indeed, as an artist, Yeats understood that man's life would be destroyed by the same appliances made by his own hands. In other terms, Yeats was

telling people that they would be destroyed by things that they had manufactured themselves, and they would be unable neither to control nor to stop the bleeding that this situation would provoke.

As a gifted writer, he used a style in which the language would be easily understood. Like any good literature, this poem gives a panoramic view of what the world was at that epoch and what it would be in the future if man does not change his mind in a positive way. This can be read from the different devices exploited by the poet in this text to sensitize the readers about the danger that was looming on the horizon.

Finally, the analysis and interpretation of *The Second Coming* throughout a mangle of approaches have proven that it is a modern poem.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- (2009). *Literature: Reading for Purpose*. Columbus: Glencoe McGrawhill. 129969. 12 September 2018.
- Cuddon, J.A. (1999). *A Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory*.
Greene, N. (1968). *Fascism: An Anthology*. New-york: Thomas. Harcourt Education Company.
- Holt, Renhart and Witson. (2008). *Elements of Literature*. New-York: A
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary/terms/modernism>. 2nd may, 2019.
- [https:// literarydevices.net/naturalist](https://literarydevices.net/naturalist). 12 September 2019.
- [https:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/futurism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/futurism). 20th April 2018.
- [https:// literary devices. Naturalism](https://literarydevices.net/naturalism). 12 September 2018.
- [https:// penandthepad.com/symbolismpoem-the-second-coming-2108 html](https://penandthepad.com/symbolismpoem-the-second-coming-2108.html). 13 March 2019.
- [https:// wikipedia.org/wiki/expressionism](https://wikipedia.org/wiki/expressionism). 12 September 2018.
- [https:// www.bachelorandmaster.com/britishandamericanpoetry/yeats-as-a-symbolist.html](https://www.bachelorandmaster.com/britishandamericanpoetry/yeats-as-a-symbolist.html).
- [https:// www.enotes.com/homework-help/identify-elements-symbolism-second-coming-by-](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/identify-elements-symbolism-second-coming-by-)
- [https:// www.googlesearch/client=firefox](https://www.googlesearch/client=firefox). 22nd May 2018.
- [https:// www.verywellmind.com/theconscious-and-unconsciousmind](https://www.verywellmind.com/theconscious-and-unconsciousmind). 22nd May 2018.
- Jeffrey, D. W., Douglas, F., Kathleen, A. H. D., O'brien. R., Taffy, C., Hynd and Shanahan.
- Jung, C. (2014). *The Archetypes and the Collective unconsciousness*. London: Routledge.
- Kadeghe, M. (2003). *Literature*. Dar-es-Salam: Afroplus. London: Penguin.
- Mazour, A.G., Peoples, J. M. and Rabb, T. K. (1983). *People and Nations: A World History*. Dallas: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Mounir, F. and Berens Karl, A. (1994). *World History*. Washington: Glencoe McGrawhill.
- Ngugi, W.T. (2003). *Decolonizing the Mind*. Nairobi: east African Educational Publishers.
- Ngugi, W.T. (2004). *Writers in Politics*. Nairobi: east African Educational Publishers.
- Ngwaba, B.F. (2009). *Exercises in Poetic Discourse Analysis from Theory to Practice*. Kinshasa: Collection.
- Ngwaba, B.F. (2009). *Reading, Understanding, and Interpreting a Literary Text*. Kinshasa: Art Collection.
- Ngwaba, B.F. (2016-2017). *Modern Literature Seminar*. Kinshasa: UNIKIN (Unpublished).

- Prentice-Hall. (1989). *Literature*. New-Jersey: Englewood Cliffs.
- Spanckeren, V.K. (1994). *An Outline of American Literature*. United States of America:
- Sussel, A. Cabaret, F. & Denis. (1999). *To the Point*. Paris: Hachettes.
- USA States Department of State.
- Wikipedia the free encyclopedia. 12th April, 2019.