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How Seven Woods Audio Got Its Name The Poetry of William Butler Yeats

MN-1

by Christopher Moore

William Butler Yeats—poet, playwright, statesman—lived from 1865 to 1939 and is widely regarded as one of the greatest poets of all time. Yeats decided at an early age that he would hammer himself into a poet and left behind a substantial body of wonderful poetry, plays, fiction, and prose.

When he was 32, Yeats met Lady Augusta Gregory, a widow living on an old family estate, Coole Park, in the West of Ireland. Sensing that Yeats was exhausted and needed support and a refuge, she encouraged him to spend time at her estate. One volume of his poetry, "In the Seven Woods," took its name from wooded areas contained within Coole Park.

The Wild Swans at Coole

THE trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty Swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trode with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?

•+•

On the single-minded pursuit of wealth—

The Witch

TOIL and grow rich,
What's that but to lie
With a foul witch
And after, drained dry,
To be brought
To the chamber where
Lies one long sought
With despair?

•+•

On the frustrations of management, written in the midst of his attempts to found and nurture an Irish theater—

The Fascination of What's Difficult

THE fascination of what's difficult
Has dried the sap out of my veins, and rent
Spontaneous joy and natural content
Out of my heart. There's something ails our colt
That must, as if it had not holy blood
Nor on Olympus leaped from cloud to cloud,
Shiver under the lash, strain, sweat and jolt
As though it dragged road-metal. My curse on plays
That have to be set up in fifty ways,
On the day's war with every knave and dolt,
Theatre business, management of men.
I swear before the dawn comes round again
I'll find the stable and pull out the bolt.

•+•

What Yeats wrote in "Adam's Curse" about crafting poetry also applies to the creation of products. While we may consider many alternatives and go through months of complex design, we will have failed if the user does not experience our product as natural and effortless to use.

Adam's Curse (excerpt)

WE sat together at one summer's end,
That beautiful mild woman, your close friend,
And you and I, and talked of poetry.
I said, "A line will take us hours maybe;
Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.
Better go down upon your marrow-bones
And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones
Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;
For to articulate sweet sounds together

Is to work harder than all these, and yet
Be thought an idler by the noisy set
Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen
The martyrs call the world.”

•+•

One of a number of poems inspired by Yeats' largely unrequited
love affair with Maud Gonne—

A Deep-sworn Vow

OTHERS because you did not keep
That deep-sworn vow have been friends of mine;
Yet always when I look death in the face,
When I clamber to the heights of sleep,
Or when I grow excited with wine,
Suddenly I meet your face.

•+•

A short poem about love—

A Drinking Song

WINE comes in at the mouth
And love comes in at the eye;
That's all we shall know for truth
Before we grow old and die.
I lift the glass to my mouth,
I look at you, and I sigh.

•+•

Yeats' patriotism led him to champion the cause of Irish inde-
pendence. In this poem, Cathleen represents Ireland itself—

Red Hanrahan's Song About Ireland

THE old brown thorn-trees break in two high over Cummen
Strand,

Under a bitter black wind that blows from the left hand;
Our courage breaks like an old tree in a black wind and dies,
But we have hidden in our hearts the flame out of the eyes
Of Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan.

The wind has bundled up the clouds high over Knocknarea,
And thrown the thunder on the stones for all that Maeve can
say.

Angers that are like noisy clouds have set our hearts abeat;
But we have all bent low and low and kissed the quiet feet
Of Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan.

The yellow pool has overflowed high up on Clooth-na-Bare,
For the wet winds are blowing out of the clinging air;
Like heavy flooded waters our bodies and our blood;
But purer than a tall candle before the Holy Rood
Is Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan.

•+•

Written during a time of great discouragement when friendships
and love and work seemed to all be coming to naught—

Into the Twilight

OUT-WORN heart, in a time out-worn,
Come clear of the nets of wrong and right;
Laugh, heart, again in the grey twilight,
Sigh, heart, again in the dew of the morn.

Your mother Eire is always young,
Dew ever shining and twilight grey;
Though hope fall from you and love decay,

Burning in fires of a slanderous tongue.
Come, heart, where hill is heaped upon hill:
For there the mystical brotherhood
Of sun and moon and hollow and wood
And river and stream work out their will;
And God stands winding His lonely horn,
And time and the world are ever in flight;
And love is less kind than the grey twilight,
And hope is less dear than the dew of the morn.

•+•

Today, the woods and lakes of Coole Park remain, but Lady
Gregory's house is gone, as Yeats prophesied in this poem—

Coole Park, 1929 (excerpt)

Here, traveler, scholar, poet, take your stand
When all those rooms and passages are gone,
When nettles wave upon a shapeless mound
And saplings root among the broken stone,
And dedicate— eyes bent upon the ground,
Back turned upon the brightness of the sun
And all the sensuality of the shade—
A moment's memory to that laurelled head.

•+•

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