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Althea Gyles' Symbolic (De)Codification of William Butler Yeats' 'Rose and Wind Poetry'

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O was it Love that conquered Hate?
Or was it Hate that set her free? --
To Death all questioners come late.
The sword and the woman all may see
And "Odi et Amo" graven there.
(Althea Gyles, *Odi et Amo*, ll. 9-12)

The only two powers that trouble the deeps are religion and love,
the others make a little trouble upon the surface.
(William B. Yeats, *A Symbolic Artist and the Coming of Symbolic Art*, p. 133)

1. When in *A Vision* Yeats bluntly declared «I am a poet, not a painter»[1], he was probably alluding to the simple assumption of considering himself a poet much more than a painter, despite his art-oriented studies[2]. A consideration that could not obviously preclude him from carrying on, even if occasionally, his painting ambitions[3], speaking «always of painting as a painter speaks»[4], or meeting and appreciating his contemporary painters, keen to recognize and support their artistic value. Actually, from 1886, the year he decided to give up painting as a career, Yeats' connections with art ostensibly continued in his father's pre-Raphaelite *entourage* of painters[5]. As emerges from Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux's *Yeats and the Visual Arts* (2003), Yeats often appealed to the circle of friends related to his father for illustrations or book covers. Besides Edwin J. Ellis, with whom he would also work from 1899 to 1903 on the three-volume edition of William Blake's *opus*[6]; Jack Nettleship, discovering in his paintings «in place of Blake's joyous, intellectual energy a Saturnian passion and melancholy»[7]; John Trivett Nettleship, who drew the frontispiece of Yeats' *The Countess Kathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics* (1892); H. Granville Fell, who had illustrated Yeats' first edition of the *Poems* (1895) with gold lettering and Celtic design on front, back and spine[8]; and Aubrey Beardsley, in whom he admitted finding «[…] that noble courage that seems to me at times, whether in man or woman, the greatest of human faculties. I saw it in all he said and did, in the clear logic of speech and in [the] clean soft line of his art» (*Memoirs* 1992)[9], later placing him in Phase 13 of *A Vision*, Yeats was mainly influenced by two other painters, Charles Ricketts and Charles

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Shannon, whose reputation was mostly related to their co-edition of «The Dial» and the designs produced for Wilde's books. In 1904 he wrote about Ricketts' *Deposition from the Cross* (Tate, 1915): «Here is absolute genius. And the rarest kind of genius, for it is the romance not of the Woman but the romance of the Man, and hardly anybody but Michael Angelo and Blake and Albert Dürer have done anything in that»[10]. As well, in a letter he wrote on 13 November 1904 to Charles Shannon, in asking him «to do a lithograph or something of that kind for the collected edition of [his] writings if it comes off […]» Yeats acknowledged: «You are the one man I would like to be drawn by»[11]. Shannon's portrait of Yeats was painted in 1908.

Among these painters who deeply influenced Yeats' symbolic vision and art, it is still worth mentioning another artist, «the fey and slightly manic Irish artist»[12] Miss Althea Gyles (1868–1949)[13], as Roy Foster was to define her in his *The Apprentice Mage* (1997)[14]. Known by contemporaries for her unamenable enigmatic character, her symbolic art and fascination for esotericism and occultism, Althea Gyles' fame is today mostly related to her outstanding book covers for Yeats' *The Secret Rose* (1897), *Poems* (1899), and *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899). Significantly defined by Warwick Gould as «the genius who invented a symbolic personality for Yeats»[15], Miss Gyles was actually one of the few artists really able to understand, decode and translate Yeats' magical symbolism, his Irishness and Pre-Raphaelitism into her plastic forms. Despite the fact that their «connection […] lasted for a few years only» during the 1890s, and that «Yeats had his reservations about her talent from the beginning» it was, according to Ian Fletcher, an «important, if puzzling» relationship[16]. A relationship that, from the first time, was characterized by common esoteric visions and fascinations, reinforced by a few shared occult experiences and circumstances, and supported but also compromised by a certain number of personal events. Actually, in his finding a possible cause for Yeats' and Gyles' 'private' and artistic divorce probably occurred before 1900[17], Ian Fletcher points out that «Miss Gyles' broken relationship with him [Yeats] owes something to her voluntary abstention from work in design and something to a deflection of Yeats' own interest […]. It also owed not a little to the difficult personality of the lady itself»[18] and, I would add, to her own private affairs.

Born in 1868 in Kilmurry, County Waterford, into a well-to-do old family[19], «she had quarreled with a mad father […] because she wished to study art, had run away from home, had lived for a time by selling her watch, and then by occasional stories in an Irish paper»[20]. She was «associated with the Dublin Theosophists, in what Yeats describes as their 'conventual house' at Dublin in the late eighties, starving, as her father disapproved of her taking up a profession»[21]. From 1889 to 1890, she had studied Art at the Slade School in Dublin, economically helped by E.J. Dick, the founder of the Dublin Theosophists' house and the well-known bearded Manichean engineer of Yeats' *Autobiographies*, who had «engaged her as a companion for his wife, and gave

her money enough to begin her studies […]»[22]. About her staying at 3 Upper Ely Place, the Household of the Dublin Theosophists'[23] – that «company of Irish mystics who have taught for some years a religious philosophy which has changed many ordinary people into ecstatics and visionaries» –, Yeats wrote in *A Symbolic Artist and the Coming of Symbolic Art* (first appeared in the «Dome», 1898)[24]:

> I know that Miss Althea Gyles, in whose work I find so visionary a beauty, does not mind my saying that she lived long with this little company […]; and that she will not think I am taking from her originality when I say that the beautiful lithe figures of her art, quivering with a life half mortal tragedy, half immortal ecstasy, owe something of their inspiration to this little company. I indeed believe that I see in them a beginning of what may become a new manner in the arts of the modern world […][25].

Many years later, in *The Trembling of the Veil* (1922), Yeats would come back again to Althea Gyles' staying at the Dublin Theosophists', particularly enhancing the young painter's passion for art:

> On a lower floor lived a strange red-haired girl, all whose thoughts were set upon painting and poetry, conceived as abstract images like Love and Penury in the Symposium-, and to these images she sacrificed herself with Asiatic fanaticism. The engineer had discovered her starving somewhere in an unfurnished or half-furnished room, and that she had lived for many weeks upon bread and shell-cocoa, so that her food never cost her more than a penny a day. Born into a county family, who were so haughty that their neighbours called them the Royal Family, she had quarrelled with a mad father, who had never, his tenants declared, "screwed the top of his flask with any man," […]. For some weeks she had paid half-a-crown a week to some poor woman to see her to the art schools and back, for she considered it wrong for a woman to show herself in public places unattended; but of late she had been unable to afford the school fees. The engineer engaged her as a companion for his wife, and gave her money enough to begin her studies once more[26].

It was by the end of 1891, after studying art in Dublin and writing her first unpublished novel, *The Woman Without a Soul*, that Althea Gyles moved to London, where she took a room in Charlotte Street «[…] still pursuing art, first at Peddars, then at the Slade School, where her expenses were paid for by one of her Grey relatives. In those years she seems to have moved in literary society […]»[27]. In London, she became famous not only for producing Yeats' cover designs, but also for her cover of Dowson's *Decorations in Verse and Prose* (1899)[28] and her illustrations to Wilde's *The Harlot's House* (1904)[29]. She was also associated with The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn[30], already joined by Yeats in 1890 – after his former experiences in the Dublin Hermetic Society (1885) and in Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society (1887)[31].

«Most watched her in mockery», wrote Yeats in the *Autobiographies*, «but I watched in sympathy […]»[32]. Miss Althea Gyles' life was characterized by several extravagant anecdotes and contradictory voices mostly connected, as already anticipated, with her artistic talent and mysterious temperament, but also caused by a miserable existence and occult disposition. She was variously defined as a painter and a poet of genius, as revealed by Mrs. Eleanor Farjeon's letter to Mrs. Cazalet, Althea's nephew (dated May 16th, 1951): «[…] thanks for sending me Althea's poems. She was, I think quite exquisitely gifted, as a writer and an artist»[33]. As well, in one of his letters to Mrs. Cazalet, the Irish poet, artist, and stage designer Cecil French admitted: «[…] your aunt had a considerable reputation about 1900. She was a most difficult being with noble qualities, who invariably became the despair of those who had helped her» (*AGSC*). An opinion which was also shared by one of her editors, met around 1910[34], Clifford Bax, who wrote to Mrs. Cazalet on February 29th, 1949: «What an eccentric she was!», and continued «In my opinion, which is shared by Mr. French, she had a quite rare talent both as poet and painter» (*AGSC*). Yeats himself in *The Trembling of the Veil* observed that:

> She had talent and imagination, a gift for style; but, though ready to face death for painting and poetry, conceived as allegorical figures, she hated her own genius, and had not met praise and sympathy early enough to overcome the hatred. Face to face with paint and canvas, pen and paper, she saw nothing of her genius but its cruelty, and would have scarce arrived before she would find some excuse to leave the schools for the day, if indeed she had not invented over her breakfast some occupation so laborious that she could call it a duty, and so not go at all. […] composition strained my nerves and spoiled my sleep; and yet, as far back as I could trace and in Ireland we have long memories my paternal ancestors had worked at some intellectual pursuit, while hers had shot and hunted[35].

She was often rumored to be slightly insane and completely eccentric in both her life and manners, or in her choice to live in poverty, firstly challenging her father's authority and secondly rejecting her own friends' help. In Yeats' words:

> She could at any time, had she given up her profession, which her father had raged against, not because it was art, but because it was a profession, have returned to the common comfortable life of women. When, a little later, she had quarrelled with the engineer or his wife, and gone back to bread and shell-cocoa I brought her an offer from some Dublin merchant of fairly well paid advertisement work, which would have been less laborious than artistic creation; but she said that to draw advertisements was to degrade art, thanked me elaborately, and did not disguise her indignation. She had, I believe, returned to starvation with joy, for constant anaemia would shortly give her an argument strong enough to silence her conscience when the allegorical images glared upon her, and, apart from that, starvation and misery had a large share in her ritual of worship[36].

Eleanor Farjeon claimed in her aforementioned letter to Mrs. Cazalet: «I used to go to her terribly poor, and very untidy room off King's Road, Chelsea, and found her fascinating and exhausting. I think everyone who knew her at all closely began by doing all they could and in the end simply had to slow down in self-defence. She had almost the most beautiful hands I have ever seen, and quite the dirtiest» (*AGSC*).

Finally, she was the object of gossip for her *liaison* with the well-known and much discussed pornographic publisher Leonard Smithers (1861-1907). «Gyles was seen by her friends as a naïve, virginal, spiritualized sort of figure, utterly devoted to her art. Consequently, her sudden liaison with the fleshly Smithers was universally viewed as nothing less than scandalous»[37]. In a letter to Lady Gregory written in November 1899, Yeats himself did not hesitate to assert:

> A very unpleasant thing has happened but it is so notorious that there is no use in hiding it. Althea Gyles, after despising Symons & [George] Moore for years because of their morals has ostentatiously taken up with Smithers, a person of so immoral a life that people like Symons and Moore despise him. She gave an at home the other day & poured out tea with his arm round her waist & even kissed him at intervals. I told her that she might come to my 'at homes' as much as she liked but that I absolutely forbade her to bring Smithers (who lives by publishing books which cannot be openly published for fear of the law) . . . She seems to be perfectly mad, but is doing beautiful work. I did my best last week to make her see the necessity for some kind of disguise, but it seems to be a point of pride with her to observe none. It is all the more amazing because she knows all about Smithers [*sic*] past. She is in love, & because she has some genius to make her thirst for realities & not enough of intellect to see the temporal use of unreal things she is throwing off every remnant of respectability with an almost religious enthusiasm[38].

The affair with Smithers probably began in 1899, when Gyles «on several occasions was seen with Smithers on his frequent trips to Paris», subsequently starting to work on her five illustrations for Oscar Wilde's *The Harlot's House*, published by Smithers in 1904: «In fact, it was on one of these business-*cum*-pleasure trips on the spring of 1899 that Smithers and Wilde […] came up with the idea of an edition de luxe of the poet's poem "The Harlot's House" which Gyles, who was present, would illustrate»[39].

In *A Note on Althea Gyles (1868-1949)* Leonard Fletcher wrote (October 1957): «In 1900 she had a serious breakdown, probably as a result of a liaison with Leonard Smithers» and, he continues, «for the breakdown of this, see Aleister Crowley's story At the Fork of the Roads [*sic*], in the first issue of Crowley's magazine, The Equinox [*sic*] (March 1909)»[40]. Althea Gyles' relationship with Leonard Smithers was first fictionalized in Faith Compton Mackenzie's novel *Tatting* (1957). Here Smithers appears as an «[…] abominable creature of high intelligence, no morals»[41], with whom the heroine,

Ariadne Berden – who portrays Althea Gyles' part – falls in love; secondly, by Aleister Crowley in his *At the Fork of the Roads* (1909), where he erotically and ironically reproduced Gyles' affair with Smithers. In this work Althea is presented as the artist Hypatia Gay, fond of Will Bute, a poet based on the figure of Yeats, while Crowley is Count Swanoff. Smithers enters the scene when Althea-Hypatia takes some of her drawings to a Bond Street publisher, portrayed by Crowley with the following words:

> This man was bloated with disease and drink; his loose lips hung in an eternal leer; his fat eyes shed venom; his cheeks seemed ever on the point of bursting into nameless sores and ulcers. He bought the young girl's drawings. "Not so much for their value," he explained, "as that I like to help promising young artists – like you, my dear!" Her steely virginal eyes met his fearlessly and unsuspiciously. The beast cowered, and covered his foulness with a hideous smile of shame[42].

Immediately before Aleister Crowley's death in 1947, Richard Ellmann visited him at Hastings. On that occasion, he received Crowley's narration of his ambiguous relationship with the Irish artist Althea Gyles. From this account, later reported by Ellmann in his article, *Black Magic Against White: Aleister Crowley Versus W.B. Yeats*, published in 1948 in the «Partisan Review» and based on Crowley's words, it emerges that Miss Gyles was on good terms both with the black magician and the white. She was aware of their totally different approaches to magic, of their esoteric vision and different use of connected symbols. Actually, during that visit, Crowley revealed to Ellmann Gyles' deep involvement in the psychic quarrel between Yeats and himself for control of the Golden Dawn, immediately before its very division and MacGregor Mathers' leaving[43]. From Ellmann's narration, it appears that Crowley – after receiving from Mathers a few «appropriate charms and exorcisms to use against recalcitrant members» – tried to keep possession of the Golden Dawn Vault of the Adepts, i.e. the temple of the Inner Order, at 36 Blythe Road, Hammersmith. Once defeated by Yeats, Crowley started «infecting London with his black masses and his bulging, staring eyes corrupted many innocents», records Ellmann. «Among them was a young painter named Althea Gyles, an unconventional young woman whose work had appeared in the *Savoy*. Althea felt herself surrounded by Crowley's insidious aura, and went to her friend Yeats to ask if she could do anything to save herself»[44]. Althea Gyles' affair with Crowley probably started in that period, around 1900, before Crowley's leaving his flat in Chancery Lane. In his own account of Crowley's narration, Ellmann writes:

> The poet was deeply concerned. […] "bring me a hair of his head." Althea thought that might be impossible, but would nothing else do as well? "Bring me any object from his rooms." Althea accordingly went to Crowleys' rooms for tea, and covertly managed to steal a hair of her host's head […]. But Crowley suspected foul play. Helplessly she allowed the magician to lead her down a long corridor […], until

at last she arrived in front of a tabernacle covered with mystic signs and symbols. Crowley, after invoking the chthonian powers, suddenly pulled open the door of the tabernacle, and a skeleton fell into Althea's arms. She screamed, dropped the book, and ran off in terror. But she still had the hair of Crowley's head, and […] she carried it to Yeats. The poet cast the requisite spells and exorcisms, […]. That night when the black magician went to bed, he discovered a vampire beside him […]. At last, desperate from loss of blood and sleep, Crowley went to consult another magician […] and was instructed as to what to do. On the tenth night, as soon as the vampire put in an appearance, Crowley took her by the throat and squeezed with all his might. An then, just as the other magician had predicted, she suddenly groaned and disappeared. Her power was ended, and she returned no more. Althea unfortunately did not fare so well. In spite of Yeats's best efforts, she was willy-nilly drawn back to Crowley and finally forced to give way entirely to his baleful fascination[45].

On June 9th 1902, Yeats wrote a letter to Lady Gregory complaining about Althea's physical and mental conditions, showing that he was deeply acquainted with his Irish compatriot, sincerely regretful for her decisions and statements, but also firm in his own position:

My dear Lady Gregory,

My eyes have not been quite as well during the last couple of days owing I think to a cold & I want to write to you at once about Althea Gyles. […] Althea Gyles has now left the Hydropathic having been the occasion of a "row" of some sort, she is evidently highly hysterical but her lungs have at any rate for the time being been cured. I must say that she fills me with despair, she hardly seems to me sane. She all but turned me out three times, the last time I was round, because I would not take up her quarrel about the Hydropathic.

I believe that a friend of hers will take charge of her in July & that after that she can go to Conn Gore Booth (that was) who may possibly bring her to Ireland where one can only hope she will somehow drift into the hands of her family who seem loath to do their duty in the matter. I doubt since I have seen Althea, if she will be able to work, at least to work enough to ever make her living. Her mind seems to me too unbalanced. She is absorbed in a feeling of indignation against everybody and everything. I could do nothing on Friday but repeat to her what Hume said about Rousseau: "If Jean Jacques were in the right, too many people would be in the wrong." (I think at this point she practically did turn me out) […][46].

As reported by Ian Fletcher, «Her later years were to be spent in those dreary bed-sitting suburbs of South London, moving from Tulse Hill to Sydenham, casting horoscopes, collecting antiques of a shadowy value»[47]. She died in a nursing home near Crystal Palace in January 1949, after spending her last years in complete poverty, assisted by a friend, Eleanor Farjeon, and by Compton and Faith Mackenzie. Jad Adams, in his biography of Dowson entitled *Madder Music, Stronger Wine* (2000), writes about the aged artist: «her flaming hair now grey, her independence an old woman's eccentricity, her punctilious craftsmanship becoming mere fussiness about domestic trivia.

She lived in bedsits in Tulse Hill and then Sydenham, casting horoscopes as the new century wore on, until she became a ghost from the 1890s in war-shattered London»[48].

2. *The Secret Rose*, Yeats' seventeen short-stories collection, was published in London in 1897 by Lawrence & Bullen, and illustrated by John B. Yeats. Two years later, in 1899, *The Wind Among the Reeds* was issued in London by Elkin Mathews and in the same year Yeats' *Poems*[49] were published for the second time – the first edition was printed in 1895[50]. These three ornately-styled volumes deserve particular attention, not only for their considerable poetic value and conspicuous cross-references to Yeats' symbolism, but also for their most interesting cabalistic covers, all of them generated by Miss Althea Gyles' talented hand and visionary mind[51]. The three covers, perfectly mirroring the content of their related volumes, can be considered the most accomplished result of William B. Yeats' and Althea Gyles' common esoteric symbolism and imagery, as Richard Ellmann[52], Ian Fletcher, Liam Miller[53], Warwick Gould and Richard Finneran have widely demonstrated in their studies.

Both Gyles and Yeats actually drew on a very ancient mystical source, chiefly reached after their entrance into the Golden Dawn[54]. As widely known, both Madame Blavatsky's and MacGregor Mathers' occult societies were grounded upon a plethora of mystic and esoteric symbols, most of them of cabalistic and Rosicrucian inheritance; symbols that constituted a sort of primeval talisman or sign of identification for their adepts, growing in meaning and notoriety whenever employed by painters or poets in their works. Althea's «pictures with patterns and rhythms of colour» and «drawings with patterns and rhythms of line» stroke Yeats in deep since, as it is familiar, for Yeats «pattern and rhythm are the road to open symbolism»[55] and symbols are the secret keys enabling the adept to ascend the cabalistic tree of life and achieve the upper level of wisdom. «By contemplation and manipulation of certain symbols», writes Ian Fletcher, «the mystic can move into the spiritual world for which they stand. […] For him [Yeats], the symbol as it appears in poetry or in the visual arts is not distinguished from the symbol as it appears in religion or in magic and it is the function of the artist in any field to mediate symbols»[56]. And Miss Althea Gyles proved to be, for Yeats, a great mediator of symbols, as clearly emerges from *A Symbolic Artist and the Coming of Symbolic Art* (1898). In this essay, Yeats defined Althea's pictorial art as «full of abundant and passionate life, which brought to mind Blake's cry, "Exuberance is beauty", and Samuel Palmer's command to the artist, "Always seek to make excess more abundantly excessive"»[57]. Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux remarks that Yeats mostly prized Miss Gyles' covers for their ability to combine words with designs, where the latter code or decode the former, or better, they artistically mediate those symbols intrinsic in his poetry, reinforcing their semantic and imaginative value.

Many had disappointed Yeats, but Althea Gyles's covers […] pleased him, perhaps because the designs are not separate from the written word but attempt to work with it. They image the books' major occult symbols, declare the author's Irishness by using Celtic lettering, and set the poems and stories in the Pre-Raphaelite tradition by echoing the motifs and patterns of Blake, Rossetti, and Burne-Jones[58].

Althea Gyles' most famous cover binding for *The Secret Rose* is the one in deep blue stamped in gold letters and designs[59], «suggestive of art nouveau and the Pan-Celtic movement begun in literature around 1894»[60]. The front cover appears to be divided into three main parts. The title is included within an upper frame. Immediately beneath the title, we find another wider frame including Miss Gyles' famous drawing of the two lovers[61]. The painting is endowed with a well-structured and highly recognizable body of esoteric symbolism, which seems to find its very origin in the main character, a human skeleton lying supine under a straight line probably standing for the earthly surface. The skeleton is what remains of a knight, who is still recognizable from his untouched armour, a helmet on his head and a spear in his left hand. The figure of the dead warrior is positioned horizontally, perfectly fitting the horizontal line of the frame, with the head on the right side and the feet on the left. The knight clearly brings back to the heroes of one of the four great cycles of Irish mythology, the Ulster Cycle, formerly known as the Red Branch Cycle. And Yeats' volume is actually devoted to these very heroes, inspired by ancient Irish history and legend, from the «proud dreaming king» Fergus to the Red Branch King Conchobar and the legendary Celtic hero Cúchulain, each one questing «the most secret, and inviolate Rose»[62]. In one of the stories devoted to the Secret Rose cycle, *Of Costello the Proud, of Oona the Daughter of Dermot and of the Bitter Tongue*, the poet writes:

> The next day a fisherman found him lying among the reeds upon the lake shore, lying upon the white lake sand, and carried him to his own house. And the peasants lamented over him and sang the keen, and laid him in the Abbey on Insula Trinitatis with only the ruined altar between him and MacDermot's daughter, and planted above them two ash-trees that in after days wove their branches together and mingled their leaves.

Althea Gyles' cover might be partially inspired by the end of the story, narrating the death of the hero Costello, of his grave besides that of MacDermot's daughter, and the ash-trees planted above the two tombs, mingling their branches and leaves. In Gyles' design, from the skeleton's genitals originate the roots of a leaf-less tree. The tree's roots and branches in their continuous interweaving appear to recreate the most typical intertwining of the Celtic medieval manuscripts:

> Stylised roots, wrought to resemble the Celtic knotwork of richly illuminated gospels such as The Book of Durrow, intertwine with the bones of the buried knight and grow out from the earth in serpentine folds to form a stylised rose tree[63].

The tree with its serpentine branches whose roots are intertwined and come out from the skeleton of the knight, also recalls to the famous cabalistic symbol of the Tree of Life, which connects the phenomenal world to the noumenic one[64]. Now, the cabalistic Tree of Life is figuratively represented as a diagram composed of ten circles or spheres, i.e. the so-called Sephiroth or divine emanations. Each one of the ten Sephiroth has, within the tree, a very specific position given by its very role and function. If we analyse Althea Gyles' tree, besides noticing that it rises from a knight skeleton and is composed of several leafless boughs, it is worth observing that it is characterized by eight symbols that can be related to eight of the ten Sephiroth of the Tree of Life. The ten emanations forming the Tree are usually divided into three columns: one forming the central part of the tree, one its right side and one its left side. While the central pillar is made-up of four Sephiroth, the right and left pillars respectively have three emanations.

The tenth and lowest emanation of the central column is called Malkuth, the Kingdom, and it stands for the physical expression of the divine, as well as for the physical world and the physical body. By overlapping the Tree of Life with Althea Gyles' tree, it is immediately possible to notice that Malkuth, finding itself at the base of the Tree, has the same position as the skeleton's reproductive organs which, in turn, just like Malkuth, stand for physical life.

The ninth Sephirah, immediately above Malkuth in the central column, is Yesod, the Foundation. It stands for the creation of the material world. It is interesting to notice that this emanation finds itself in correspondence with the trunk of Althea's tree, upon which the whole tree grows.

Still going on across the central column of the Tree of Life, we find the sixth Sephira, Tiphereth or Beauty. Being at the core of the tree, Tiphereth corresponds to the heart of the human body. It coordinates and reconciles all the other emanations. In Althea Gyles' painting, the centre of the tree is characterized by the image of a rose and a cross, surrounded by seventeen segmented luminous rays. As widely known, the image of the rose and the cross is a fundamental esoteric symbol recalling the Rosicrucian emblem of the rosy-cross. Since 1888, the rosy-cross had been the very emblem of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, founded on the same year. The rosy-cross is composed of four arms, just like the Christian cross, but differently from the latter, each arm of the rosy-cross has a different colour standing for the four alchemic elements: red stands for fire, blue for water, yellow for air, and citrine, olive, black and russet – all of them colouring the fourth arm – for earth[65]. Miss Gyles' «synchronic, unchanging, timeless»[66] rose is here made-up of four circular petals, which further contrast with the rationality and geometric harshness of the cross. Richard Ellman[67] states that the four petals of Gyles' rose represent the four elements, while the image of the rose intersected with the cross pertains to the Rosicrucian tradition, reproducing the fifth element or quintessence[68], a point of convergence between the spir-

itual and the material world. Actually, according to the Rosicrucian doctrine embraced by the Golden Dawn adepts, the rose is also the symbol of the mystic wedding, which can be contemplated only by those initiates who have already fulfilled their phenomenal pilgrimage and found their own cross and rose joined together. It is worth noticing that while the cross is the memory of each terrestrial fight and sufferance, the rose stands for love and beauty. Althea Gyles gives them a central position within her own tree. Exactly like the rosy-cross, the sixth Sephirah named Tiphereth stands at the centre of the Tree of Life and is in turn not only associated with beauty and love (the rose), but also with the sacrifice (the cross) that each man has to experience in order to be admitted to climb the Tree of Life: he has to sacrifice his own ego. Exactly like the rosy-cross, Tiphereth represents the equilibrium between opposite forces.

The fourth and fifth Sephiroth appear to be deeply connected. They are Chesed and Geburah, the former stands for mercy and benevolence and the latter for power and courage; Chesed is defined as the king-ruler, while Geburah as the king-warrior; Chesed contains the oral esoteric teachings, while Geburah the written teachings. Chesed is the absolute divine love, while Geburah a limited love. In Althea Gyles' drawing, just in correspondence to the positions assigned to Chesed and Geburah, the intertwined stylized foliage of the tree of life creates the faces of two lovers kissing each other, while their hands are placed on the rosy-cross at the centre of the tree. The two lovers appear to represent, like Chesed and Geburah, the two opposing principles of humanity, standing for male and female principles. Besides, if Chesed and Geburah find their reconciliation in Tiphereth, in which all opposites are conciliated, the two lovers can be restored to their primeval state of harmony only through the rosy-cross symbol; a reconciliation figuratively represented by Althea Gyles through the image of the two lovers' hands, joined together and laid upon the rose. The two lovers also recall Yeats' aforementioned story, *Of Costello the Proud, of Oona the Daughter of Dermot and of the Bitter Tongue*, and in particular the image of the spirits of Costello and Oona, whose after-death meeting is metonymically represented by the image of their interweaving branches[69].

Above the two lovers, the intertwining branches of the tree form a crown containing three roses, which completes the foliage of the tree and concludes its ramification[70]. The central rose is slightly higher than the others. Interestingly, the three higher emanations of the cabalistic Tree of Life are in the same position as Gyles' three roses, with the central emanation slightly higher than the others. The higher three emanations are represented by Kether, the Crown or Father (in the middle pillar), by Cochmah, Wisdom or the Son (in the right or male pillar), and Binah, Understanding or the Mother (in the left or female pillar).

Trying to decode Miss Gyles' painting with all its symbolic and imaginative references, we can identify a trajectory starting from the skeleton's bones

and directed upwards, towards the three roses. The symbols reproduced in the painting grow in spirituality, from the knight's bones to the tree of life with its pulsing rosy-cross heart surrounded by the stylised light beams, up to the Crown (Keter) given by the three roses. Assuming that the main goal of all the Golden Dawn adepts was the soul's abandoning the phenomenal way in order to find the noumenic one, Gyles' painting may be conceived as a sort of diagram whose departure coincides with the earth and whose arrival is the sky; a map which is immediately recognized by the esoteric readers of Yeats' volume, visually anticipating for them the very content of the whole work. It is not material life that finds its origin from death (i.e. the knight's skeleton), but the spiritual life starting after death. And the initiate knows that he has to undertake a journey, where each step will correspond to a particular moment in his spiritual growth. This vision of life after death is evidently not a static but a dynamic one, and dynamism is given by this upwards trajectory, by the dead body of the knight, which is still able to originate life, by the intertwining branches of the tree, which in turn appear to go on lengthening and forming other images, by the beams of light that sprinkle from the rosy-cross and last by the two lovers kissing each other.

Concerning the two colours adopted, we should recall that while gold is the metal associated with the Sun where its yellow colour refers to the element of the air, blue is related to the element of water. Besides, yellow and blue are two of the three primary colours. Blue is also the colour characterizing the fourth Sephirah, Chesed, which, as already anticipated, is the symbol of divine love, while yellow is the colour of the fifth Sephirah, Tiphereth, the latter here corresponding to the rosy-cross. Moreover, gold immediately recalls to the very name of the Golden Dawn. Steven Putzel, in his *Reconstructing Yeats*, also claims that «The cover's rich blue and gold suggests the bejewelled book shrines crafted to house holy texts […]»[71].

The lower frame of the drawing contains the name of W.B. Yeats «in unauthentic yet Celt-looking script, densely surrounded by a design of points and stylised rose petals»[72], observes Putzel, while Fletcher is much more scathing in his analysis, admitting that «[…] the lettering of the title is eccentric (and mediocre) […]. This is particularly true of the *r* where the tail is snapped off. The *a* of Yeats is ordinary English. The form of the *e* is tenuously nearer to Gaelic script; Miss Gyles' lettering improves as she persists»[73].

The book spine bears the title of the volume, the name of the author, the publisher's name «A.H. Bullen» at the bottom. Concerning the lettering, as still argued by Fletcher, «That on the spine is hand-drawn. The T and H are traditional Irish, the B (of 'Butler') is not. Irish makes no distinction in the b (nor with later founts in the r or s) between upper- and lower-case. W and y do not occur in Irish, so that they have to be mocked-up: w is done as a u. The lettering is condensed»[74]. Among the names of the author and the editor, and the title of the volume, Miss Gyles draws a spear sinking into a

bowl, a sort of cauldron or better, according to Warwick Gould, «a chalice»[75]. The vegetation grows from this cauldron or chalice and is interweaved to the spear, as to reproduce the image of the skeleton (metonymically represented by the spear) and of the tree (metonymically symbolised by its branches). As well, it recalls the symbol of the caduceus or wand of Hermes, the image typically characterized by the two serpents twisting together around a rod. The latter is, writes Fletcher, «[…] a resonant emblem, relating to Hermes, Thoth and through its flowering to Moses and so to a familiar secret wisdom tradition […] The caduceus involves hermaphroditism (the kissing heads in the tree of life seem androgynous rather than male and female) and its touch turns to gold […] The flowers wreathed round the cone might well be fritillary, a spotted snake flower, elegant, sinister, white-purple-red touched with green and with a drooping cup»[76]. Furthermore, the lance may also suggest the phallic symbol in its union with the female one, the latter given by the bowl. Putzel, referring to the caduceus image, points out that

> [t]his emblem, like the front cover, coveys Golden Dawn iconography and stands as a symbol of sexuality, but it is also the spear of the God Lug with its point dipped in poppies to quench the flame of battle – one of the four treasures of the Tuatha De Danann (named by the dying woman in 'The Adoration of the Magi')[77].

According to Warwick Gould, the lance and chalice might also evoke the Holy Grail symbolism and related legends[78].

On the back cover is reproduced a mandala, showing the same rosy-cross emblem that is portrayed on the front cover. Here the cross is surrounded by twenty-eight broken rays or spears: seven coming out from each of the four angles formed by the two branches of the cross. The rose, the cross and the pointed spears are included within the four sides of a vertically positioned square. Each side is composed of the converging tips of two spears. This quadrangular image is itself included within a two-line circle, where the outer circle is «bounded by what appear to be stylised waves»[79].

Putzel maintains that this design constitutes «[…] an exact replica of the cover of Robartes' secret text which the narrator describes as 'a book bound in vellum, and having upon the vellum and the alchemical rose with many spears thrusting against it, but in vain, as was shown by the shattered points of those nearest' (SR, 249; VSR, 141)»[80]. Actually, Althea Gyles might as well have gained inspiration by Yeats' *Rosa Alchemica*, where both the narrator and Michael Robartes are questing for a supernatural experience. The narrator tells of a visit received by his friend Michael Robartes, of their night conversation and of the narrator's decision to join Robartes' Order of the Alchemical Rose. Before starting the initiation ceremony, the unnamed narrator takes an ancient Ritual Manuscript, described by Yeats in «the page proofs of the 1897 edition, the italicized section having been cut by Yeats from the published book»[81]:

In the box was a book bound in vellum, and having *a rose-tree growing from an armed anatomy, and enclosing the faces of two lovers painted on the one side, to symbolize certainly the coming of beauty out of corruption, and probably much else*; and upon the other, the alchemical rose with many spears thrusting against it, but in vain, as was shown by the shattered points of those nearest. The book was written upon vellum […][82].

Perfectly reflecting and joining Althea Gyles' illustrations, we are told that even the deepest sanctuary of the Order of the Alchemical Rose creates a mandala with a rose linking together earth and sky. Most significantly, the petals of the rose turn into immortal beings joining the mortals into an everlasting dance. Among the dancers is the symbol of a flouted cross, that evidently is related to the rose and to the ending Christian Era.

The reiteration of various opposing couples on the front and back covers, as well as on the book spine, such as the rose and the cross, the lance and the bowl, the rosy-cross and the spears are the epitome of a main opposition, the one between eternity and death, spiritual and material life. Althea Gyles' tree of life with the rosy-cross symbol at its very heart, perfectly reproduces the point of encounter between sensible reality and the spiritual one, the former given by the dead knight and the latter by the living couple. Physical death and spiritual or divine love meet each other in the middle of the tree, where the rosy-cross symbol reveals itself. Althea Gyles, in her plastic interpretation of Yeats' leitmotifs, expressed throughout the volume, is suggesting the contrast given by the afore-mentioned main opposing couples, by attributing a circular form to all the elements pertaining to spiritual life and a linear and rational form to all the elements pertaining to the sensible reality. The two epigraphs inside the volume are as well emblematic of this symbolic and opposing union, highlighting Yeats' vision of beauty and time. The first one is a quotation from the poet of «visionary beauty»[83], Villiers de L'Isle-Adam: «As for living, our servants will do that for us» (*Axel*). The other is a passage from Ovid's *Metamorphosis XV*, referring to the moment when the old Helen starts realizing her loss of beauty, ravaged by the passing years. Actually, in his dedication to George Russell, Yeats' friend and Irish writer better known as AE[84], Yeats anticipates that the real argument of his work is «the war of spiritual with natural order», celestial bliss and mortal misery find a proper actualization in the book stories and are definitely joint together into the symbol of the secret rose[85], in which all the conflicts are reconciled and resolved.

3. The first editions of *The Wind among the Reeds* were published both in England by Mathews and in America by Lane from plates produced in America. The parallel publication, at first opposed by Elkin Mathews who didn't want his former partner, John Lane, to go on with his own plan[86], was achieved in the form of a final compromise after a long diatribe involving

Mathews, Lane and Yeats himself. A conflict which, instead of being concluded with the American rights affair, subsequently shifted to another matter, the binding of the volume. As maintained by Charles Ricketts, «Mathews and Yeats have been at odds over the binding for *The Wind* for some time before its publication . . . Yeats envisioned his new book of poems with an appropriate cover design and a frontispiece»[87]. Actually, in order to reproduce also figuratively the Celtic subject of the volume, Yeats «chose an artist close to the Celtic Movement, Althea Gyles»[88]. Miss Althea Gyles' design and lettering in gilt on the covers and spine, defined by Ian Fletcher as her «most accomplished»[89], probably did not match with Mathews' low-cost and plain publishing style. Hence, Mathews' attempt to change gold for yellow and Yeats' own reply in the Autumn of 1898, after receiving from Mathews a yellow binding proof:

> First the colour and the cloth won't do. It is a colour I particularly dislike. The colour should be the same dark blue as my "Secret Rose". Secondly the yellow lines won't do. This cover is simply ugly. The lines should be in gold or the cover should be perfectly plain. I thought it was understood that the design was to be in gold. Please either get the design printed in gold or abolish it altogether, letting me know what the block has cost. Surely you must see yourself that it is absurd to print a book of verse of any kind of importance with the same kind of common stuff on the cover that you put on a novel. […] The cover you sent me would do neither of us credit. I believe on the other hand that if you make it a really charming book to look at you will help the book greatly[90].

It followed other proofs and letters[91] but, in the end, the simultaneous first and second Elkin Mathews editions of *The Wind* came out according to Yeats' desire. Mathews actually resolved to cut a part of the publishing costs by removing, either from the first edition or from the following editions of the volume[92], the frontispiece where Althea Gyles had portrayed a stylised Yeats «as Rosicrucian mage»[93]. After the ordinary edition, Charles Ricketts proposed to Yeats a new version of *The Wind* in a full vellum deluxe binding, with Althea Gyles' design and lettering in gilt on the covers and spine. Yeats enthusiastically accepted Ricketts' proposal. Notwithstanding, «the ordinary third edition of 1900 still was issued in dark blue cloth with Gyles' design in gold as in the first and second editions; however, it was accompanied by an alternate binding style: blue-gray boards with Gyles' design stamped in black»[94]. It was only in 1903 that twelve copies[95] were printed in the deluxe binding, with the design in gold on vellum binding, while the ordinary 1903 edition was issued in plain boards.

The edition of *The Wind Among the Reeds*[96] here referred to is the Elkin Mathews 1899 edition, in full blue publisher's cloth with gilt-stamped design by Althea Gyles on front, spine and back. Concerning the binding of the volume, the pages appear to be cut by hand and all edges are untrimmed. As in *The Secret Rose* binding, where the covers are in deep blue with letters and

designs in gilt and Yeats' name is within the lower frame «in unauthentic yet Celtic-looking script»[97], also in *The Wind*, Yeats' name is on the lower part of the front cover, at its centre, inside a straight frame. Ian Fletcher, referring to the front cover, argues that «the lettering is again accurate with the exception once more of the *B*. […] we can trace a continuous evolution from *The Secret Rose*»[98].

In *The Wind* design Althea Gyles reveals again her indebtedness to the cabalistic tradition. The symbolic substrate from which she conspicuously draws, is clearly rendered at the figurative level as to reinforce the deep poetic connections between *The Secret Rose* and *The Wind Among the Reeds*. Actually, as it is widely known, the stories included in *The Secret Rose* are deeply related to the thirty-seven poems of *The Wind* collection, where the symbol of the secret rose also plays a centripetal force, attracting and evoking the most ancient mystical and esoteric symbols and imagery. It is in particular in the homonymous poem entitled *The Secret Rose*, that the rose receives a clear representation both at a semantic and symbolic level. In this poem, the rose exemplifies the point of union between the spiritual world and the material reality, sending back to the Rosicrucian doctrine of the Golden Dawn:

Far off, most secret, and inviolate Rose,
Enfold me in my hour of hours; where those
Who sought thee in the Holy Sepulchre,
[…]
Men have named beauty (1-3, 7).

Despite the fact of representing one of the most relevant symbolical connections between Yeats' *The Secret Rose* and *The Wind Among the Reeds* volumes, Miss Althea Gyles, in her *Wind* covers, does not figuratively pay any tribute to the rosy-cross symbol, the quintessential element. Far from the front and back covers of *The Secret Rose*, where it plays a central part, leaving a subordinate role to all the other esoteric symbols, and far from *Poems* (1899), where the image of the rosy-cross overtops the front cover and that of the rose the back cover[99], in *The Wind Among the Reeds* the rosy-cross symbol appears to be willingly concealed. Further, what is really worth noticing is the somewhat implicit, indirect, and simpler plastic representation of the esoteric and mystical cauldron *tout court*. The latter appears to be strictly reduced into Althea's drawing of the four natural elements, which are symbolically evoked by a plain design and nature-related images. In other words, the difficult symbolic and multilayered level enhanced by the weird figures appearing on the front and back covers of *The Secret Rose* is here replaced by an essential design, seemingly not complicated with any difficult obscure symbolism.

The front cover is characterized by a large frame including the central design, which is bordered by an upper and a lower panel. Within the lower

panel, tongues of fire seem to burn the name of the poet, thus evoking the symbolic meaning of the fire of inspiration. «The title at the top of the front cover was balanced at the bottom by the author's name rising over a flame-like pattern highly reminiscent of one of Gyles' mentors – both spiritual and artistic – William Blake»[100]. We remember that in *America* (1793), William Blake portrayed his red demon, Orc, the very symbol of the new spiritual vision gained by a violent act of rebellion, as burnt by the purifying fire able to destroy his material clothes and to inspire him with a totally new transcendent perspective. As suggested by Putzel, «[e]ach of the four elements is present in the world […] of *The Secret Rose* and *The Wind Among the Reeds*. Earth-heavy humans are blessed and tormented by the fire of inspiration that allows them to hear and sometimes see 'elemental beings' in wind and wave»[101]. In her representation of each one of the four elements, Miss Gyles implicitly suggests the image of the poet who, once burnt by the flames of inspiration, is able to perceive in Putzel's aforementioned words some elemental beings, probably in the portrayed reeds blown by the wind and generated by the water. Fletcher also supports this hypothesis, claiming that «[t]he cover expresses the origin of inspiration»[102]. The blow of the wind, which corresponds to the life blow or breath, accordingly symbolizes the element of the air which, in turn, stands for the invisible, spiritual life. The wind which blows among the reeds is thus the Air, i.e. the Spirit or Universal Mind which circulates, exchanges, and disperses, by penetrating the Earth, causing the Fire to burn, and mixing itself with the Water. Allen Grossman, in *Poetic Knowledge in the Early Yeats*, claims that *The Wind Among the Reeds* must be conceived as a single «mythological poem» about the «search for poetic knowledge»[103] and the poet himself, burnt by the fire of inspiration, is the subject of this quest. In his opinion, the reed bowed by the wind might suggest the poet's «self-image as the over-thrown artist»[104], an image Yeats probably derived from pre-Raphaelite painting.

In the central part of the drawing, Althea Gyles illustrates a row of intertwined reeds, bent by the wind, clearly performing at a plastic level the very title of the volume. Now, one of the most relevant myths emerging from the volume is that, in Grossman's words, of the «creative fire-self», of the «the cherubic Warder of Eden, the cabalistic Jehovah» representing the father, and the White Woman standing both for the Beloved and the Mother[105]. According to Warwick Gould, «[a]t the centre of *The Wind Among the Reeds Plate 4.* is a complex projection of a hopeless love triangle, the lover, his beloved, and a pale woman whom passion has worn, or Yeats, Maud Gonne, Olivia Shakespear» and, he continues, Althea Gyles' «rather Japanese design» might be «[b]ased on her reading of one poem, 'Breasal the Fisherman'», from which she could have derived the image of the net of reeds, of the poet as fisherman and the beloved as the fish, «suggesting perhaps the planned entrapment of the beloved [within the net]. It is reduced to chaos, tangle and escape on the back, as fire gives way to water»[106].

Although you hide in the ebb and flow
Of the pale tide when the moon has set,
The people of coming days will know
About the casting out of my net,
And how you have leaped times out of mind
Over the little silver cords,
And think that you were hard and unkind,
And blame you with many bitter words[107].

The eight tetrameter lines of this lyric, later called *The Fish*, present «the words of a man who has been on an impossible supernal quest for many years»[108]. The motif of the mysterious initiation is conferred by many images which are symbolic of his travel across different places and times. Leaping «[o]ver the little silver cords» of the sea, throughout several times that are «out of mind», he is able to cast out or elude a mysterious net, temporally and geographically extended by means of his own quest. Instead of considering the fisherman as the poet himself, Grossman suggests that «[t]he fish is the prima materia, the lapis philosophorum, the ultimate identity of the self, and Yeats is in search of it the more hopelessly because the moon, symbol of subjectivity, has set, and the creature of the moon is not to be found elsewhere»[109]. In Miss Gyles' drawing, the arch-shaped net might suggest a sort of three-dimensional corridor that has to be crossed by an invisible quester. Going further, this stereogram-like image made of five couples of bowed reeds, if observed from above, also evokes the very vaults of a secret temple.

The whole design is extremely rational and essential[110]. On the front cover, the reeds appear to be disposed in a symmetric pattern, rising from the lower part of the frame as to symbolise their phenomenal generation. Being ten in total, five on the left and five on the right side, they are once again evocative of the Tree of Life with its ten emanations. Interestingly, they lean and are intertwined so as to form the aforementioned net-motif. By imaging the ten reeds to be divided into two parts or columns, we can see that each reed intersects with nearly all the reeds of the opposing column, thus forming four visible convergent arches. This artistic solution is achieved thanks to the different position assumed by the ten reeds: the five reeds belonging to the right part all lean towards the left side of the frame, where we find the other five reeds leaning, in turn, towards the right side. Their opposing movement, implicitly caused by two different winds respectively blowing in two different directions, eastward and westward, creates a sort of intersecting game among the reeds and the aforementioned net-motif.

Differently from the four higher couples of reeds, which converge into the center producing four arches by their interweaving, the lower couple, being figuratively represented only upwards, from the very point where the two cannas meet, does not form any visible arch. Besides, the two lower reeds are made up of an entire bough instead of a fragmented one, as in the case of the

other eight reeds which, in turn, are respectively divided in two, three, three, and two parts. Going further, while the four lower couples of reeds, even in their fragmentation, are still composed of simple bow reeds, the higher couple appears to split into two parts, in turn made up of a new reed and a leaf, where the former follow the usual circular trajectory, while the latter waves towards the edge of the cover, as if to interrupt or conclude the net-design. The two leaves, one on the right and one on the left side of the frame, depart from the point of fragmentation of the higher couple.

The extreme rationality conferred by the division of the reeds into two parts and by their perfect, proportional interlacing is evidently disturbed and diminished by the flexion of these same plants, where the exact, somewhat rigid proportions of the design contrast with the sinuous movement of the reeds. A movement, the latter, which is evidently caused by one of the four natural elements, the air, here represented by the wind. The contrast between the spiritual and the phenomenal world, expressed by the air and the water generating the reeds, is also microcosmically represented by the higher couple, where the division between the earth-generated reed and the wind-blown leaf becomes neat and complete.

The upper frame is characterized by the title of the volume «in an almost consistent Celtic lettering while the author's name on the front base panel, again in Celtic is surrounded by some Beardsleyish *japonaiserie*»[111]. The frame is somewhat pervaded by a number of little black points, which, in one of her letters to Yeats, Althea Gyles interestingly defines as the «"dust of the Dead"» and represents this concept by drawing a black square full of several little points: «I think the best design you can have for the book plate would be a simple square filled with the "dust of the Dead"»[112]. Evidently, the dust sends back to the symbol of Earth.

The spine bears the title of the volume and the name of the poet. Fletcher interestingly observes that «[t]he lettering on the spine […] is academically accurate with the exception of the *e* which has no extended crossbar. There is an English capital *B* which is not found in Gaelic founts until they began to be aligned to international use. The author's name is vertically compressed. The imprint is in roman»[113]. Between the name of the author and the name of the publisher, Althea Gyles appears to interrupt the sinuosity of the reeds of the front and back covers with the image of a linear, straight reed with a «hyssop-heavy sponge impaled»[114] at the bottom of the reed, which, according to Gould, «dares us to compare the sufferings of sexual passion with those of Christ on the Cross»[115].

Writing about Robartes, Aedh and Hanrahan, Yeats admitted that

> These are personages in 'The Secret Rose;'. . . . I have used them in this book more as principles of the mind than as actual personages. It is probable that only students of the magical tradition will understand me when I say that 'Michael Robartes' is

fire reflected in water, and that Hanrahan is fire blown by the wind, and that Aedh is fire burning by itself. To put it in a different way, Hanrahan is the simplicity of an imagination too changeable to gather permanent possessions, or the adoration of the shepherds; and Michael Robartes is the pride of the imagination brooding upon the greatness of its possessions, or the adoration of the Magi; while Aedh is the myrrh and frankincense that the imagination offers continually before all that it loves[116].

Assuming that each one of the four element might be divided into four further elemental categories, i.e. Fire of Fire, Air of Fire, Water of Fire and Earth of Fire, and so on, Yeats considered Robartes as «fire reflected in water», while «Hanrahan is fire blown by the wind». Now, observing Althea's covers from the front to the back, we can immediately notice that while the front cover is characterized by fire and wind, which might recall the figure of Hanrahan, on the back cover fire is totally replaced by water – the reeds here clearly appear to be originated by water, the latter figuratively represented, beneath the reeds, by six parallel stylised lines, so as to form the waves of a river – while the element of the wind remains constant. Watching together the front and back covers, they appear to be perfectly specular in their composition: the central design is on both covers devoted to the reeds, while the lower design represents fire in the front cover and water on the back cover, all together suggesting the figure of Robartes as «fire reflected in water».

According to Ian Fletcher, «In this design, there is greater use of the dark blue base colour, while the back cover with its whip-lash leaves is nearer to the prevalent art nouveau idiom. Asymmetricality renders it more visually exciting than the front cover»[117]. Actually, the reeds in the back cover do not shape arches by interweaving with each other and giving thus birth to a rational pattern, as in the front cover, but they appear to branch out into a new rational reed creating a semi arch-pattern, and in a leaf that, like a ribbon, wraps the still bowed reeds. The waving leaves evidently find their origin from the two leaves of the front cover and are even figuratively related to them. As observed by Putzel, «The symmetrical pattern of interlocking reeds has been broken and now the slender leaves swirl about the reeds in a visual version of Yeats' comment that 'the wind bloweth as it listeth …' (WR, 86; VP, 806)»[118].

Gyles reworked all this. All the elements she illustrated on *The Wind* covers contribute to the symbolic language of the volume and enhance Yeats' attraction for symbolic art.

In Gyles' artistic translation of his symbolic vision, Yeats achieved one of his desires, to publish all his books in a «uniform shape»[119]. And it is worth noticing, as Gould accordingly enhances, that «These spinal designs and blue-and-gold liveries by Gyles established Yeats' image across five further titles *The Celtic Twilight*, 1902, *Poems 1899-1905*, *Poems: Second Series*, *The Poetical Works of William B. Yeats*, *The Unicorn from the Stars*, and across four publishers (Unwin, Bullen, Ernest Benn and the Macmillan company […]»[120].

In *A Symbolic Artist*, Yeats himself wrote:

> Once or twice an artist has been touched by a visionary energy amid his weariness and bitterness, but it has passed away. […] If one imagine a flame burning in the air, and try to make one's mind dwell on it, that it may continue to burn, one's mind strays immediately to other images; but perhaps, if one believed that it was a divine flame, one's mind would not stray. I think that I would find this visionary beauty also in the work of some of the younger French artists, for I have a dim memory of a little statue in ebony and ivory. Certain recent French writers, like Villiers De L'Isle Adam; have it, and I cannot separate art and literature in this, for they have gone through the same change, though in different forms. I have certainly found it in the poetry of a young Irish Catholic who was meant for the priesthood, but broke down under the strain of what was to him a visionary ecstasy; in some plays by a new Irish writer; in the poetry of "A.E."; in some stories of Miss Macleod's; and in the drawings of Miss Gyles; and in almost all these a passion for symbol has taken the place of the old interest in life[121].

Endnotes

[1] W.B. Yeats, *A Vision and Related Writings*, ed. by Alexander Norman Jeffares, Arena Books, London 1990, p. 134.

[2] In May 1884 he entered the Metropolitan School of Art in Kildare Street, though he considered the teaching received there as «destructive of enthusiasm» (quoted in T. Brown, *The Life of W.B. Yeats: A Critical Biography*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Malden, Mass. 1999, p. 28).

[3] See for instance, his Coole Park pastel (1903).

[4] J. Masefield, *Some Memoirs of W.B. Yeats*, Cuala Press, Dublin 1940, p. 1.

[5] Yeats gave an account of his father's circle of friends in the *Autobiographies* as «painters who had been influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite movement but had lost their confidence» (The Macmillan Press, London 1955, rev. ed. 1979, p. 44), alluding to their giving up Pre-Raphaelitism.

[6] *The Works of William Blake; Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical. Edited with Lithographs of the Illustrated Prophetic Books, and a Memoir and Interpretation by Edwin John Ellis and William Butler Yeats*, Bernard Quaritch, London 1893.

[7] W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, cit., p. 157.

[8] «Fell gave him a front-and-back design of an aureoled, winged and helmeted angel, presumably St. Michael […], vanquishing a serpent, all enclosed within a celestial harp-shaped border of thorned roses» (W. Gould, *Yeats and His Books*, ESB International, The University College Cork 2005, p. 15).

[9] In April 1894, Yeats' play *The Land of Heart's Desire* was published by Fisher Unwin. The editor adopted for the cover and title page of the volume, the poster designed by Aubrey Beardsley for the Avenue Theatre production of Yeats' play.

[10] W.B. Yeats, *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats, Volume IV, 1905-1907*, ed. by. J. Kelly, R. Schuchard, Oxford UP, Oxford 2005, p. 211. Hereafter *CL4*.

[11] Ivi, p. 671.

[12] Quotations from Gyles' poetry are taken from the *Althea Gyles Special Collection* of the University of Reading. As reported by Ian Fletcher in his *Poet and Designer: W.B. Yeats and Althea Gyles*: «Mrs Barrington [Althea Gyles' sister] with great generosity presented to Reading University Library such papers of Miss Gyles as were in her possession, securing the equally

generous permission of her daughter, Mrs Joyce Cazalet. Among these were a typescript of the greater number of Miss Gyles' poems; the first chapters of two novels—*Mrs Campton's Campaign* and *Pilgrimage*; a number of miscellaneous essays; two children's stories and several drafts of the play which Miss Gyles mentions in her letters to W.B. Yeats» («Yeats Studies. An International Journal», 1, 1971, *Yeats and the 1890s*, ed. by R. O'Driscoll, L. Reynolds, p. 79, n. 32; published a second time in I. Fletcher, *W.B. Yeats and his Contemporaries*, The Harvester Press, Brighton 1987).

[13] «Miss Horniman, John Masefield, William Rothenstein, Ricketts and Shannon are much in evidence. He says in his autobiography that a fanaticism for mythology delayed his friendship with Ricketts and Shannon, men "in the great tradition", but now he saw them every three or four days. The two young artists, Pamela Coleman Smith and Althea Gyles (who designed his first bookplate), also find frequent mention in his letters», J. Hone, *W.B. Yeats, 1865-1939* (1943), St. Martin's Press, New York 1962, p. 179.

[14] R.F. Forster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life Volume I: The Apprentice Mage 1865-1914*, Oxford UP, Oxford 1997.

[15] W. Gould, *Yeats and His Books*, cit., p. 16.

[16] I. Fletcher, *W.B. Yeats and Althea Gyles*, cit., p. 42.

[17] Ivi, p. 68.

[18] Ivi, p. 42.

[19] For any in-depth study of Althea Gyles' family, see I. Fletcher, *W.B. Yeats and Althea Gyles*, cit., p. 45.

[20] W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, cit., pp. 237-238.

[21] From *A Note On Althea Gyles (1868-1949)*, written by L. Fletcher on October 1957. This most important document is included in the *List of Works by A. Gyles (1868-1949)* in the University of Reading Library (Manuscript 823.91).

[22] W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, cit., p. 238.

[23] Ivi, p. 236: «The one house where nobody thought or talked politics was a house in Ely Place, where a number of young men lived together, and, for want of a better name, were called Theosophists. Beside the resident members, other members dropped in and out during the day, and the reading-room was a place of much discussion about philosophy and about the arts. The house had been taken in the name of the engineer to the Board of Works, a black-bearded young man, with a passion for Manichean philosophy, and all accepted him as host ; and sometimes the conversation, especially when I was there, became too ghostly for the nerves of his young and delicate wife, and he would be made angry. I remember young men struggling, with inexact terminology and insufficient learning, for some new religious conception, on which they could base their lives; and some few strange or able men».

[24] For references to Yeats' consideration of Althea Gyles' talent, see Yeats' *A Symbolic Artist and the Coming of Symbolic Art. An essay on Althea Gyles*, «Dome», 1, December 1898, special issue (reprinted in *Uncollected Prose by W.B. Yeats*, ed. by J.P. Frayne, C. Johnson, 2 vols., Columbia UP, New York 1976) and Althea Gyles' portrait at pp. 237-239 of *Autobiographies.*

[25] W.B. Yeats, *A Symbolic Artist and the Coming of Symbolic Art*, in *Uncollected Prose*, cit., p. 133.

[26] W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, cit., pp. 237-238.

[27] I. Fletcher, *W.B. Yeats and Althea Gyles*, cit., p. 45.

[28] Ernest Dowson's *Decorations: in Verse and Prose* were published in London by Leonard Smithers' The Chiswick Press. As reported by Jad Adams: «It was probably in the preparation of Decorations that Dowson met Althea Gyles, one of the few women associated with decadence. She was a poet and painter who 'sacrificed herself with an Asiatic fanaticism' to her art, according to Yeats, living on bread and shell-cocoa so that her food never cost her more than a penny a day. She was a year younger than Dowson, a fiery woman with red-gold hair whom Smithers engaged to design a cover for *Decorations* […]. The design for Dowson's book was a

double rectangle in gold on white, enclosing a stylized flower with thorns on the front with another pattern, of thorns and foliage, on the back» (J. Adams, *Madder Music, Stronger Wine: The Life of Ernest Dowson, Poet and Decadent*, I.B. Tauris, London 2000, p. 157).

[29] First published in «The Dramatic Review», on April 11, 1885 and in 1904 by Leonard Smithers' The Mathurin Press in London, with five illustrations by Althea Gyles.

[30] «Miss Gyles was associated with the Order of the Golden Dawn and her interests extended to anti-vivisectionism and a neo-Ruskinian view of economics», L. Fletcher, *A Note On Althea Gyles (1868-1949)*, cit.

[31] For an in-depth analysis of Yeats' adhesion to the Theosophical Society and the Golden Dawn, see M.K. Schuchard, *Yeats and the Unknown Superiors: Swedenborg, Falk, and Cagliostro*, in M. Mulvey Roberts, H. Ormsby-Lennon (eds.), *Secret Texts: The Literature of Secret Societies*, AMS , New York 1995, pp. 114-168; K. Raine, *Yeats, the Tarot and the Golden Dawn*, The Dolmen Press, Dublin 1972 and *Yeats the Initiate: Essays on Certain Themes in the Works of W.B. Yeats*, Allen and Unwin, London 1986; S. Graf, *W.B. Yeats – Twentieth-Century Magus: An In-depth Study of Yeats's Esoteric Practices & Beliefs, Including Excerpts from His Magical Diaries*, Samuel Weiser, Inc., York Beach (ME) 2000; A. Antonielli, *L'esoterismo colto di William Butler Yeats dalla Società Teosofica all'Aurora Dorata*, «Il Confronto Letterario», 47, II, 2007, pp. 69-98 e *William Blake e William Butler Yeats. Sistemi simbolici e costruzioni poetiche*, Firenze UP, Firenze 2009.

[32] W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, cit., p. 238.

[33] From the *Althea Gyles Special Collection* of the University of Reading. Hereafter *AGSC*.

[34] I. Fletcher, *W.B. Yeats and Althea Gyles*, cit., p. 76.

[35] W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, cit., p. 238.

[36] Ivi, pp. 238-239.

[37] J.G. Nelson, *Publisher to the Decadents …*, cit., p. 270.

[38] W.B. Yeats, *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, *Vol. II, 1896-1900*, ed. by W. Gould, J. Kelly, D. Toomey, Clarendon, Oxford 1997, p. 473. Hereafter *CL2*.

[39] J.G. Nelson, *Publisher to the Decadents …*, cit., p. 268.

[40] L. Fletcher, *A Note on Althea Gyles (1868-1949)*, in *List of Works by A. Gyles (1868-1949)*, the University of Reading Library (Manuscript 823.91).

[41] F.C. Mackenzie, *Tatting*, Cape, London 1957, p. 12.

[42] A. Crowley, *At the Fork of the Roads*, «The Equinox», I, 1909, p. 104; accessible online <http://www.thule-italia.net/letteraria/Crowley,%20Aleister%20-%20The%20Equinox%20Volume%2001.pdf> (08/20/2010).

[43] «Both Crowley and Yeats were members of a secret magical order, the Hermetic Students of the Golden Dawn; […]. But when Crowley showed a tendency to use his occult powers for evil rather than for good, the adepts of the order, Yeats among them, decided not to allow him to be initiated into the inner circle; they feared that he would profane the mysteries and unleash powerful magical forces against humanity. Crowley refused to accept their decision. He went to Paris, and there persuaded the chief of the Golden Dawn, a Celtophile magician named MacGregor Mathers, to deputize him to wrest control of the London temple of the order away from Yeats and his friends. Mathers furnished Crowley with appropriate charms and exorcisms to use against recalcitrant members, and instructed him to wear Celtic dress. Equipped accordingly in Highlander's tartan, with a black Crusader's cross on his breast, with a dirk at his side and a skindoo at his knee, Crowley arrived at the Golden dawn temple in London. Making the sign of the pentacle inverted, and shouting menaces at the adepts, Crowley climbed the stairs. But Yeats and two other white magicians came resolutely forward to meet him, ready to protect the holy place at any cost. When Crowley came within range the forces of good struck out with their feet and kicked him downstairs» (*Black Magic against White: Aleister Crowley versus W. B. Yeats*, «Partisan Review», 15, 9, September 1948, p. 1049).

[44] Ivi, p. 1050.

[45] Ivi, pp. 1050-1051.

[46] J. Kelly, R. Schuchard (eds.), *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats, Vol. III, 1901-1904*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1994, pp. 198-199. Hereafter *CL3*.

[47] I. Fletcher, *W.B. Yeats and Althea Gyles*, cit., p. 79.

[48] J. Adams, *Madder Music, Stronger Wine: The Life of Ernest Dowson, Poet and Decadent*, cit., p. 178.

[49] W.B. Yeats, *Poems, 1899-1905*, A.H. Bullen, London 1906; Maunsel & Co., Dublin 1906. The cloth is characterized by Althea Gyles' typical gold design on spine. Concerning Miss Althea Gyles' design to the *Poems* cover, not analysed in this study, J.W. Gleeson White's comments: «The name of Althea Giles [*sic*] belongs properly to the neo-Celtic school and her cover […] is highly characteristic of a sombre, mystical and weird imaginative power expressing itself through a talent still vagrant and diffuse» («Studio», special Winter number, 1899, p. 32).

[50] As Joan Coldwell remarks «Yeats's active concern with cover-design began with his objection to the "facile meaningless" of the cover to his *Poems*, 1895. […] Yeats had admired one of Fell's designs at an earlier exhibition but he felt that the artist's work had deteriorated; in John Quinn's copy of *Poems* Yeats wrote, "… Dent had spoilt him with all kinds of jobs & when he did this the spirit had gone out of him. I hate this expressionless angel of his."» (J. Coldwell, *"Images That Yet Fresh Images Beget": A Note on Book-Covers*, in R. Skelton, A. Saddlemyer (eds.), *The World of W.B. Yeats*, University of Washington Press, Seattle 1967, p. 135).

[51] Yeats' play *The Shadowy Waters* (Hodder and Stoughton, London 1900) also includes a design by Althea Gyles. Concerning the frontispiece of *The Wind among the Reeds*, W. Gould writes: «Gyles's frontispiece portrait of Yeats, […] was omitted, but its three-petalled Tudor rose and blown fourth petal found their way onto *The Shadowy Waters*, 1900, also in the Cantwell collection, in stamped gold on blue» (W. Gould, *Yeats and His Books*, cit., p. 19).

[52] R. Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats*, cit.

[53] L. Miller, *The Noble Drama of W.B. Yeats*, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N.J. 1977, p. 365.

[54] Even though, as remarked by Clifford Bax and reported by Fletcher in his *Poet and Designer*, Miss Gyles' «'[…] occultism', […], 'was skin deep'» (I. Fletcher, cit., p. 46). For more detailed information on the Order of the Golden Dawn, see the Historical and Biographical Appendix of *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats, Volume I*, ed. by J. Kelly, E. Domville, Oxford UP, London 1986). Hereafter *CL1*.

[55] W.B. Yeats, *A Symbolic Artist and the Coming of Symbolic Art*, in *Uncollected Prose*, cit., p. 134.

[56] I. Fletcher, *W.B. Yeats and Althea Gyles*, cit., p. 47.

[57] W.B. Yeats, *A Symbolic Artist and the Coming of Symbolic Art*, in *Uncollected Prose*, cit., p. 135.

[58] E. Bergmann Loizeaux, *Yeats and the Visual Arts* (1986), Syracuse UP, New York 2003, p. 90.

[59] Reserve 821.912. Accession No. 57, 697. Bibliotheca Universitatis Radingensis. Lawrence & Bullen, Limited, 16 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London, MDCCCXCVII. See also W. Gould, *Yeats and His Books*, cit., p. 44, note 80: «Two copies survive in which the designs, or part of them, are stamped upon dark crimson or reddish brown cloth. One copy is in D.B. Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario. […] It has 'Lawrence & Bullen' stamped on the spine, in common with copies of the first issue, but there is no design upon the lower board».

[60] D. Kiely, *Partnerships in Symbolic Book Craft: W.B. Yeats and His Covers Designers*, «Biblion: The Bulletin of The New York Public Library», 8, 2, 2000, p. 54.

[61] The image of the two lovers was probably drawn by Althea Gyles from Yeats' poem *The Two Trees*.

[62] W.B. Yeats, *The Variorum Edition of the Poems*, ed. by P. Allt, R.K. Alspach, Macmillan, New York 1973, p. 170. The first eight stories of *The Secret Rose* deal with Irish legendary stories, while the other six belong to the tales of the Hanrahan Cycle and are partly grounded

in the life of Owen Ruadh O'Sullivan, the poet who lived during the XVIII Century. The main character of the last story, taking place at the end of the 19th Century, is Michael Robartes, who is leading the narrator towards an occult temple. At first, the collection also included a short story entitled *The Tables of the Law*, which had been conceived by Yeats as a part of a triptych to which *Rosa Alchemica* and *The Adoration of the Magi* should belong as well. But the three stories were conceived by the publisher to be not publishable all together, for their highly esoteric content. Hence, two of them were removed from the 1897 edition. *The Tables of the Law* was first issued by «The Savoy» in November 1986, while *The Adoration of the Magi* was published privately in a separate volume, together with *The Tables of the Law*, in 1904, by Elkin Mathews. The greater part of *The Secret Rose* stories have also appeared in «The New Review», «The Sketch», «The National Observer» and «The Savoy».

[63] S. Putzel, *Reconstructing Yeats: the Secret Rose and The Wind Among the Reeds*, Barnes and Noble, Totowa, NJ 1986, p. 23.

[64] See A.R. Grossman, *Poetic Knowledge in the Early Yeats. A Study of The Wind Among the Reeds*, The University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville 1969, pp. 46-51.

[65] For any in-depth analysis of the rosy-cross symbol, see P.F. Case, *The True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order*, Samuel Weiser Publishing, York Beach, Maine 1985; C. and S. Cicero, *Secrets of a Golden Dawn Temple*, Liewellyn Publications, St. Paul, Minnesota 1992; S. Jones, *I.N.R.I., De Mysteries, Rosae Rubea Et Aurae Crucis*, Kessinger Publishing, Kila, Montana 1996. H. Van Buren Voorhis, *A History of Organized Masonic Rosicrucianism*, Societas Rosicruciana, Brookline, MA 1983; R. Steiner, *Christian Rosenkreutz: The Mystery, Teaching and Mission of a Master*, Rudolf Steiner Press, London 2002.

[66] S. Putzel, *Reconstructing Yeats:* The Secret Rose *and* The Wind Among the Reeds, cit., p. 25.

[67] Cfr. R. Ellmann, *Introduction* to *The Identity of Yeats*, revised ed., Oxford UP, New York 1964.

[68] Yet, it is worth noticing that the basic rosy-cross symbol is that of a five petal rose appended to the junction of the two lines of a 6 square cross.

[69] For the image of the two lovers who meet each other again, after death, in the form of mingling rose bushes, see also Yeats' poem *The Three Bushes*.

[70] This very design also appears on the covers of the following Yeatsian studies: R. Skelton and Ann Saddlemyer (eds.), *The World of W.B. Yeats: Essays in Perspective*, Dolmen, Dublin 1965; R.J. Finneran, *The Prose Fiction of W. B. Yeats: The Search for 'Those Simple Forms'*, Dolmen Press, Dublin 1973; A.N. Jeffares, *W.B. Yeats: A New Biography*, Hutchinson, London 1988; W.K. Chapman, *W.B. Yeats and English Renaissance Literature*, Macmillan, London 1991. See also J. Genet, *Villiers de L'Isle Adam and W.B. Yeats*, in A.N. Jeffares (ed.), *Yeats the European*, Barnes and Noble, Savage (Maryland) 1989, pp. 63-64; S. Putzel, *Reconstructing Yeats:* The Secret Rose *and* The Wind Among the Reeds, cit., pp. 22-25; W.H. O'Donnell, *A Guide to the Prose Fiction of W.B. Yeats*, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor 1983, pp. 90-91.

[71] Ivi, p. 24.

[72] S. Putzel, *Reconstructing Yeats:* The Secret Rose *and* The Wind Among the Reeds, cit., p. 23.

[73] I. Fletcher, *W.B. Yeats and Althea Gyles*, cit., p. 56.

[74] Ivi, pp. 55-56.

[75] W. Gould, *Yeats and His Books*, cit., p. 17.

[76] I. Fletcher, *W.B. Yeats and Althea Gyles*, cit., p. 55.

[77] S. Putzel, *Reconstructing Yeats:* The Secret Rose *and* The Wind Among the Reeds, cit., p. 24.

[78] W. Gould, *Yeats and His Books*, cit., p. 17.

[79] S. Putzel, *Reconstructing Yeats*, cit., p. 24

[80] *Ibidem*.

[81] W. Gould, *Yeats and His Books*, cit., p. 16.

[82] Quoted from W. Gould, *Yeats and his Books*, cit., p. 16. Italics added by W. Gould to underline the section cut by Yeats from the published volume. See W.B. Yeats, *The Secret*

Rose: Stories by W.B. Yeats: A Variorum Edition, ed. by W. Gould, P.L. Marcus, M.J. Sidnell, Macmillan, Basingstoke 1992, p. 272. The whole story can be read in W.B. Yeats, *Mythologies*, Macmillan, New York 1959, p. 283.

[83] See W.B. Yeats, *A Symbolic Artist and the Coming of Symbolic Art*, cit., p. 134.

[84] Concerning George Russell, in his *A Symbolic Artist and the Coming of Symbolic Art*, Yeats writes: «I do not believe I could easily exaggerate the direct and indirect influences which "A.E." (Mr. George Russell), the most subtle and spiritual poet of his generation, and a visionary who may find room beside Swedenborg and Blake, has had in shaping to a definite conviction the vague spirituality of young Irish men and women of letters» (p. 133), thus implying, to some extents, that Althea Gyles, being an Irish woman of letters, was also influenced by Russell.

[85] It is worth noticing that the symbol of the rose had appeared in the Yeatsian *opus* since *The Wanderings of Oisin* (1889). Both in *The Countess Kathleen* (1892) and in *The Celtic Twilight* (1893, 1902), the rose is a Janus-faced symbol, standing either for Ireland or for esoteric truth. Trying to explain its first meaning, Yeats claims that the «ancient Celts associated the Rose with Eire, or Fotla, or Banba – goddesses who gave their names to Ireland […]». Lionel Johnson and Ernest Dowson adopted the symbolic value of the rose attributing it, respectively, a typical Christian Dantesque meaning (the rose as the symbol of the Virgin Mary) and the paradigm of profane sensual love. Yeats probably adopted both traditions, assuming that for him the rose was «a multifoliate symbol». Actually, as maintained by Steven Putzel, «For Yeats, the Rose is more than a symbol of Ireland. As a neophyte in the Order of the Golden Dawn, Yeats was instructed to inhale 'the perfume of this rose as a symbol of Air'. In 1893 he was accepted into the inner Order of the Golden Dawn as an 'Adeptus Minor', having proven to his superiors that he had mastered the secrets of the Rose symbol» (S. Putzel, *Reconstructing Yeats*, cit., p. 21).

[86] Namely, as maintained by Nelson, «When the partnership between Mathews and Lane was dissolved at the close of September 1894, Yeats sided with Mathews […], promising him the right to publish *The Wind*, […]. Mathews, at that time it appears, drew up an agreement for the book which he sent Yeats who, unwilling to sign it, threw it aside amongst some other papers. As a result, when Lane several years later—probably 1897—sought the American rights to *The Wind*, proposing to Yeats a plan whereby he would print the book through his New York branch of the Bodley Head and supply sheets to Mathews for the English edition, Mathews objected, arguing that the agreement which he had drawn up allowed him to dispose of the American rights» (*Elkin Mathews: Publisher to Yeats, Joyce, Pound*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1989, p. 75).

[87] Quoted from James G. Nelson, *Elkin Mathews: Publisher to Yeats, Joyce, Pound*, cit., p. 77.

[88] *Ibidem*.

[89] I. Fletcher, «Yeats Studies», 1, 1971, p. 57. See also Allen R. Grossman, *Poetic Knowledge in the Early Yeats. A Study of The Wind Among the Reeds*, cit., pp. 46, 48, 50-51.

[90] Yeats to Mathews, 25 October [1898], Brotherton. CL2, pp. 279-280.

[91] See Yeats to Mathews, 17 November [1898] and 2 December [1898], Brotherton, *CL2*.

[92] See Yeats to Mathews, 21 August [1905] and [?] 1905, Brotherton, *CL2*.

[93] I. Fletcher, *Poet and Designer*, cit., p. 58. See note 51.

[94] J.G. Nelson, *Elkin Mathews: Publisher to Yeats, Joyce, Pound*, cit., p. 80. See also James G. Nelson, *Elkin Mathews, W.B. Yeats, and the Celtic Movement in Literature*, «Journal of Modern Literature», XIV, 1, Summer 1987, pp. 17-33.

[95] «In the Note in the Houghton Library copy of The Wind, Ricketts is reported as having said that twelve copies were so bound» ivi, p. 263.

[96] Reserve 821.912. Accession No. 116,069. Reading University Library. Copy included within the Ellis Collection. Elkin Mathews, Vigo Street, London 1899.

[97] S. Putzel, *Reconstructing Yeats*, cit., 23.

[98] I. Fletcher, *Poet and Designer*, cit., p. 58.

[99] For a detailed analysis of the rose symbol in *Poems* (1899), see W. Gould, p. 20: «The rose petals swirl in clouds rather like incense from the rose on the cross at the centre, which

acts as a thurible or censer. […] The lower board image recalls that of *The Secret Rose*, while the spine is like a new close-up view of the rose-tree on the top-board of *The Secret Rose*, as the imploring hands of the lover reach for the beloved among the birds, branches and roses of the Tree […]» (pp. 20-25). Althea Gyles' cover design for *Poems* continued to be adopted on all the following editions (thirty years).

[100] J.G. Nelson, *Elkin Mathews: Publisher to Yeats, Joyce, Pound*, cit., p. 82.

[101] S. Putzel, *Reconstructing Yeats*, cit., p. 3.

[102] I. Fletcher, *Poet and Designer*, cit., p. 58.

[103] A.R. Grossman, *Poetic Knowledge in the Early Yeats: A Study of The Wind Among the Reeds*, cit., p. xiv.

[104] Ivi, p. 47.

[105] Ivi, p. xvi.

[106] W. Gould, *Yeats and His Books*, cit., pp. 18-19.

[107] D. Karlin, *The Penguin Book of Victorian Verse*, Penguin Classics, London 1999, p. 757.

[108] S. Putzel, *Reconstructing Yeats*, cit., p. 174.

[109] A.R. Grossman, *Poetic Knowledge in the Early Yeats: A Study of The Wind Among the Reeds*, cit., p. 161.

[110] Accordingly, in Bernard Muddiman's words, «In all her drawings the fancy that seems to have such free flight is in reality severely ordered by the designer's symbolism (*The Men of the Nineties*, G.P. Puynam's Sons, New York 1921, p. 120).

[111] I. Fletcher, *Poet and Designer*, cit., p. 58.

[112] R.J. Finneran, G.M. Harper, W.M. Murphy (eds.), *Letters to W.B. Yeats, Volume I*, Macmillan, London 1977, p. 56. The editors add that «Miss Gyles probably refers to the production of Yeats's The countess Cathleen» (p. 55).

[113] I. Fletcher, *Poet and Designer*, cit., p. 58.

[114] W. Gould, *Yeats and His Books*, cit., p. 19.

[115] *Ibidem*.

[116] W.B. Yeats, *The Variorum Edition of the Poems*, cit., p. 803.

[117] I. Fletcher, *Poet and Designer*, cit., p. 58.

[118] S. Putzel, *Reconstructing Yeats*, cit., 146.

[119] CL1, p. 402.

[120] W. Gould, *Yeats and His Books*, cit., p. 25.

[121] W.B. Yeats, *A Symbolic Artist and the Coming of Symbolic Art*, in *Uncollected Prose*, cit., p. 134.

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