The hidden miraculous : an esoteric reading of yeats', Rilke's and Gore-booth's poetry

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**The Hidden Miraculous: An Esoteric Reading of Yeats', Rilke's
and Gore-Booth's Poetry**

**Zoea Tania Chen Jinyan
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
2019**

The Hidden Miraculous: An Esoteric Reading of Yeats', Rilke's and Gore-Booth's Poetry

Zoea Tania Chen Jinyan

School of Humanities

A thesis submitted to the Nanyang Technological University in partial
fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

2019

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This journey is the accumulation of a decade of dreams, wish fulfilment, blood, sweat and tears.

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Moving on from this will be one of the hardest things I will need to do, but I will take everything with me as I go.

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SUMMARY

According to many thinkers, modernity has ushered a severe fragmentation in the realm of consciousness. This fragmentation has cut us off of an important connection to an “other” realm where spirits and divine truths reside. Esoteric philosophy is the spiritual and intellectual venture to redress this issue. The proliferation of this philosophy is rooted on a profound belief in the potentialities of the human mind and the hidden truths from a beyond that harkens back to primordial times. Such concerns and aspirations were shared by poets who saw an invisible world looming behind the veil of reality, and through their bodies of poems wanted to release and illuminate. Such was the disposition of many prolific early twentieth century European poets whose reputations were characterized by an incomplete understanding of their initial impulses. This paper thus, seeks to delineate an esoteric, poetic tradition percolating in the early twentieth century European literary landscape. Paying attention to the works of Rainer Maria Rilke, Eva Gore-Booth and William Butler Yeats, this exploration aims to trace an intellectual and spiritual line that illustrates an affinity with the esoteric. Although the esoteric tradition is not exclusively reflected in their oeuvres, the richness and poignancy of Yeats’, Rilke’s and Gore-Booth’s poems in particular, seemed to create an important echo in the poetic world that was to follow. Such manifestations indicate a continuity of the esoteric tradition and will be exemplified by brief examinations of the works by Arsenii Tarkovsky and Dylan Thomas. The analyses within this paper are framed and informed by thinkers such as P.D Ouspensky, George Gurdjieff, Rudolf Steiner and Madame Blavatsky whose ideas of esotericism and hermeticism proved to be a great source of inspiration to the poets we will discuss. In exploring the various affinities between the poetic form and esoteric philosophies, this research hopes to articulate and shed light on a tradition’s presence that has been eclipsed for far too long.

CHAPTER ONE

Anima Mundi

Esoteric philosophy refers to a body of knowledge that examines and meditates the cosmos, the spiritual and its inherent relation to the human individual. It places great emphasis on the metaphysical and invisible dimensions of existence that both reside within us, and is situated in the beyond. The word “esoteric” can be traced back to 1792, when it was revealed in German: “Esoterik” within a discourse related to Pythagoras and his secret and hidden teachings. However, the origins of the noun does not account for its ancient and diverse influences. “Esotericism” includes an entire body of ideas from astrology, eastern and oriental wisdom, freemason philosophy, tarot, etc. In examining the varying facets of esotericism, the unfolding of this mode of knowledge and phenomena has seen manifestations in several factions of fraternal organisations, secret groups and individual practice. The philosophy has continued to influence movements such as romanticism, surrealism (pioneers of Surrealism such as André Breton have cited Occultism as a source of significant influence) and even within the subject of psychology. The prolific psychoanalyst, C.G Jung, for example, was known to have been influenced by certain components of esotericism. His understanding of the psyche exemplifies the effect of esoteric theories on areas of study that have to do with examining existence. Jung explains, “[o]ur psyche is set up in accord[ance to] the structure of the universe, and what happens in the macrocosm likewise happens in the infinitesimal and most subjective reaches of the psyche” (335), this postulation of our psyche being in connection to the universe is one of the ways in which esoteric thinking appears and is articulated in writing. Although esoteric teachings can be practiced through activities such as rituals and séances, there are also aspects of the philosophy which finds expression in literary mediums. An example of such a literary medium would be

poetry. In examining the various currents of poetry in history, there appears to be a parallel tradition that partook and interacted with the tradition of esoteric ideas. Thus, this paper aims to affirm the connection between poetry and esoteric philosophy and also, to clarify this relation by illustrating ways in which these threads of thought manifest resonantly across the poetic works of a body of writers. This will be specific, but not limited to, the early twentieth century literary landscape that will include poets such as W.B Yeats, Rainer Maria Rilke, Eva Gore-Booth, Arsenii Tarkovsky and Dylan Thomas. Thus, I am proposing that these poets belong to a parallel tradition that was particularly suffused and influenced by esoteric undercurrents, against the other dominant traditions such as modernism and surrealism.

This study focuses predominantly on a *poetical* tradition. It is not that poetry is esotericism's exclusive mode of conduct, but the affinities it shares with esoteric thinking proves poetry an inevitable medium. The nature of its form offers greater allowance to the writer to abandon strict reliance on logic and rationality. The poet can engage with a mediumistic mode of meditation, reverie and cognitive modes that transcend our immediate reality. Gaston Bachelard, French philosopher and writer of *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie*, acknowledges the unique quality and mobility of the poetic imagination and form. He writes, "[t]he imagination invents more than things and actions, it invents new life, new spirit; it opens eyes to new types of vision. The imagination will see only if it has visions. [...] Here, in this commitment to the invisible, is the original poetry, the poetry that gives us our first taste for our inner destiny" (72). Thus, Bachelard's idea of primordial poetry shares an affinity with esotericism in its aspirations and commitment towards the hidden realms and forces. Poetry, should open up stratas of perception to dimensions and realms that are previously eclipsed from our perception. The concept of the destiny of the human spirit can be clarified by the esoteric definition of "Anima Mundi", otherwise known as the soul of the world. "Anima Mundi" refers to a conception of the world

reiterated by thinkers such as Plato, Yeats and Jung. Poetry, thus, should bring to the precipice the sense of “Anima Mundi”, reminding us that there are buried realities that draw from the universe.

Bachelard deciphers an important crux of poetry that binds “esoteric” ambitions with poetic ideals. Poetry intersects with esotericism because it is “build[s] on a time open to all kinds of spirituality and consonant with our spiritual freedom” (*On Poetic Imagination and Reverie* 80). Thus, poetry evokes the plurality of multiple temporal modes and phenomena. Moreover, the poetic form and poetic language is a linguistic mode where its verification relies on the subjective understanding of the reader rather than a definitive, objective system of understanding. Through poetry, one can begin to mend the disconnection from universal forces and begin to retrieve from a loss of contact from the self and what constitutes it.

In examining the intersections of poetry and esoteric philosophy, the early twentieth century literary landscape consisting of poets such as Yeats, Gore-Booth and Rilke stand out in exemplifying such cross-overs and resonances within their own works. All three poets display a synonymous predilection for the other-worldly, and a common dissatisfaction with life that is rooted on the quotidian. Yeats might be known for his engagement with esoteric material, however, many resonances and repeated motifs can be gleaned from Gore-Booth and Rilke’s works as well. In bringing the three poets side by side, many of their works seem to be in conversation with one another, displaying a presence of esoteric influence or the “anima mundi”. This evidences a trace of a tradition that was occurring during their time. Of course, other poets might have also participated in this parallel tradition, but in the interest of space, I will focus on the three poets whose works have continually shaped and inspired writers who came after them. Yeats’, Gore-Booth’s and Rilke’s works do not contain direct references to each other; these poets wrote and expressed their unique declensions and interactions with cosmic forces. While they

might have belonged to different milieus and had unique techniques, they were fixated on certain approaches and recurring motifs that allow their bodies of work to speak in a kind of unison. The three poets place emphasis resuscitating lost connections to certain buried realities and primordial concerns. This act of consciousness that focuses on both recovery and discovery is a kind of approach in which the three poets seem to delineate in their oeuvres. Psychical, spiritual and mystical, their works display a desire to trace and retrace.

Thus, each chapter that follows will address the ways in which each poet bring esoteric ideals to the precipice of consciousness through engagement with the poetic form. Furthermore, within the chapters, there will be an attempt to put recurring thematic concerns into collision and into conversation with one another. A definitive echo and approach might not necessarily be validated, however, they will gesture towards a broader approach of legitimizing the esoteric influence within the poets' works. The proceeding chapter will consider and survey the works of esoteric thinkers whose teachings have provided a point of entry, framework and foundation for this research. These thinkers include P.D Ouspensky, George Gurdjieff, Helena Blavatsky and Rudolf Steiner. Chapter 2 will also reference Colin Wilson's texts to cement certain interconnections and observations between the philosophies and the poet's dispositions. Lastly, Yeats' hermetic postulations articulated in works such as *The Vision* and "Per Amica Silentia Lunae" will be referenced as an intermediary between esoteric theories and poetry. Chapter 3 will deal with Rilke's body of poetry, paying close attention to works from collections such as *The Book of Pictures*, *Duino Elegies* and *Uncollected Poems*. The chapter will discuss and illustrate, through Rilke's works, a gap between the quotidian and the beyond in which the poet struggles to negotiate. Furthermore, it will establish certain esoteric properties and echoes that seem to speak directly and indirectly to Yeats' works. It will continue then, to elucidate Rilke's poetic techniques that represent poetry's affinity to the hidden worlds and pulses. Following this, chapter 4 will

cover grounds on Eva Gore-Booth's poetry, paying attention to the ways in which esotericism finds expression through a pining for primordial, ancient wisdom. This will be bolstered by references to Blavatskian theories of the Great Memory and the concept of the Gyre. Within this chapter, Gore-Booth's treatment of mythology will be emphasized as a conduit for the higher and "other realms". Finally, chapter 5 will consist of analyses of Arsenii Tarkovsky and Dylan Thomas' works, thereby offering a sample of works that reveal a continuity of the 20th century, esoteric poetic tradition both chronologically and geographically. Tarkovsky's works will illuminate the transit of esoteric thinking in Eastern Europe and how this takes shape within his poetic framework. More specifically, the analyses will focus on Tarkovsky's synthesis of otherworldly visions and the structure of poetry. Finally, a discussion of Dylan Thomas' works will shed light on a particular disposition of the poets discussed, dealing with the poets' acute intuition of an "other", hidden world that requires illumination and expression. Within the proceeding chapters, the presence of mysticism, occultism, theosophy and western esotericism will be traced in the poems' forms, tropes, images, rhythms and gaps. Through this, the goal is to form a current of thought, illuminating esoteric philosophy as a viable site of inspiration and pivotal point of departure for poets.

In establishing a parallel tradition, this research wants to trace an esoteric poetic tradition in the early 20th century European landscape, thereby address a tension in modern consciousness that relegates and vanquishes the importance of spiritual and mystical factions of existence. In illuminating certain patterns that are not so recognized within phenomena within the poetic form, the poets in question incorporate synchronicities and bring insight to the free-floating, hidden realities. Our existence might continuously unfurl in the everyday, "[y]et somehow precisely linked to and uniting all these events and coincidences is the great macrocosm itself, the planetary movements in the vast starry sky high above the ocean of whales and men, all reflecting

a profundity of significant pattern and mysterious purpose in the depths of all things”. (Tarnas 241) In the proceeding chapters, we will witness how the poets illustrate this precise connection of the macrocosm and the microcosm, and the ways in which this finds expression in poetry.

CHAPTER TWO

ESOTERICISM AS PHILOSOPHY: AN INTIMATION OF THE HIDDEN

This section of my exploration will concern itself with identifying the ways in which esoteric philosophy intersects with the study of poetry. This will be achieved through consulting certain tenets of esotericism that is relevant to our study of the works of poetry in early 20th century Europe. These works of poetry will be highly influenced by esoteric philosophy and are significant in their spiritual and mystical undertones. The dominating ideas in the poet's oeuvres lead us to believe that the poets were not only writers, but were also traversing life as intellectual mystics. This statement by Underhill provides important insight into the intersections between the poets' personal beliefs and how they might have come to shape their writings:

The mystic's 'path is the pathless; his trace is the traceless'; and human intelligence ever tends to discredit all those experiences which its clumsy device of speech refuses to express, regardless of the fact that all life's finest moments are thereby excluded from the participation in reality. (Underhill 13)

The intellectuals whose participation in the mystical discourse indicate an insatiable desire to fathom and express the unexplainable, thereby translating experiences that resist and refuse translation. In committing their craft to such a venture, the poet or "mystic's" path becomes one that is fragile. In the process of interfacing with such intangible material, the inheritance from both poets and philosophers are often effaced. In the proceeding chapters, we will be looking at poets who works display a strong interest in uncovering the underlying secrets of existence in an effort to subdue the effects and inane of the quotidian. In order to properly establish the parallels between poetry and philosophy, we will be expounding on the dominant ideas of esoteric philosophy that seem to speak to the poetry we will be reading in further chapters.

In this study, I am heavily indebted to P.D Ouspensky's, "In Search of The Miraculous" that covers the ideologies of the mystic and thinker, Gurdjieff. I will also reference certain ideas proliferated by Madame Blavatsky that has been influential, directly or indirectly, to all the various thinkers and poets in this research. Furthermore, Rudolf Steiner's body of ideas and works have provided great insight into the realm of the occult and esoteric studies. We will see that the mechanisms of the esoteric ideas provided a great source of invaluable observations on the human consciousness. In addition to these esoteric thinkers, I would also like to credit Colin Wilson, whose study and excavation of the aforementioned philosophers gave me both affirmation and a deeper understanding of how the philosopher's ideas come into collision with each other and with the poets we will later engage with. Wilson's text, "The Outsider", exemplifies the ways in which the artistic endeavours of poets and writers share an affinity with esoteric ideas. This gradually became a form of cultural phenomenon and resource of inspiration. Hence, in this section of the chapter, I will be explaining certain key ideas of esotericism.

Firstly, I would like to introduce certain terms in relation to this area of study that will require some demystifying. These words will be used loosely and interchangeably as derivatives of one another, but, in general, are gesturing towards similar frames of thought.

1. Theosophy—The word "theosophy" is derived from two Greek words- Theos, God; Sophia, Wisdom—and therefore, is composited into the word that means both "God Wisdom" and "Divine Wisdom". This becomes imperative to this research in the analyses of certain poems that will reference God, but not as the mono-theological or Christian being.
2. Esotericism—refers to hidden knowledge or wisdom that is only known to a group of people. The word has Greek origins and is derived from "eso" that denotes something "within". In esoteric study, as we will soon see, stresses on inwardness. This inwardness

characterizes the ideas proliferated but also the approach that which the learner must inhabit.

3. Occult—usually referred to mystical, alchemical, spiritual practices and phenomena related to such concerns.

These terms will be important as guiding satellites that refer to the larger tenets of esoteric ideas. I hope to suggest, through the next few chapters, the ways in which the poets sought refuge in these spiritual endeavours and explorations. In a book written by Wilson on Rudolf Steiner, he quotes the theosophical philosopher who cleverly encapsulates this tussle between alienation and the ego. He writes, “All occult science is born from two thoughts... first, that behind the visible world, there is another, invisible world, which is hidden from the sense, and from thought that is fettered by the senses; secondly, that it is possible for man to penetrate into that unseen world by developing certain faculties dormant within him” (qtd. in Wilson 10). This summary of occult sciences excavates and illuminates the inherent importance of occultism, esotericism and theosophy. Esoteric study provides a way into the ineffable realm of mystery, and bestows mollification for the poet in its promise of transcendence, or at the very least, an aspiration towards it. Therefore, the poet garners affirmation in their explorations of ideas regarding hidden truths and secrets, awaiting to be uncovered and articulated. In this chapter, I hope to work towards providing a more pragmatic approach to occultist, esoteric, or theosophical ideas, in order for them to begin to depart from their mythologized and superficial conceptions. Collating and extrapolating the ideas evinced in the poetry of Rilke, Gore-Booth and Yeats, it can be said that spirituality and esotericism comprise of two fundamental concerns: firstly, with an existential intuition, one that deals with an acute sense of a realm that exists beyond the veil of our immediate reality and materiality; secondly, the idea that an individual possesses a form of

untapped potential of “seeing”, which a heightening of one’s sensitivity can enable encounters with the “unseen”.

Before plunging into the various theories of esotericism, I would like to frame this chapter with Ouspensky’s definition of the *miraculous* that encapsulates the “purpose” or “quality” of these philosopher’s, or the poet’s, pursuits. He defines the *miraculous* as a penetration into an unknown reality: “I already knew then as an undoubted fact that beyond the thin film of false reality there existed another reality from which, for some reason, something separated us” (Ouspensky 3). This precise intuition of an “unknown reality” was a catalyst for Ouspensky’s own journey towards gaining esoteric knowledge. In his own personal life, he journeyed across Egypt and Asia in the quest for answers relating to Man and the Universe. However, we must see that this impulse is one that is multifarious in nature and reverberates in varying shades. This research acknowledges the many derivations that can be said to be aspiring towards a common goal. In identifying this quest towards understanding the concept of the “miraculous”, several veins of thought have also been justifiably pursued and questioned. Referring to various forms of the occult, masonic and alchemical schools of thought, Ouspensky elaborates, “[b]ut such pseudo-esoteric systems also play their part in the work and activities of esoteric circles. Namely, they are intermediaries between humanity which is entirely immersed in materialistic life [...] (*In Search of the Miraculous* 313). Through acknowledging the presence of such imitations, I would like to place focus on the impetus of the concept and its desires to create space for the conservation of lost realities and the “miraculous”.

OUSPENSKY MEETS GURDJIEFF: IN SEARCH OF HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

Constellating the important tenets of esoteric philosophies, we will begin with the Russian esotericist, P.D Ouspensky, who was an active intellectual in the 1910s-1940s. In his quest for knowledge, Ouspensky documented many of George Gurdjieff's (an Armenian philosopher) esoteric doctrines and continued to expound on these abstract ideas in his writing. An important tenet of esoteric teaching emphasized and proliferated by both Gurdjieff and Ouspensky is the concept of "self-remembering". Both Gurdjieff and Ouspensky were concerned with the limited ways in which humankind was accessing reality. Fully convinced that there were ways to increase our consciousness, Gurdjieff's teachings promulgated the idea that there are four possible states of consciousness. The first being sleep; the second layer of consciousness being our "waking consciousness" in which most modern men spend their lives; the third is termed "self-remembering"; and, the fourth (popularized by Gurdjieff) is known as "objective consciousness" (*In Search of the Miraculous* 41). For the purpose of this project, we will be focusing on the intermediary state between the second, third and fourth stages. In zeroing in on these three stages, we see the progression and aspiration of the common man attempting to transcend beyond normal cognizance and self-awareness. Thus, this project seeks to illuminate the aspiration towards "objective consciousness", and, at the same time, stressing on the brief encounters with "self-remembering". For here, according to Gurdjieff's doctrine, seems to be where the poet resides.

Gurdjieff was convinced that the modern man is characterized and possessed by "sleep". Gurdjieff compares the man to a mechanical constitution, stating, "[t]hey have to do with a very complex machine, far more complex than a railway engine, a motorcar, or an aeroplane—but they know nothing, or almost nothing about the construction, working, or possibilities of this machine" (*In Search of the Miraculous* 58). Therefore, Gurdjieff claims that the common man exists

and is trapped in an anesthetized state. As such, in order for mankind to evolve, man should undergo a “conscious struggle” towards awakening (*In Search of the Miraculous* 58). One of Gurdjieff’s proposed diagnoses for this is the mode of “self-remembering”. Ouspensky succinctly elucidates this mechanism, “[n]ormally when you are looking at some physical object, the attention points outwards, as it were, from you to the object. When you become absorbed in some thought or memory, the attention points inwards. Now sometimes, very occasionally, the attention points both outwards and inwards at the same time [...]” (*The Outsider* 265). As Ouspensky describes, self-remembering requires a certain intense consciousness of not only the self, but also the individual’s surrounding. Most importantly, this practice of self-remembering compels the individual to enact a certain reciprocal relationship between selfhood and environment; that means becoming aware of its symbiotic relationship. Moreover, “[s]elf-remembering is like standing back, so you can see ‘yourself’ [...] and the outside world, distinct from ‘you’” (*The Outsider* 266). Additionally, they also discuss our place and significance in the cosmos, that planetary bodies affect the trajectories of our lives and our behaviours. Hence, we begin to see that the significance of “self-remembering” can be gleaned as a practice of “awakening” of the individual to their selfhood, and the innate and elusive subjectivity quality of their selfhood.

Self-remembering is not only a pursuit of self-knowledge, but also a vehicle to uncover the “miraculous”, as Ouspensky describes. This surfacing of “hidden knowledge”, or a previously “unknown reality”, to individual consciousness, reveals certain axioms of truth about our own existence previously obscured. The importance of this endeavor, in relation to this research, is also predicated on the idea that there is little point in knowledge or knowing the world if one does not first know themselves. Gurdjieff explains, “[i]t is impossible to study a system of the universe without studying man. At the same time, it is impossible to study man without studying the

universe. Man is an image of the world. He was created by the same laws which created the whole of the world” (*In Search of the Miraculous* 75). Thus, through this practice of “self-remembering”, a person progresses towards a more profound and complete understanding of their integral relation to the universe, and, by extension, themselves. The conception of the individual or self-knowledge begins to disengage from and expand beyond normal cognizance and self-awareness.

The value of this mystical truth, or the search of it, lies in its ability to reveal the uncertainties and chasms in our understanding of phenomenology and knowledge. We will begin to see in the subsequent chapters how the poet combines the labour of “self-remembering” with glimpses of the “transcendental” or ascetic truths, imbuing this into their works. Furthermore, the inward and outward turns of “self-remembering”, and its crucial division between the multiple perspectives of our selfhoods in relation to the world, is one that can manifest within the poetic form. Through the embodiment of such ideas in poetry, the words of the poet are no longer mere carriers of these doctrines, they also express “the broadening of his consciousness and the intensification of his psychic functions [that] lead him into the sphere of activity and life of two *other* cosmoses simultaneously” (*In Search of the Miraculous* 207). The poet’s intuitive understanding of the inadequacy of existence at large, and the realization of the impracticality of relying on certainties, explains why he becomes a participant of both mortal and immortal governing forces. So, the poet finds himself somewhere in the in-between.

RUDOLF STEINER

The next thinker who was extremely influential in the realm of theosophy was Rudolf Steiner. Of Austrian descent, Steiner spearheaded the German section of the Theosophical Society. In his participation with the theosophical landscape whose participants included the likes of Annie Besant and Jiddu Krishnamurti. Steiner desired to imbue the preexisting tenets of theosophy with Western European traditions and philosophies. He was also particularly influenced by Madame Blavatsky and borrowed many of her ideas which carried forward into his own “Anthroposophy”. In surveying Steiner’s input, I would like to draw attention to the ways in which Steiner comprehended the governing impulses behind these factions of esoteric thought. In a book written by Wilson that surveys Steiner’s works and his influences, Wilson cites Steiner’s “[...] in these moments of spiritual perception, he experienced a *flood of warmth* [...]”. This in turn describes the experience described by Proust: ‘I had ceased to feel mediocre, accidental, mortal...’” (*Rudolf Steiner: The Man and his Vision* 84). Here Wilson examines Steiner’s rumination on poetry and its encounters or intersections with the spiritual world. There is a pivotal convergence between the aesthetic experience of poetry that intersects and mirrors our encounters with the esoteric beyond. This widening of our inner reality – an expansion beyond the “accidental and mortal” – is at the heart of the Proustian description of transcending banal existence. Steiner suggests, in “formulating ideas that would present the human Soul’s experience of the spiritual world [...]” it will compel us to undergo such a transformation in our psyche (qtd in. *Rudolf Steiner: The Man and his Vision* 83). As Wilson states:

While in earthly life man develops from birth onward, he confronts the world with his power of cognition. First, he gains insight into the physical sphere. However, this is but the outpost of knowledge. This insight does not yet reveal everything the world contains. The world has an inner living [my italics] but man does not reach this living reality at

first. He shuts himself off from it. He forms a picture of the world which lacks inner reality because his own inner reality has not yet faced the world. The world-picture he forms is, in fact, an illusion. As man perceives the world through his sense he sees an illusion. But when, from his own inner being, he adds sense-free thinking to sense perception, the illusion is permeated with reality; it ceases to be illusion. Then the human spirit experiences itself within man and meets the spirit in the world; the latter is no longer hidden from man behind the physical world; it weaves and moves with it. (*Rudolf Steiner: The Man and his Vision* 85)

The commonly “exothermic” or “escapist” conception of the “spiritual realm”, and how we have long perceived this “place” as spatially constructed, or an unreachable beyond, is destabilized here. Steiner emphasizes the intrinsic and inherent inward quality of the spiritual sphere, one that does not detract from our own understanding of the world. It does not diminish our own sense of space and time and is not a space that is entirely outside our own. Steiner lucidly explains that it is cultivated or can be understood through introspection and profound mental labour. The thinker was convinced that devoid of this connection with our individual interiority, and consequently our spirit, our understanding of existence and our experience within the boundaries of existence is forcibly impeded.

While we begin to understand and retrieve meaning from Steiner’s perspective and observations, we also witness an attempt towards a structuring of a new phenomenology of our interior world, that which is composited of the Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition. This tripartite construction or negotiation of the psyche, to Steiner, is a viable entry point to the spiritual realm in which he claims many insights reside. Wilson states, “Steiner insisted that when a man has developed the power to withdraw ‘inside himself’ [...] he becomes aware of spiritual realities, and that these include the life history of the human race” (*Rudolf Steiner: The Man and his*

Vision 104). Hence, in the understanding of not only the tripartite relationship, as established before, we also become cognizant of “spiritual realities” that is an important fragment of a full picture. This would then mark a significant beginning of a disruption from physical illusions in which the mind can only perceive the occurrences of immediate reality. An individual can become increasingly aware of a multitude of forms of reality. Steiner, hence, claims that one will begin to have glimpses into mental horizons that are presently (or prior to this awareness) inconceivable to the human mind. This is imperative to the seeking of modern man, or in the case of this research, poets. This would allow them, if only for a brief moment, to no longer see themselves as “creatures of circumstance” or “contingency” which describes “the feeling that we are somehow unnecessary and superfluous” (*Rudolf Steiner: The Man and his Vision* 23). This feeling of a more complete comprehension of existence, “unity”, or Proustian “warmth”, is further developed. The idea of esoteric studies is not only the result of a curiosity of the human psyche and what lies beyond. It is how it provides us with a sense that we might perhaps have some form of apparent purpose. Therefore, this approach can be seen as a form of escape and an amelioration from Satre’s diagnosis.

Furthermore, Wilson suggests that “Steiner himself insists repeatedly that he does not wish to be taken on faith; everything he says should be tested” (*Rudolf Steiner: The Man and his Vision* 106). Steiner was opposed to the idea that his theosophic philosophy was to be circulated like a doctrine. He compelled readers to interrogate and analyze these ideas in order to critically engage with them. This meant that the reader and individual necessarily examined their complicity and alliance to such ideals. In this way, the receiver of information is placed in a position of receptivity, but is obliged to not blindly pledge their allegiance to the entirety of his findings. This means that students of theosophy can remain subjectively influenced and yet also encouraged to incorporate ideas only if they have been thoroughly examined. This reflected and

represented Steiner's own speculation of consciousness and realities that he continues throughout his life to question and explore. In comparing Steiner's method to the previous thinkers, we are able to infer that his was contrastingly much more scientific. Steiner believes that "any serious philosophy of life must be based on the scientific method" (*Rudolf Steiner: The Man and his Vision* 125). As such, any legitimate exploration of spirituality and the mystical, required the backing of logic and did not abscond logical understanding and explanation. Despite this, theosophy has become progressively understood as irrational spiritualism because our conception of "modern science [is] too narrow, and this resulted in materialism. But the real task of philosophy was to rise above materialism[...]" (*Rudolf Steiner: The Man and his Vision* 125). The merit of Steiner's insight lies in his ability to meld two originally oppositional disciplines and viscerally collapse their boundaries. Therefore, we are able to begin to see science not as a binary opposition of theosophy (or esotericism) but an area of study that can feasibly work in tandem with more logical areas of study in order for us to radically transform the way we view existence and consciousness.

Steiner's visions are an important source of ideas as he posits that the "spirit world" in which we are out of touch with is harbored deep inside of ourselves. He reflects the poets' conviction that this "other" space is not so heterogeneous but is one that can be reached and accessed. Therefore, the pivotal cross section between Steiner's various convictions with poetry is this precise imaginative synthesis between the real and unreal, the hidden and revealed. In the poetic image influenced by theosophical excavations, we bear witness to the range of the created image where reality is seized, and more reality can be found underneath what is hidden, dwelling in the unknown.

W.B. YEATS

Last but not least, I would like to discuss Yeats as a thinker who contributed to the research both philosophically and poetically. Yeats not only wrote theoretically about hermeticism and occultism but also expressed these ideas in his poetry. Therefore, at this juncture, I would like to invite his voice and insights as a form of segue from the philosophical to the poetic.

William Butler Years was born in Dublin in 1856. He was trained and studied in the Metropolitan School of Art in 1884. While Yeats is widely known for his nationalistic Irish poetry, his affection and dedication to the study of magic, hermeticism, the occult and the supernatural cannot be ignored. These interests not only heavily influenced his views but greatly informed his experiences and therefore his writing and poetry. Yeats went on to become a founding member of the Dublin Hermetic Society which brought him to the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical society and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (1890). This cemented his lifelong commitment to the exploration of hermeticism and similar areas of study such as occultism. It has been said that “[f]or recent commentators on Yeats the poet's esoteric interests have provided a welcome, if hitherto neglected, avenue towards a reassessment of... his writings” (Armstrong 176). As critic Charles Amstrong astutely records, Yeats’ works were curtailed by “[...]the efforts of [...] critics, the harsh geometries and ambitiously reductive schémas of A Vision - allegedly handed down to Yeats from the spirits of the other world, via the automatic writing of his wife - have tended to be considered both obscure and somewhat irrelevant” (175). Various critics have cited the certain more arcane works of Yeats as being, in Terence Brown’s words, “indigestible as a whole” (175). This perception has resulted in readings and representations of Yeats’ works that undermine the influence of the occult and similar fields of study such as hermeticism and magic. Such is precisely the stigma that this research aims to

ameliorate. Especially in Yeats' career, we see that he was always struggling to grapple with established systems of understanding or other systemic sets of ideas. Yeats wrote in an attempt to erode these immovable and narrow modes of understanding. In order to highlight and underscore the significance of such areas of study thus, it will be important to address the influence of Yeats's more mystical poetry on the other poets that are central in this paper. As we discuss more extensively in the following chapters about the poet's and their works, it is evident that Yeats has, through the years, become a formidable depository of philosophical support and inspiration to the poetry that came after him. Moreover, the poets and thinkers discussed were always feeding from older traditions, always unfurling to a pull from the past.

In order to critically examine Yeats's ideas of esotericism, we single out fragments derived from works that were published as theoretical exemplification of hermetic and occultist ideas. These works include the likes of "Per Amica Silentia Lunae" (Through the Friendly Silences of Moon) and "The Vision" where the poet extrapolates pivotal, inspired and original ideas of esoteric thinking that were developing at the time. They were also notably informed by a myriad of sources—from original and archaic hermeticism to Madame Blavatsky's theories on the gyres, etc. Yeats' oeuvre, thus, serves as a purposeful intermediary and transition between esoteric philosophy and poetry and how these distinct genres and body of ideas can be compatibly discussed. As we will later exemplify, Yeats utilizes the form of poetry as an avenue to unfurl, organize and encapsulate his study and practice of esotericism:

In the Dreaming Back, the Spirit is compelled to live over and over again the events that had most moved it; there can be nothing new, but the old events stand forth in a light which is dim or bright according to the intensity of the passion that accompanied them. They occur in the order of their intensity or luminosity, the more intense first, and the painful are commonly the more intense, and repeat themselves again and again. In the

Return, upon the other hand, the Spirit must live through past events in the order of their occurrence, because it is compelled by the Celestial Body to trace every passionate event to its cause until all are related and understood, turned into knowledge, made a part of itself. (*A Vision* 226)

In the first section of “Per Amica Silentia Lunae” titled, *Amina Hominis*, Yeats’ speaker explores the “soul” of the man, and the ultimate destiny of human spirit. In the second section, *Anima Mundi*, it discusses the microcosm of man that expands and becomes “the soul of the world”. This is where an individual is able to seek shelter and find themselves at home in a metaphysical harbor that transcends mortality in an “elsewhere called the Great Memory, of spirits and of archetypal images” (Larissy 49). This idea of the “Great Memory” dates back to Blavatsky’s text “*Isis Unveiled*” in which the mystic hypothesizes that our memory is not merely a collection and percolation of the past, but an unseen force belonging and existing in the universes’ fabric and blueprint. In Yeats’ envisaging and interpretation, the “Great Memory” is fabricated as an “other space” that is locatable. Additionally, “Great Memory” is that which allows the individual to traverse backwards into higher wisdom, discovering the umbilical that ties the mortal to the mystical and hidden forces of the universe. It is, in her words “[...] the [memory of God]” in which all “unmutilated records of all that was, or all that will ever be” is imprinted (Blavatsky1:78).

In comparison to the other thinkers in this chapter, Yeats seems to have a somewhat more materialist interpretation of esoteric ideas. For example, Yeats converts the Blavatskian “Great Memory” and interprets it spatially, transforming the concept into an “elsewhere”, apart from our world, in which the individual can journey to and therefore experience tangibly. It seems, tremoring in his works is a latent impulse to translate spirituality into totems or organized streams and systems of thought that the individual can emulate and understand systematically

and grasp. This allows Yeats' ideas of existence and phenomenological approaches to be locatable and accessible. Even his iteration of the spirit is one that is graspable. He expresses "that after death he would like to take a form like that of a golden mechanical bird" (Larissy 51). This golden bird makes an appearance in his poem "Byzantium". He writes, "Miracle, bird or golden handiwork, /More miracle than bird or handiwork, (17-18). Yeats refers to the miraculous and immortal golden bird, whose miracle lies in its unlikeness to its original form. The miracle golden bird into which Yeats desires to reincarnate into is made "[i]n glory of changeless metal" unlike "[c]ommon bird or petal/ And all complexities of mire or blood" (22-24). The golden mechanical bird bears traces of its lively form, but is transfigured and immortalized—bloodless and fleshless, and thus is no longer tied to earthly existence and form. This exemplifies the Yeatsian reading of the spirit in which its formless form can be moulded and crystallized into shape, giving rise to various rich motifs such as the "golden mechanical bird", the "lapis lazuli" and the "tower". Yeats' idea of reincarnation is that "spirit" comes in the form of a "whole", that which can be transfigured into another complete form. This is a slight contrast from the aforementioned thinkers. Yeats' version of the "miraculous" is not as Ouspensky describes, an unknowable reality that is distant from our materiality. To Yeats, the miraculous really belongs to the dead. "The dead living in their memories [...] are the source of all that we call instinct, and it is their love and their desire, all unknowing, that make us drive beyond our reason [...]" ("Per Amica Silentia Lunae"). Hidden knowledge, or esoteric ideas, are presumably buried with the dead, they lie beyond the cognitive boundaries and are consequently inconceivable to our perception. To Yeats, even the dead, as elusive as they may become to us, are reachable presences: "However, a series of seances which he attended between 1909 and 1914 was to have a formative effect on the mature development of his thought, and ultimately, combined with influences from Rosicrucianism, magic, and theosophy, was to feed into Yeats's

great occult synthesis, *A Vision*” (Larissy 48). In it, Yeats notably writes, “only that which is completed can be known and dismissed”—this speaks greatly of his teleological approach and his disposition as a practitioner of magic and mystical practices (Larissy 48). The ghosts in which he writes are linguistically summoned in order to be completely understood.

Yeats’s literary strategies thus was one that enacted a dialectical within the individual, one where we witness the poet “mak[ing] out of the quarrels with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry” (29). However, “[u]nlike the rhetoricians, who get a confident voice from remembering the crowd they have won or may win, we sing amid our uncertainty [...]” (Yeats 29). Here, Yeats makes a poignant claim about poetry and its form, illuminating to his readers its abilities of both being the embodiment of occultist ideas and also the bearer of it. Additionally, the poetic form is one that specifically challenges the individual consciousness, and this challenge launched at the self is not one that is solely concerned with pleasure of art and beauty. Yeats continues, “we sing amid our uncertainty and, smitten even in the presence of the most high beauty of knowledge of our solitude, our rhythm shudders” (9). Declaring thus, Yeats implores the reader and the individual to confront the difficult, the unanswerable questions, “for that only which comes easily can never be a portion of our being” (9). In this, Yeats refers to the poet and the writer who is able to write poetry in light of this war that the individual wages on himself, an approach that is similar to the idea of “self-remembering”. This process, as argued by Yeats is inherently difficult, epitomizing and challenging the proverb “[s]oon got, soon gone” (“*Per Amica Silencia Lunae*”)

CONCLUSION

In looking into the relationship between esoteric principles and the poetic craft, I would like to reference Anna Butkovsky, a friend of Ouspensky's who has expressed her impression of Gurdjieff. In her encounter with the esoteric teacher, she reflects, "you felt that each phrase was being carefully and specially put together, for that particular occasion, not at all like the ready-made phrases which we would normally use in conversations devoid of creative power or individuality. You quickly grasped that he had a gift of assembling words expressively" ("The Outsider" 14). This encapsulates the possible relationship and affinity between the aforementioned esoteric principles and poetic rhetoric. In engaging with the discourse and exploration of the invisible forces that possibly govern the macrocosm and the microcosm, we begin to understand our actions and impulses in a profoundly diverse way. Just like the poet's articulation, every atom of his thought, every syllable and every pause and line break can become charged with meaning. Summing up, the goal of this research is not to detach the poems and poets from other external influences that may be central to its entirety. Certainly, the goal is not to debase their political, psychological, historical and societal entanglements, but to investigate its undeniable attachment to various esoteric ideas and to highlight their importance that might have been unnoticed or neglected.

Meister Eckhart states: "There is another power, immortal too, proceeding from the Spirit... Aye, in this power is such a poignant joy, such vehement immoderate delight as none can tell [...] if once a man in intellectual vision did really glimpse the bliss and joy therein, then all sufferings would be a trifle, a mere nothing..." (qtd. in "The Outsider" 263). In this, Eckhart references a bigger sense of truth that transcends beyond mortality and intellectual cognition—he elucidates the idea that men will always be in search of such truths from the spirits and the immortal, in order to nullify mortal suffering. As such, the aim of this study is not to propound a

conclusive solution to the ailing poet who suffers from the inability to speak of unspoken truths and the inescapability of material reality. However, there seems to be something of a tradition of these philosophies being read and ergo, poetically expressed. Their attempts to search for the miraculous, and to escape common levels of unreality, begs the question: how do we find a way out?

CHAPTER THREE

RILKE AND THE LOST WORLD

Rilke's first significant collection of poetry was *Das Stendenbuch*, which has been translated to "A Book for the Hours of Prayer" and was published in 1905. As the poet and translator Robert Bly writes, "[t]he German title suggests a medieval monk's or nun's handbook of prayers. *Innigkeit* is the German word associated with such poetry, which translates to "inwardness" in English [...]" (3). This sense of "inwardness" that seems to be tied to the German word for "poetry" also characterizes Rilke's works. In his poems we see the world through the lens of an outsider looking into himself. Rilke was in many ways a meditative purveyor of life, rather than an active participant. There has been much written about Rilke's life and how frequently he has "felt himself in exile within a disintegrated world, and looked for a radical reunification which would allow him to live at home, in peace" (Grosholz 419). This "home" which Rilke seeks is a home of unity in which the increasingly fragmented world, seemingly banal, is able to meld into a cosmic oneness. His position as a person in exile in a modernizing world is greatly exemplified in his oeuvre. The characters he creates always mirror this meandering moroseness. In his works, we are privy to Rilke's deep search for an alternative world; his writing, always interested in recovering a world that is long lost or hidden beneath the veil of reality.

In *Letters To A Young Poet*, Rilke writes to his student "You are looking outward, that above all you should not do now. Nobody can counsel and help you, nobody. There is only one single way. Go into yourself. Search for the reason that bids you write; find out whether it is spreading out its roots in the deepest places of your heart, acknowledge to yourself whether you would have to die if it were denied you to write" (16). This emphatic response is in reply to his student's request for an evaluation of his writing. Rilke avoids supplying answers to his mentee, choosing to address the problem of the question itself. What can be inferred from this is that Rilke believes in,

the writer needs to “go into” themselves in order to adequately write poetry and verses. The process of self-examination and “increasing consciousness” become central to affective poetry and writing. There is also a sense of self-reflexivity in what Rilke believes to be important in the practice of writing. His is a practice that reveals a stark awareness of artifice of writing. Thus, in order for the poet to access the crux of their writing, one is required to thoroughly interrogate one’s relation to themselves and be accountable to the works they produce. Rilke destabilizes the status of a poet who is regularly held on a pedestal, asking writers themselves to demolish all sense of self-aggrandisement in order to come closer to examining one’s consciousness. Moreover, this symptom or prerequisite has been commonly attributed to Rilke’s keen interest in Eastern mysticism. Rilke’s disposition as a writer was largely informed by Eastern mysticism and the ways the philosophy explores the individual’s relation to reality. In asking questions about the individual’s relation to reality, Rilke seeks truths about the human being and the individual’s symptoms in existence. As we later discuss, the eastern philosophies he was exposed to importantly allayed a sense of exile in a world that was, in his view, constantly threatening fragmentation. Therefore, the understanding or a consistent effort towards understanding unity, or cosmic unity, can be said to be pertinent to the quest of “the outsider”, a position which Rilke identifies with as not only a writer, but also as an individual.

Maurice Nicoll’s definition of esotericism will perhaps allow us to understand Rilke’s predicament, and the reasons for his inclination towards esoteric study. Nicoll states, “[f]rom the standpoint of esotericism, a man is not simply his physical body, his strength, his violence, his primitive instincts: a man is his understanding [...] All esotericism is about overcoming violence, about increasing consciousness [...]” (407). Several important tenets of esoteric principle thus include the idea of broadening and pluralizing of consciousness to allay existential violence, or violence that is synonymous to existence which inhibits the seeker from the truths he endeavours.

This pursuit also aims to intensify one's spiritual awareness of his relation to the cosmos and universe at large in order to gain a deeper understanding that, as Nicoll writes, "a man is not simply his physical body", he becomes one that understands that the microcosm of the human body and learns that it is also indelibly linked to the macrocosm. With such an approach, Rilke's poetry or poetics, has carved out a new phenomenological method through his poetry where consciousness is shaped by the everyday, but also in negotiation with the delicate fabric of the spiritual realm.

THE POET'S TRANSCENDENT ASPIRATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The dilemma central to Rilke's poetic endeavors is the limitations experienced within one's own dimension of reality and selfhood. This includes concerns with the spatio-temporal and existential conditions we find our selves having to negotiate with. And this negotiation is, intrinsically, a negotiation with the levels of our own consciousness. The first poem "The Book of Hours of Prayer" well-exemplifies this conundrum:

I live my life in growing orbits
which move out over the things of the world.
Perhaps I can never achieve the last,
but that will be my attempt.

I am circling around God, around the ancient tower,
and I have been circling for a thousand years,
and I still don't know if I am a falcon, or a storm,
or a great song. (*Selected Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke* 13)

What is firstly apparent is the two opposing forces at work in this poem. Rilke's speaker is an individual who earnestly recognizes his place as a common mortal "liv[ing] his life" and his inevitable limitations of "never achieving the last", reflecting his inability to garner completion (*Selected Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke* 13). There is a sense of ambiguity in the word "last" to which the speaker is referring. Does this "last" or sense of ending refer to a post-humous consciousness? In other words, does the "last" insinuate death or does it allude to a last thought at the brink of death before one can transition "out over the things of the world", and out of existence?

In his attempt to circle and transcend the circular orbit, his movement is undeniably curtailed by an unmoving humanness. In the end, the speaker of the poem acquiesces to his

inability to attain the knowledge he seeks. He admits, “I still don’t know”. Such questions of the individual’s limitations evoked by the first stanza of the poem lead readers to wonder about the ontological secrets and boundaries of human life along with the speaker. In asking these unanswerable questions and leaving them unresolved, the poem reflects on the aspiration to fathom the unanswerable and undiscovered. This opposing semantical meaning is enhanced by a doubleness in the tone of this poem. From it we see, or hear firstly, Rilke’s commitment to express with clarity the condition of contemporary experience or the repetitive rigor of the everyday. In addition to that, he effectively uses his expression as disguise. The second and perhaps more pertinent layer of the poem is the landscape which the speaker gestures towards. The vulnerability of the oscillating self is juxtaposed with an intense awareness of an “other” world, or an “ideal world”. There is a superimposed layer of unworldliness constructed by symbolic language.

In order to further understand the imaginative dimension of the poem in which Rilke has constructed, we look to words such as “orbits”, “the ancient tower” and the “falcon” that provide readers with some images that describe the temporality within the poem. Unsurprisingly, these images and symbols can also be found in Yeats’ poems “The Second Coming” and “The Tower”. In “The Second Coming”, Yeats’ falcon “cannot hear the falconer” and the speaker traverses through “widening gyres” that are “turning and turning” (1-2). Despite the fact that Rilke never directly referenced Yeats, and Yeats has only been cited to have read Rilke’s essays on death, such a parallel in the usage of symbols speak volumes about the influence of esoteric tradition in which both Yeats and Rilke referenced. In Yeats’ poem, the speaker anticipates an epiphanous moment to emerge from discord where the falcon cannot orientate himself and the “centre cannot hold” (3). The speaker, quite like Rilke’s, expects to experience a kind of Proustian moment of warmth or clarity that can ameliorate the pain of unknowing, except this

anticipation was left unfulfilled. Additionally, what is mirrored in these poems is the image of a disintegrating reality that spins irrevocably and madly on. As the individual (in both Yeats and Rilke's work) moves on an infinitely expanding and apathetic spiral. However, entrapped in the boundaries of mortality, the individual is inevitably spun into a disorienting stagnation. The gesture of emphasizing the ever growing circular "gyre" and "orbit" emphasizes the speaker's inability to catch up with the expanding space around him, and his ultimate inability to garner clarity and understanding of his experience. Therefore, in allowing Yeats' imagery to bolster the ones in Rilke's poem, we see the poignancy of the spirals, bearing echoes and vestiges of the Blavatskian gyre that explains the journey of the soul in relation to the passage of time. These references enrich our reading of Rilke's poem. We are able to infer that Rilke's speaker is experiencing the spiritual vertigo of being acutely aware of one's mortality, and yet is caught desperately attempting to understand his soul's destiny and the world that exists beyond our own. Just as Yeats' speaker experiences in "The Tower", Rilke's speaker is similarly subjected to an banality of the quotidian.

In an otherwise utilitarian universe, Yeats and Rilke have unearthed within them a pivotal intermediary, a space of the beyond in which the soul, the human, and the universe are connected. However, a symptomatic and seemingly inevitable loneliness that experienced by the poet. Lodged within the heart of this of perpetual and fruitless questioning, is simultaneously the poets' source for inspiration and his pain. Poetry becomes a mode in which he can question the unlocatable, to account for secrets that refuse accountability. Furthering this thought, the poems become a hypophoric response to the untenable esoteric questions we are exploring in this research. As Patricia Merivale so acutely observes, both Rilke and Yeats "[...] found it hard work to be a poet; their aesthetic of the creative, re-creative, and morally evocative imagination is strenuously dedicated to 'the fascination of what's difficult,' even if they made somewhat

differently the choice between ‘perfection of the life, or of the work’” (242), of which they were both so aware.” There is something about the difficulty of poetry, and the questions they chose to ask, that both of them were committed to. These questions concerned themselves with the restoring of a lost world that is hidden within ourselves or amongst a greater beyond that which we must pursue. The poets focus on a world that has gradually become lost to our senses, awareness and understanding. And in embarking on this retrieving of the lost world, Rilke and Yeats allow themselves to be lost to the world.

In combining the poet’s aspirations and the philosophy in which these ideas are borne out of, we necessarily think about the bridge and relationship between ambitions of esotericism and poetry. How does this account for the predominance of poetry as expression for these inclinations? Critic Patricia Silva McNeill provides some insights on this. She opines that the philosophy “informed a substantial segment of [...] poetic production, injecting it with an esoteric quality embedded in arcane imagery and symbolic language. They supplied the poets with metaphorical constructs - what Yeats called ‘metaphors for poetry’ - with which to edify a theory of poetry” (163). In other words, McNeill suggests that esoteric philosophy is integral in its role of providing poetic frameworks for poets, that true poetry should look to the tenets of esoteric philosophy in order to garner theoretical directions.

In order to develop this idea, and further exemplify the mutual interaction between poetry and esoteric ideas, we look to our core philosophy texts by Ouspensky and Gurdjieff. Examining their commentary we focus on how they correlate. Ouspensky states, “[r]ealizing the imperfection and weakness of ordinary language the people who have possessed objective knowledge have tried to express the idea of unity in ‘myths,’ in ‘symbols’ [...]” (279). The objective knowledge Ouspensky mentions is not “objective” or impartial as we would commonly understand it to be. The philosopher’s ideas of objectivity is clarified in other parts of the text.

“Objective” knowledge in Gurdjieff’s perspective, is propagated as a “truth” that coalesces all fragmented and subjective knowledge resulting in a concentrating whole. Furthermore, inferring from both Ouspensky’s and the literary critics’ ideas on the collision, we can gather that in expressing esoteric ideas poetically, a writer can no longer solely rely on “ordinary” language to convey “unordinary” or previously unheard ideas. He necessarily leans on the usage of myths, symbols and metaphors as the main mode of expression. With the usage of myths and symbols, we examine and engage with the material differently, prioritizing other modes of understanding above logic and reason. To Bly, “Rilke writes not as a man interested in myth but as a person interested in the sensual experience of the swan [...]” (136). Here, Bly comments on poetry that has been written around the myth of Leda and the Swan where Zeus metamorphoses in the form of a swan to seduce a mortal woman. He draws a distinction between Rilke and other poets as he observes that Rilke’s work always prioritizes the affectiveness of myths and its sensual significances in order to convey meaning. Therefore, it is conceivable that Rilke features these symbols and myths, but simultaneously decenters them, focusing on the breadth and depth of sensual experience it can elicit, rather than relying on the exact meaning of these features. This draws out intelligence and cognitive modes that are not ruled by logic or the linearity of a narrative. The writing of hidden worlds and secrets, as revealed by Yeats and Rilke thus far, relies on the writing of traceable images and symbols in order to then locate the untraceable. The language of poetry thus, authorizes the buried to be illuminated.

As Wilson argues, poetry “[...]is a contradiction of the habitual prison of daily life and shows the way to transcend the ordinary world through an act of intense attention-and intention” (“Poetry and Mysticism” 236). As such, it can be said that poetry becomes a medium in which the writer seeks privately for symbols and signs of a different world, of a lost world. This state of doubleness, where the poet belongs both in the “prison of daily life” and the “lost world”, as we

will see, becomes central to Rilke's fictional personalities such as Malte Laurids Brigge. Rilke writes, "I am too alone in the world, and not alone enough/to make every minute holy" (1-2). In this, we detect a stark sense of solitude, this negativity or the "lack" that is emphasized in these lines. To Rilke, this is probably the most important affirmation of life that is central to him and his work. He continues passionately, "I want to be with those who know secret things/or else alone" (11-12). If the life in which these poets seem so determined to escape also harbour within them the secrets in which they seek, where can the poets escape?

RILKE'S EFFECT OF TRANSFIGURATION

In order to examine Rilke's works and their contributions to the esoteric, poetic tradition, we delve deeper into their analyses, finding ways in which they might be in conversation with one another. However, bearing in mind that interpretations of poetry resist definitive resolutions and are subjective at best, we can gradually observe that this might be the precise reason for Rilke's choice of expression. In the poetic space of interpretation where subject matters are not completely stable, Rilke is able to perceive and write about the world through lens that allow transfiguration. In this process, the poet participates in a perpetual quest to understand the world that is constantly in flux while also searching within it what was hidden. His poetry gestures towards transfiguration, that are also tangibly enacted (within the reader's experience of the poem) on the auditory and spatial landscape. This element of transfiguration is also accompanied by a sense of wistfulness that permeate his body of works as the poet struggled with circumventing the conditions of his reality. Therefore, it can be said that his works bring us into confrontation with the insufficient present, while at the same time reaffirming the transfigurative potentialities of the present.

A poem that addresses this effect of language and poetry is "Sunset" from a collection of poems titled, "The Book of Pictures" (*Selected Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke* 85). Rilke writes, "[s]lowly the west reaches for clothes of new colors/which it passes to a row of ancient trees./You look, and soon these two worlds both leave you,/one part climbs toward heaven one sinks to earth" (1-4). Rilke's tone is perhaps paradoxical; the poem brims fervently with both hope and defeat. The speaker watches as both his world, and the one he seeks, abandons him. The "angelic" world, otherwise understood as an idealized one, rises into the sky like ether. Moreover, the tangible, more material version of reality drowns and submerges into the earth. Inevitably then, the soul that is tied to this endeavour of truth is caught in the middle, deeply alone in his acquiescence

towards existential paralysis. Hope however, eventually emerges. Rilke clarifies and continues in the following line, the speaker or, “you”, are “not so hopelessly dark as that house that is silent,/ not so unswervingly given to the eternal as that thing/ that turns to a star each night and climbs—” (6-8). Rilke negotiates with this darkness and assures the universal “you”, that since the darkness is not complete that vestiges of light inevitably remain. The state in which the speaker inhabits is not as impermeable as death. Thus, it is neither indicative of the termination of life, nor complete ascension that can release the individual from his mortal coil. He writes, “one moment your life is a stone in you, and the next, a star” (12). The last line of the poem serves as a form of assurance and a semblance of hope to the reader and the speaker himself. The inanimate and dead “stone” is forcibly and doubly transfigured, now imbued with qualities of the celestial. The poignant imagery of the last line comes from its resemblance to the imagery of a meteorite, a fragment of a comet that falls helplessly and rapidly from the distant sky or universe. In a moment, the meteorite, or in this case, the “stone”, is transformed from being a part of another world, to one that falls dead onto earth.

Through this, we are able to glean the ways in which Rilke disrupts patterns of observing the everyday and transforms our image of the quotidian, thereby compelling the reader to consider the incompleteness of our somatic awareness. The poet enacts this through considering, multiplying and complicating the position of writer and the poet. The individual character and “you” in the poem is no longer merely a victim of his mortality, nor one that is cut off from it. His association to a potential higher universe complicates his identity in the sense that it is no longer rooted in this life. We are able to see this through the usage of symbols, woven with an intensely personal account of an experience. In this poem, Rilke cleverly creates a character that is easily inhabited by the reader. If these words were previously inhabited, now they are inhabited anonymously by the reader’s perception or memory. The tone carries an acute

awareness of his own humanness, and is entrapped by precisely that. What seems implicit in the works and words he has produced is a desire to experience the universe (that is, beyond our earthly existence) in a cognitively, imaginatively and sensorially new way. The imagery of the heavens in the case of this poem, the heavens, albeit consistent, is always irreducibly and innately plural. In the last stanza, he writes that the two worlds, namely the divine and the earthly “[leave] you (it is impossible to untangle the threads)/your own life, timid and standing high and growing,/so that, sometimes blocked in, sometimes reaching out” (9-11). Rilke delineates a sense of expansion and contraction towards this other world with which we share an intrinsic bond. Far reaching as it may seem to be, a release from everyday weariness is revealed by Rilke to be lodged within ourselves. “Sunset” thus, compels us to survey the horizon of our periphery, but also to look to the beyond. Furthermore, Rilke complicates the individual experience with the everyday with his play on pronominal usage. The use of the second hand pronoun, despite the intensely personal tone of the poem is intriguing for its seeming dissonance. The usage of “you” instead of “I”, has the poignant effect of transferring a personal experience to a universal “you”. It leaves the individual “not really belonging to either” themselves or the world of the poem (5). The repetition of the word “you” throughout the poem, has the effect of both reinforcing the subject and also diminishing the significance of the subject. This enforced repetition importantly creates multiple phantasms, and many “you[s]” while gesturing towards a universal and singular version of “you”. In this, Rilke artfully exemplifies the ways in which the poet is able to alienate the speaker from possessing a distinctive voice—thereby allowing it to take all voices.

There is certainly a sense thus, that esoteric and spiritual ideas of the self are present in the influence his works. This technique of pronominal shift we find in “Sunset” parallels and appeals to the esoteric ideal (influenced also by Eastern beliefs), in which the quest of secret and sacred knowledge entails a disintegration of personality or the effacement of the “I” or a specific

sense of self in order to surrender to a higher truth. We see this in Ouspensky's "In Search of the Miraculous" where Gurdjieff discusses man's mechanical understanding and illusions with the self. Ouspensky highlights: "His 'I' changes as quickly as his thoughts, feelings, and moods, and he makes a profound mistake in considering himself always one and the same person; in reality he is *always* a different person, not the one he was a moment ago" (*In Search of the Miraculous* 59). This does not merely emphasize an inherent multiplicity of the self, but also highlights the malleability and fragility of men's conception of the self. Moreover, this is important as "[e]very thought, every mood, every desire, every sensation, says 'I'. And in each case it seems to be taken for granted that this I belongs to the Whole, [...] Man has no individual I. But there are, instead, hundreds and thousands of separate small I's" (*In Search of the Miraculous* 59). These perceptions of the fragmented, kaleidoscopic "I" contributing to a "Whole" is precisely the intricate harmony in which Rilke seems to have imagined and embodied in his works. Bearing the kaleidoscopic nature of the self in mind, Rilke's body of works become all the more poignant, seemingly attempting to cause a significant shift in the ways in which collective consciousness perceive the "I". Additionally, the poet is also committed to create a distinct way of accessing reality, a new method of processing reality where the human self is no longer the fulcrum of our perception. This may be viewed as a new phenomenological approach, where Rilke attempts to restructure our experience and consciousness in relation to everyday quotidian and the meaninglessness of human life.

Rilke draws attention to the individual who is caught in the awareness that the reality intelligible to him is always incomplete. However, Rilke's poems draw out an important dualism in this trajectory. On one hand, this ideal illuminates a lack and innate despair that arises from the recognition of this chasm of knowledge and the inability to arrive at one's desired destination. On the other hand, men's consciousness is also revealed as being able to comprehend and

sharpen his sense of an “other” space. Rilke’s solution to the unliveable space of our reality is to cognitively imagine and create an “other” space that is beyond our perception. This idea of an “other” space, has to do with an intense, almost psychic sense in which we can inhabit; an awareness or inclination that is commonly featured and discussed throughout his work. This is a sense that can even be charted to sharpen and develop with time. An instance that exemplifies this awareness and intuition of an “other” space beyond our own immediate reality, is seen in a poem titled, “Mourning” (*Selected Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke* 163). This poem was written in 1914 where Rilke revisits the imaginal landscape that recurs previously in his work. He writes, “The loveliest thing in my invisible/landscape, helping me to be seen/ by angels, that are invisible” (12-14). Firstly, what is important to note is a significant poetic shift in tone from his earlier works that discuss this ethereal “other space”. By the time of its publication, the poet appears to have become more familiar and assured with the idea of multiple “invisible landscape[s]”, whether experienced or constructed. Therefore, unlike previous works, as seen in “Poem 1”, “[...] I have been circling for a thousand years,/and I still don’t know[...]”, it is evident that speaker was still quarrelling with himself on the validity of this supposed “other” space (6-7). However, in “Mourning”, Rilke’s tone exudes a new and significant sense of ownership. Another example of this comparison can be drawn from an early poem, “Poem 23”, where he writes, “what they are burning for, however, is not in the world/ and their body trembles as they close themselves once more.” (18-19) – the other space remains in a state of postulation, still a figment of one’s imagination that is an outcome of desire. This “other” space that is not the “world” is a faraway fantasy. Hence, we are able to observe that Rilke’s description has indeed undergone a significant sense of transformation: the space beyond, and the speaker’s movement towards it, is no longer foreign nor shaky.

However, what seems to remain is the enduring sense that his speaker is marred by the years of juggling the two realms. Despite displaying a renewed sense of familiarity of this other space, it must be recognized that the poem is mainly about bereavement and memorializing the feeling of loss. Hence, what is ultimately emphasized here is still a sense of loss, an absence that vanishes for a brief moment and reappears. Rilke continues, “[...] More and more alone, you make your way through the unknowable/human beings. All the more hopeless perhaps/ since it holds to its old course,/the course towards the future,/ that’s lost” (1-6). The speaker undergoes a process of mourning that exacerbates with time. The “work of mourning”, is necessarily experienced by one undergoing a loss of something that has weathered through time. In this process, the mourner finds himself between negating death and preserving it is constantly vacillating between the two. This state of loneliness is engendered by a collapsing concept of time. There is a sense that linear time, during the process of mourning, is broken, and yet he must continue to live moving forward and horizontally across time. Referencing the previous quote, Rilke writes that the time that moves towards future is lost. He continues, “Happened before. Did you mourn? What was it? A fallen/ berry of joy, still green” (7-8). The fallen berry becomes a symbol both of decay and vigor, or perhaps an untimely death. What has been experienced is forgotten and yet recaptured by the continuity of grief. It seems Rilke was attempting to encapsulate and visualize an inherent tension of the grieving person who in wanting to traverse forward into the future when one is doubly aware that time and its experience is not linear. The path forward becomes one that is increasingly abysmal and empty.

Paying close attention to the significance of the imagery in “Mourning”, we see that the heart personified is asked to choose who it “will cry out to” (1); and the heart, expectedly, bears no language and knows not what it feels. It can only cry out to nothingness. The person in question or the speaker, as such, is someone who is bereft of both language and a functional sense

of time. This seems to be the fate of the bearer of unknowable knowledge, one that Rilke appears very well acquainted with. Echoed in his personal ethos, it was known that as Rilke “got older, [he] urge[d] poets again and again to train their imagination like a body, to aim and struggle for something intense. Being carried along, drifting is not enough. He wants them to reach far out[...] to labor” (159). Rilke’s opinion was that this painstaking rigor to understand what is mysterious to us is pivotal. His aspirations for the poet share a resemblance to the philosopher’s goals as previously mentioned. The individual is always tasked with a “quarrel” with themselves, to confront the unavoidable and inconspicuous voids and chasms in understanding. These echoes between the poets and thinkers are, in my opinion, not coincidental. These resonances can additionally be accounted for by accounts in which these poets were documented to have exhibited such inclinations towards esoteric material. In Rilke’s case, the exposure to such material was noted by others as a “[...] sense of mystical obsession, which Rilke called "muzotisme" and "almost a kind of malady" is expressed repeatedly in the letters from this period” (Ziolkowski 121). The obsession and unquenchable curiosity for the mystical was one that aided the poet in unifying his understanding of the universe.

At the end of four weeks he wrote that moving into the tower was like putting on an old suit of armor. During the trial period in July "it was more as though this severe Tour de Muzot were testing me than I it—and I had days of almost being ill and many others at least of apathy, when I couldn't pull myself together, in the battle with the heat and the most immediate inconveniences or at least, let us say, demands of my knightly abode" (Ziolkowski 121). Rilke’s description of experiencing this mystical malady during his stay in the tower bears some parallels to the ascetic experiences where the individual experiences a self-transcendence or encounters with godly figures. He experiences a physiological effect in the presence of the tower, a mystical force that sends him to a state of mental paralysis, and yet, he chose to stay confined in this space

where many of his poems were written. In this place, the poet's inner reality comes into collision with an outer reality that is heightened and which places demands on Rilke to perceive himself in a way that is transposed onto the backdrop of the tower. Moreover, Rilke emphasizes the ephemerality of this state of consciousness in which the double is poignant and possible. Without "objective meaning" the reader can grasp, definitively, that what is present for the reader within the poetic form is the music and lyricism of Rilke's language. This element of music is pivotal in shaping our ideas of how poetry is able to communicate ideas in a non-linguistic manner. Rilke, himself, acknowledges the importance of musicality of his work. He instructed his editors to read his poetry aloud, and suggested that there is meaning that can only be conveyed through the auditory dimension of the poem. It can be said, thus, that Rilke was well aware that there were subliminal messages that can only be transmitted through experiencing the poem sonically.

Unlike poems written previously, as in the "Book of Hours of Prayer", Rilke does not aspire towards resolution; there is a significant transition in the way he utilizes the form of poetry. The rhyming couplet which attempts to imbue in readers a sense of resolve further diminishes in this collection. In Rilke's fixations on the lost world, we also bear witness to the stubbornness of the sense of bereavement to which these works are borne out of. Rilke not only effectively transposes the experience of empathy to the reader, his grasp on the internal music of the poetic form sheds light on the affinity between poetry and esoteric philosophy. The poet comments on this self-reflexively in a poem titled "On Music" (*Selected Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke* 169). In it he writes, "Music: the breathing of statues. Perhaps:/ the silence of paintings. Language where/language ends. Time/" (1-3). These first lines of the poem reflect the function of music. A kind of metaphoric language is employed here, where Rilke's take on the functions of music can only be found by deduction. Firstly, he compares the effect of music to the sensation evoked when looking at a statue that cannot speak for itself, the silence of old paintings in which its

meaning can only be conveyed through sensations and intuition. Rilke posits the idea that music is a legitimate medium of ideas and meaning and a form of unordinary language that can convey significances in which language cannot reach. In addition to this, the syncopation enacted in “On Music” itself is significant and actualizes his commentary on music. The poem, written in 1918, is marked by Rilke’s intentional enjambment and an unusually frequent use of punctuations such as ellipses and colons. In this poem, the poet emphasizes the effectiveness and affectiveness of poetic rhythms with the employment of the generous use of punctuations. For example, in line 6, Rilke writes, “Feeling... for whom? Place where feeling is/ transformed... into what?”. The natural intonation of the reader raises as they vocalize the rhetorical questions. Simultaneously, with the usage of colons and ellipses, Rilke recreates the “silence” and the “end of language” when silence, and a break in a sentence, is enacted. The network of punctuations, pauses, and deliberate rise in intonations within the poem, indicate Rilke’s poetic orchestra, where the reader is equal parts humming as he is reading.

Moreover, Rilke’s poetry emphasized (consciously or unconsciously) the effects of reverberation within his poetry. As we will soon find, the quality of reverberation provides some insight on the topic of ascension or the idea of connecting to individual to larger, cosmological forces. We should begin by understanding the roots of music hypothesized within the rhetoric of esoteric philosophy. Music, is said to be governed by the law of vibration of octaves and scales, or the law of harmony in which twelve notes are combined and can be heard within the range of human hearing. This idea, which Ouspensky and Gurdjieff expounds on, is that the musical scales follow the Greek modes where octaves are divided into ratios that reflect our relationship and distance from “heavenly bodies”. In other words, the scales are a mathematical reflection and mapping of the distance between notes, organized through the reference of the distance between earth to the other planets. As such, music can be seen as an apparatus for a kind of “self-

remembering” in which the individual can begin to understand their relation to the cosmos via the internal rhyme and vibrations of the planetary movements that are imprinted within the mechanism of music. These vibrations encompass within them and draw from a larger memory in which the soul is connected to the universe and remembers the sound of the planetary movements. Therefore the reverberations within the poems can be seen as a psychical and sonic sojourn towards even higher vibrational modes of consciousness. The effect of reverberation within Rilke’s poetry can be gleaned from a sonorous echoing quality that characterizes many of his works. Hence, the significance of this is that vibrational meaning offers readers a non-linguistic connection, where their conception of meaning in the poem’s unfolding are consequently governed by law of octaves and vibrations that can account for unexplainable and cosmological phenomena in existence.

As evidenced in the notes in the bilingual edition of *Duino Elegies*, “[w]hatever Rilke’s sources (and they are fragmentary at best), he conflates the cosmological and psychological to construct his own elliptical myth of grief [...]” (70). Here, an important mode of thinking promulgated through the analysis of Rilke’s writing methods is drawn out. Rilke’s sources resemble that of a “myth” where its narrative are both cosmological and psychological:

[...]in the beginning plenitude, full space nurturing an “almost divine” youth;
then fullness transformed into emptiness (the void is not originary here; it comes
into being as the absence of presence) when the youth suddenly, inexplicably
“steps out of it,” “leaves,” “is gone” (the word “death is studiously avoided); [...]
(Snow 70)

This narrative is the balance of personal life and universal forces, it draws both its sense of liveness and mystique from a transient youth that inevitably diminishes. No matter where this myth goes, it leads inexorably to lightness and the absence of presence. This “myth” finds its way

in the last section of the ninth elegy. Rilke writes, “Look, I am living. On what? Neither childhood nor future/ lessens.... Superabundant existence/ well in my heart” (77-79). There is a poignant sense of bereavement that Rilke takes note to emphasize by the end of the poem. A loss is experienced by the speaker not as an outcome but as an inherent symptom of existence.

“Superabundant existence” and yet its potency and tangibility diminishes in the next line, “well in my heart”. Abundant existence is merely a sentiment that does not know its articulation. Or, “well” in this case, could allude to the literal object, that requires replenishing to be used.

Thus, in considering the various sources that informed Rilke’s creative force it is perhaps also important to note that *Duino Elegies* was largely written in isolation. Therefore, it is conceivable that both the cosmological and psychological aspects of his mythic source were borne out of an absence of sound, the memory of sound or silence. Yet again, we can observe the presence of Ouspensky’s postulations on creative and poetic expression, as a combination of “words, in their meaning, in rhythm, in music, in the combination of meaning rhythm and music, [...] men create a new world [...] trying] to express in it that which they feel but [...] cannot convey] through words [alone]” (*Tertium Organum* 83). It expresses the inexpressible facets of our inner life, resulting in a more complete and unified idea of existence and consciousness—this as we know, lies at the heart of Rilke’s works. In response to these postulations on the poetic vibrato of Rilke’s works and their relationship to the movement of the planets, Rilke has this to say:

[W]e are the bees of the Invisible, *The Elegies* show us at this work, this work of continual conversion of the dear visible and tangible into the invisible vibration [...] and agitation of our nature, which introduces new vibration numbers [Schwingungszahlen] into the vibration-spheres [Schwingungs-Sphären] of the universe. (For, since the various materials in the cosmos are only different vibration rates [...] we are preparing in this

way, not only [for] intensities of the spiritual kind, but – who knows? – new bodies, [...] nebulae and constellations. (*Duino Elegies* 70)

This letter, intended for his Polish translator, Witold von Hulewicz, acknowledges the symbiotic relationship between the effect of resonances within his poetry and its relationship to the invisible, comic forces. It also addresses Rilke's affective use of poetic language. Beyond semantic meaning, Rilke emphasizes poetry's ability to enact a sonic, vibrational soundscape. The effect of this is a form of mimesis that mirrors and allows readers to experience the sensation of the shifting of the spheres, the sound of the beyond—a visceral sensation that is distant from our human consciousness and immediate reality. Rilke summarizes this aptly in the letter, “We wildly gather the honey of the visible, in order to store it in the great golden hive of the Invisible” (70).

Reflecting on his collection, Rilke discusses his intention as a writer and a poet. He describes that the goal of the poet is to percolate and contribute towards a bigger tradition of the invisible, one that is still yet ungraspable to him. He aimlessly and painstakingly collects the sweet nectar of banal everyday moments and in them he unearths the deep and unreachable truths that are invisible to the eye or common perception.

However, in order to traverse the invisible route, a state of isolation seems to be necessary: “Rilke had been living alone since July 1921 in the Château de Muzot, a small medieval tower in Rhône valley near the village of Sierre [...] where he had deliberately isolated himself in hope of recapturing the inspiration of the elegies” (Snow viii). In a space of isolated meditation, the individual is susceptible to a state where an invasion of external elements and noise is minimized. The poets in question in this research have, to a large extent, intentionally created a space of solitude where a suspension of reality occurs; wherein the poet in question no longer feels connected to the continuity of outside reality. In the process of this, the individual

becomes more sensitized to absences where no distraction can fill. Thus, this gives way for poetic exploration for ontological spaces and boundaries that is not death.

This connection between space and the man in solitude is one philosopher Gaston Bachelard explores in “The Poetics of Space”. He writes, “[...] passions simmer and resimmer in solitude: the passionate being prepares his explosion and his exploits in this solitude” (9), that space in which we dwell in alone, is where we should find “[...]countless intermediaries between reality and symbols if we gave things all the moments they suggest” (11). Bachelard perceptively draws out the link between poetic image and space, and how literal spaces, such as Yeats’ and Rilke’s towers can bestow the inhabitant with “passion” where the individual’s imagination is ignited. In this space, coalesced with the metaphorical space of solitude, there is silence. Without intrusion, the poet can come into contact with a voice that is both remote inside of him and out. Therefore, the poet’s mind, or the individual’s, is able to traverse deep within him, connecting with secrets that are abstruse, that are made enigmatic in the fog of the everyday. In this constructed space of silence and solitude, we will next see, is where Rilke finds himself in the presence of spirits, the celestial, thereby becoming privy to the realm of gods and angels.

Surveying the impulses, intentions, effects, and sonic landscapes of Rilke’s works, I would like now to draw attention to Rilke’s angel, a symbol that appears repeatedly in his poetry through the years. The angel might be misconstrued as a sign of Rilke’s allegiance to certain religions, however, considering these works in relation to his entire body of poetry, it seems that his exultation towards the angels is far more complex. It is important to clarify that the angels he referenced were more figures and symbols of eternity and the general celestial body. In an essay that examines Rilke’s enamour for angels and their appearance (and disappearance) in his works, critic Emily Grosholz writes, “Rilke was always hostile to the figure of Christ, because he sought a direct, unmediated relation to God. Rilke also regarded the "concept" or "idea" of German

Idealism, which is supposed to unify our experience, as just another divider, this time falling between subject [...]” (419). As such, we are able to infer that writing about angels, and summoning their presence in his works, was Rilke’s way of negotiating a kind of spiritual model. This spiritual model was both representative and devoid of the divisive ideas of spirituality of his time.

In *Duino Elegies*, Rilke repeatedly addresses the angel, but he complicates our understanding of the mythic figure in which we have long understood to be a source of salvation and healing. In the first elegy, Rilke laments, “Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angelic/orders?” (1-2). He emphatically reaches out towards the heavenly figures and seeks mollification. However, calling out to the angels, Rilke realizes the futility of his requests. He continues, “[...] Alas, whom can we turn to/ in our need? Not angels, not humans, /and the sly animals see at once/how little at home we are in the interpreted world” (9-13). Illuminating the inherent existential bereavement that is experienced because the human is not at home in an “interpreted world”. The “interpreted world” refers to a state of living where we rely on clarifications and over-analysis to bolster our experience. However, this is the state of impoverishment that Rilke attempts to disrupt. Rilke’s develops the symbolic significance of the angel, turning to the images of heavenly angels and subverts them, thereby going against the interpreted world as he mentions. In the second elegy, he writes, “[e]very angel is terrifying” (11), forcibly allowing the symbol of the angel falls from its pedestal. Reading the first and the second elegy in succession, Rilke forcibly undeifies the symbol of the angel. Hence, the angels, found in Rilke’s iteration, become a poetic symbol of lack but remain a simultaneous promise of teleological understanding

MADNESS AND SPIRITUALITY

Rilke exemplifies his passion for the invisible and the irrevocably hidden real. Like Yeats, Steiner and Ouspensky, Rilke is characterized by a symptom of incurable awareness and curiosity of the beyond and esoteric knowledge. There are many ways in which readers could perhaps classify such writers. However, a thread that binds these individuals together is an active search of the spirit world. In Colin Wilson's book "The Outsider", he analyzes writers such as Rilke and Nietzsche whose works bear important parallels to each other. Commenting on them both of them, Wilson writes, "[t]heir problem is the unreality of their lives. They become acutely conscious of it when it begins to pain them, but they are not sure of the source of the pain. The ordinary world loses its values, [...] Life takes on the quality of a nightmare" (67). The mystical intensity, which the writer or thinker experiences, leaves him with an existence that no longer lives up in intensity or corresponds to the poet's conception of actuality. The poet's experience in his daily prosaic life thus, becomes tainted by the awareness of the beyond and everyday life becomes increasingly unbearable. Considering the new, hypnagogic hue of the individual's life that becomes dominated with experiences that are characterized by their spirituality, one can find living and aligning with conventional structures of meaning no longer viable. It is both a malady to which the individual is subjected to, and one that they have subjected themselves to. In Rilke's case, the inner reality of his sojourn is not only embedded in his published works, but also revealed in his uncollected works that were later retrieved after his demise.

Considering this symptom and element of madness that inhabits the poet's everyday, it brings to mind the poem "The Solitary Person" by Rilke that is found in *Uncollected Poems*. Rilke, perhaps in a moment of helplessness, voices his isolation: "Among so many people cozy in their homes,/ I am like a man who explores far-off oceans./ [...] I see a distant land full of images./ I sense another world close to me, [...]" (1-5). Here, Rilke reiterates the stance that he senses this

other world existing close to him. He sees himself to be different from common man, who seek comfort from the shelter of their homes. Rather, he belongs to places “far-off”. From this vantage point, he sees images belonging to the distant, transcendental land. He continues, “[t]he living things I brought back with me/hardly peep out, compared with all they own. /In their native country they were wild;/here they hold their breath from shame” (9-12). Without giving too much explanation about this elusive place, Rilke carries this phantasmagorical place forward, emphasizing the effect of suspension in reality. This “place”, like the speaker, is holding its breath, and is not given space to exist. However, objective reality does not crumble consequently. Rilke’s tone still reveals and retains an acute awareness of the inhospitable reality to which he belongs. In it, his discoveries and insights decay in the face of an existence that cannot house these postulations.

In an untitled poem written in 1925, Rilke again articulates this sense of opposition towards existence, “Undeterrable, I’ll complete this course,/ it scares me when something mortal holds me” (1-2). Finally, Rilke might admit to the incompatibility of his fixations with mortal life, but he must persist in the way he knows how. An aphorism retrieved from a unpublished material speaks to this, Rilke writes “The transformed speaks only to relinquishers. All/ holders are stranglers” (2-3). Rilke’s courage as a poet is his ability to surrender to the difficulty of knowledge and the search of miracles. Commenting on the stubbornness of consciousness that refuse self-enquiry and an investigation of cognitive and physical landscapes, Rilke acquaints his reader with the grave reality of unreality and offers no solutions but some of his insights and perhaps a space that holds fort for them. The penetrative dream-world or mystical world of his poems become so increasingly latent, that its absence is transfigured into presence. Rilke and his timeless ventures illuminate that spiritual and higher truths are not merely the anti-thesis of sense, as we have discussed, in the eyes of the rest of the universe, it becomes non-sense. Just as

what Rilke seeks, what his poems say and mean in exactitude is made obscure to the reader, we can only find glimpses and shades from it, from its meaningful suspension, from its eternal trembling. Alas, if this truth and hidden reality is left unfound, at least we can credit Rilke for leaving constellations to a different atlas.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVA'S QUESTIONS, COSMIC ANSWERS

Eva Gore-Booth, an Irish poet and a union leader for women workers, is a significant figure to this research. Gore-Booth's body of works contributed greatly to the pre-existing library of poetic explorations that were influenced by esotericism. Both a pertinent member of the political and literary movements in Ireland, it was Gore-Booth's political endeavors and contributions towards social reform of the suffrage movements that took precedence in her career. This led to a lack of critical attention accorded to her literary works. In spite of Gore-Booth's influence on prolific Irish writers such as Yeats and Moriarty, little has been said about the rich body of poems that she has left behind. In a collection of Gore-Booth's poems compiled by Sonja Tiernan, Tiernan writes, "[d]ue to the fact that Gore-Booth's poetry is mainly out of print, there are very few critical assessments of her poetic work" (14). In light of this gap in critical studies of Gore-Booth's works, this chapter will aim to shed light on her contributions to a tradition of poetic works, in particular, those affiliated and inspired by spiritual and mystical philosophy. The more nuanced complexities of her work calls for a different narrative in which its relation to the esoteric tradition can be reinstated; one outside of the dominant political and social narratives that enshroud her work. Paying closer attention to Gore-Booth's more shadowy or eclipsed works – ones left behind by the sheer volume of material – what is revealed is her deep belief in the primordial and mythological. This disposition and proclivity towards the hermetic tradition is shared by the various writers in the research, often finding poetic expression for the primordial and ancient themes that Esotericism heavily involves. For example, John Moriarty, an Irish philosopher who continuously sought the spiritual origins of the humankind, well elucidates this particular characteristic: "[t]he truth is, of course, that we are fenced in. Within and without there's a... [w]all that... cuts us off from the land of the Ancestral Shaman.

Like an immune system, a psychological and cultural, this wall/ It keeps commonage consciousness at bay” (Moriarty 159). It is this sense of alienation from a primordial origin that instigates their poetic explorations. The task set out at hand is to recuperate, within our modes of consciousness of everyday life, a deeper, more primordial sense of self and the world.

This relentless search of a nascent place of origins is one that is familiar to esoteric studies that aspire to reveal the secrets of the universe in which the mortal soul buries—fragile truths and secrets that have become lost through time and earthly fixations. Gore-Booth’s works display a sense of keen nostalgia for the past that is a reflection of the human psyche that “has been” and therefore, lies in the realm of potentiality. To further clarify this specific notion of “memory”, one must turn to the discussions were previously discussed and found in theosophical writings.

Memory, as is stated before, is not conceived according to our traditional understanding.

Memory’s definition is no longer merely a collection of the past, rather, it functions as a mechanism that which records the inarticulate in a poignant and visceral way. Blavatsky suggests that the faculty of memory does not belong to the mind. Instead, theosophical memory refers to an agglomerate of records that contain within them even the unperceivable memories that are lost to us and our consciousness. This is known as the “Akasha”, a word originating from Sanskrit, otherwise known as "space, sky". Blavatsky’s conception of memory and “Akasha” share an important connection to Gore-Booth’s portrayal and discussions of the past. This is even evidenced by a section of her only autobiographical text where the poetess writes, “[c]losely bound up, as these obscure events are, with vivid impressions of the beauty and newness of the outside world, they sink deep down into the child’s mind, and become a part of our fundamental Consciousness forever” (cited from Barone 193). This fundamental consciousness Gore-Booth describes, bears echoes of the Blavatskian “Akasha”, and her own poetic description of her own “lost city of birth” that still resides intently in her memory.

This remembrance and nostalgia for a divine or ancient past—a trace of theosophical influence—is a thematic concern that is evident in Yeats’s own poetry. Gore-Booth’s and Yeats both shared a life-long curiosity and fixation for the mystic and would continue to develop literary and poetic material aligned to such curiosities. Furthermore, direct references to Gore-Booth appear in Yeats’ letters where he writes affectionately about the poetess’ works. Her reputation in the poetic or literary world can be said to begin with Yeats’s poem “In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz”, written in address to the poetess and her sister. It is a work that has gained more attention than Gore-Booths’ own work, seeming to outlive even her own legacy. The poem echoes and writes in the spirit of Booth’s passionate resistance towards the turbulence of Irish political climate at the time. “All the folly of a fight With a common wrong or right. The innocent and the beautiful Have no enemy but time” (21-25). But he did not just recognize her political and social contributions. Yeats intuited and observed Gore-Booth’s wandering mind that endeavored to find and imagine a harbor where her soul could port: “I know not what the younger dreams – /Some vague Utopia—” (10-11). In this poem, Yeats speaks of the mystery that enshrouds Gore-Booth, and her evocations of a utopic primordial realm that so thoroughly fascinated and inspired his own thinking.

Moriarty, too, was deeply affected by Gore-Booth’s own work. In his book *Dreamtime*, he dedicates a chapter to Gore-Booth which reflects on her yearning for the mystical that left a mark on his own perceptions and worldviews. Moriarty names her “Imram Eva”: “imram”, a word of Irish origins originally spelt “immram”, that has its etymological origins in the word “ioramh”, meaning voyage (170). The word has relations to an ancient Irish tale where a hero journeys to the “Otherworld”. This pseudonym bestowed to Gore-Booth profoundly encapsulates a crucial search for an otherworld that will come to define the rest of her life. It is these voyages to spaces

and spheres, not belonging to this earthly existence or a “primordial womb” that characterizes the trajectory of her works.

Gore-Booth’s work thus illuminates an ever-present trace of esoteric, poetic writing that continued to pervade the early twentieth century European landscape. Unsurprisingly, her works have also been featured in theosophical journals where they were credited as brilliant articulations of esoteric and theosophical ideas. Gore-Booth’s approach is one that escapes the common conception of spiritual explorations that are rooted in escapist intentions, and her oeuvre testifies to this. Illuminating, thus, the ambitions of esoteric philosophy in its desires to acknowledge the complexities, sufferings and upheavals of reality, while simultaneously excavating the human psyche and its possible complicities in the chaos in which they are amongst. More importantly, as we will soon discover, Gore-Booth’s work reflects the inner life of a poet and a significant thinker who has, through her mastery of poetic images and techniques, attempted to garner an understanding of the ancient truths that have become obsolete to the collective consciousness. It seems difficult now to renounce the importance and significance of such a tradition that has left its vestiges in the poet’s work and reverie. Unfortunately, this aspect of her inner life never garnered the traction that it deserved.

ON THE NOSTALGIA OF SPIRIT AND DIVINE WISDOM

Esoteric and occult studies are, to some extent, in response to the deteriorating spiritual condition of modernity. The rise of a scientific and empirical worldview in the early twentieth century meant departures from more psychical modes of knowledge. Rudhyar writes, “[m]odern science is also a type of structural knowledge but in a totally different sense, especially in its dependence upon mathematics and logic; yet what has limited us [...] is its insistence on relying *exclusively* on empirical observations and strictly intellectual procedures along the lines of old Aristotelian logic” (197). It is this “exclusive” reliance on rational and logical systems of knowledge that has consequently led to the neglect of other modes of cognition. The importance of esoteric studies thus lies in its strive against the rapid mechanization of the human mind that is always in search for definitive answers.

These poets and thinkers often face the conundrum of addressing the issues of a sterile modernity, and yet constantly finding themselves entrapped within its confines. Furthermore, we often find the quick dichotomization of rational or irrational modes of knowledge, that too readily classifies engagement with the mystical or occult as “irrational”. This, however, needs to be demystified, since that which lies outside of regulated systems of knowledge needs to be more carefully acknowledged as justified procedures. Gore-Booth’s poems can be read as a silent protestation to the increasing mechanization of thought. Throughout her poetry, the tension between her external involvement in the social realm, and her more resonant inner life, often structures the poetic space. Giving consideration to both kinds of truth – societal and cosmic – she exemplifies the coexistence of these seemingly disparate models of existence.

In response to this condition of modernity, we repeatedly find, across these works under discussion, an attempt to “re-member” more primordial modes of human knowledge, one that aligns with a certain level of spiritual awareness, demonstrating esotericism’s purpose of recovery

rather than conquest. Additionally, Steiner states: “In days of old, the initiates placed their questions within the womb of space in order that out of space they might be born again. [...] The cosmic element must appear [...] born out of the human soul after a period of time determined by the cosmic Power themselves” (*Human Questions* 19). It is this sense of rebirth and recovery that lies at the heart of esoteric practices. Poets are tasked with the excavation of, as opposed to the construction of, knowledge. And this has less to do with procuring answers, but with questions asked again. As such, their attempts to recover lost or forgotten knowledge reflects a kind of tendency of amnesia. Ultimately, the desire to excavate knowledge not prioritized in regulated systems function as the motor of their poetic investigations.

A return to the primordial, or at least its attempt, becomes seemingly possible through poetry. Poetry becomes a medium of secret truths in which possibilities are mediated through the poet’s “secret scriptures”. Inferring from Gore-Booth’s works, her concern with the resuscitation of a lost, primordial origin is significant. Her poems often reveal to her readers a perennial yearning for the womb of the cosmos in which greater, more profound and transcendental truths are hidden from our periphery, as potentiality. What is reflected in Gore-Booth’s poems, that is perhaps analogous to previous discussions of *Anima Mundi*, is an echoing call to a collective past that has been irrevocably forgotten, one in which the hidden truths are buried and cut off from the modern man. This yearning and nostalgia for the collective memory acknowledges and decentralizes antiquity to one that is ever present. The return and recollection of this primordial realm instigates her negotiation of the physical/spiritual, inward/outward, life/death—binaries that encapsulate the duality of realms esotericism gestures towards.

In order to begin to extrapolate the symptoms of thinking that were prevalent in the society at the time, what exactly is this impulse to return to archaic and ancient knowledge? In Gore-Booth’s case, it seemed this quest was one that was interested in excavating the sediment of

human consciousness in order to discover one's own relation to their community. In the poem discussed by Moriarty, titled "The Mystic" Gore-Booth writes:

I shall find there I know
The lost city of my birth,
Innocent white washes of snow,
A new heaven and a new earth
Neither lamb, nor calf, nor kid,
In those lonely meadows play,
All things calm and silent are
Underneath the Polar star,
Where all my dreams are hid. (*Eva Gore-Booth* 219)

Gore-Booth forcibly dissociates and denounces herself from Ireland, her physical place of birth. Instead, she seeks the place of birth that she has lost, a realm in which memories still reside as impressions and residues of her consciousness. Through the image of the untouched wash of snow, the poem illustrates a space that is covered in a pristine layer of first snow that is indicative of a place that harkens back to an ultimate origin. This remote place in which she attempts to trace is featured repeatedly in her works. And this evocative sense of repetitive seeking and pining for the otherness is also achieved through the rhythmic pacing of her works. In "The Mystic" specifically, Gore-Booth writes lyrically, albeit in a rhyme scheme that is quite erratic. Paying close attention to the form of the poem, which begins with a quatrain and subsequently evolves into a tercet, the poem adopts the Spenserian-like nine-line form and that is sustained to the end. The supposed allegorical form is treated creatively by Gore-Booth. Unlike the conventional Spenserian stanza, Gore-Booth departs from its ABABBCBCC rhyme-scheme. Instead, she deploys an irregular rhyme scheme in which rhyming words are echoed in subsequent stanzas.

This rhyme scheme mirrors the image of the lost place as depicted by the poetess, in which recollections of her nascent place is embedded within the speaker's psyche and is both foreign yet persists in semblances. Moreover, she begins the poem with a saying by Plotinus, a Greek philosopher of the ancient world, who writes, "Your soul has set sail like the returning Odysseus for its native land". The character of the mystic is thus shaped as an individual who sojourns towards a space in which ancient wisdom is buried. Throughout the poem, the speaker in the mystic is characterized by a sense of bereavement and yearning in which he or she is transfixed by an inkling of the diurnal and yet jostles with earthly elements that seem to bound her back. Gore-Booth utilizes a metaphor to convey this fatigue. In stanza 3, it reads "I am sick of wind and tide-- / Tired of this rocking boat" (20-21). This illustrates the poverty of human perception in which the speaker is attempting to escape—the earthly elements prevent sailors from arriving at a desired destination.

This distinction between the primordial/soul and earthly/material realm is central in this discussion of the collective past. As Steiner insightfully states: "In every human being there [lies] slumber faculties by means of which he can acquire for himself a knowledge of higher worlds. The Mystic, the Gnostic, the Theosophist, have always spoken of a world of soul and a world of spirit which are just as real to them as the world we can see with physical eyes and touch with physical hands" (*Human Questions* 19). And inscribing the reality of the "world of soul" is the task Gore-Booth sets out to do. In the poem "To The People on Earth", Gore-Booth blithely addresses the reader:

Ye tortured mortals, cease your cries,
Ye are but fools who thus forget
That in the centre of your Bridge of Sighs
There is an oubliette (1-4)

This impassioned call underscores the state of collective amnesia Gore-Booth is determined to bring to light. As she expresses emphatically in this short poem, an important truth is forgotten, and needs to be recalled. And this access is not obviously perceptible, like an oubliette – a secret dungeon in which the only exit is hidden – it is this seeking out, a remembering, that her poetry enacts. As in “The Dreamer”, the speaker is portrayed in this condition of endless wandering: “All night I stumble through the fields of light,/And chase in dreams the starry rays divine/That shine through soft folds of the robe of night,/Hung like a curtain round a sacred shrine”(1-4). The poem reflects a sober understanding of the human psyche and the torture and boredom of mortality—entrapped in an unending cycle, the world of the soul and spirit is gradually forgotten in our inhabitations of the body. Her poems thus, seem to set into motion a kind of mechanism that allows for a recalling for a cosmic memory that has been irrevocably lost.

The ontological barrier between inward/outward is at stake here. In her poem “Reality”, Gore-Booth revisits and echoes Blavatsky’s ideas of “Akasha” which is experienced as a yearning for a place beyond the earthly realm is one that is directed inwards, to the world of the soul.. The poetess quotes Socrates to begin her poem, “[...] give me beauty in the inward soul; and may the outward and inward be at one” (205). Socrates’ voice prefaces the poem and sets the tone. Gore-Booth has presumably situated this quote here to evoke a dichotomized force that is both moving inward and outward of soul. “Reality” becomes a concept that is incomplete, and its incompleteness seeks recovery and reparation. The speaker thus, expresses a yearning for a union and feeling of oneness. A oneiric quality and dreaminess permeates the poem where Gore-Booth discusses “[t]he secrets of the soul”. The reality as we experience becomes transfigured and brimming with hidden mysteries under Gore-Booth’s treatment. She reveals through the poem that spirits that are authentic and etheric extensions of ourselves “have they no place/In the earth’s heart, and should her children then/Despise the hand that moulds all beauty’s

grace,/And carves a dream out of the lives of men?”(9-12). In these lines, Gore-Booth illustrates a vivid scene where the soul and its buried truths are rejected and abandoned from “earth’s heart” or reality. She laments the sense of entrapment experienced in this sphere of “reality” in which the realm of the spirit cannot hold. This “reality” subsumes the other mystical reality or invisible forces are responsible for moulding and creating earthly beauties, in which the human eye cannot see and account for.

But what is important to note is that in one’s turn to the spiritual, the physical, too, is incorporated in this voyage. This return to the primordial also has to do with experiences that take place on a somatic level. Memory, or the past, is something which is also depicted as being experienced on the body—a physiological affect in which her body is stung. In the poem titled “A Lost Opportunity”, she writes: “[l]ittle I said, who had so much to say-/ This is the memory that sears and stings,/My soul was fire, my thoughts were clear as day,/ Yet had my soul no wings” (5-8). Memory, here, is experienced as a sensation—a “sear” and “sting”—displaced from the mental to physical. Here, Gore-Booth has intentionally allowed the “I” of the speaker to conflate with the symbol of Gore-Booth’s “memory”, thereby allowing “memory” to be wholly embodied by the individual. And memory, as embodied, is rendered as another mode of access to the collective past.

Another way in which the “collective past” is evoked is through the mediation of death. Gore-Booth’s fascination (even obsession) with death has to do with her yearning to overcome earthly limitations. Many of her poems speak of the variations of revivification, resuscitation and reincarnation where the individual can recover this “collective past” and memory. Gore-Booth insinuates that the beyond and memories of the collective past can be reunited with the individual in death. This thematic concern is evident and dominant in her collection of poem called “Re-Incarnation” and the “Incarnate”. The two poems, written around the same time

express a version of death in which the emphasis is not on departure from earthly existence but strongly characterized by the idea of reunification. For example, in “Re-Incarnation”, she writes in the eighth stanza, “I seek no more the secret of the wise, /Safe among shadowy, unreal human things” (31-32). The poem enacts a declarative tone, where the speaker communicates to the reader, almost as if it were at the brink of her death, expressing passionately that she will no longer endeavour to find the secret wisdom she desires on earth. This is because she would have been reunited with them, devoid of the material reality in which she dismisses as “unreal” here. In the following stanza, she continues,

I go to seek with humble care and toil
The dreams I left undreamed, the deeds undone,
To sow the seed and break the stubborn soil,
Knowing no brightness whiter than the sun. (*Eva Gore-Booth* 178-180)

As if to orientate the reader, Gore-Booth describes and illustrates the path of her departure and passing. In death, she will cognitively experience the reveries that cannot be dreamed in reality and things that cannot realistically be done. Hers is a tone of resignation, coming to terms with a dissolution and dematerializing. This tone progresses and eventually ends with a tone of resoluteness and hope in which the speaker will know “no brightness whiter than the sun”, mirroring the imagery of dying in which a person walks into a “light”. Similarly, in her poem “Incarnate”, the poetess affirms the idea that death represents an integral process of transcendence rather than permanent departure. An incarnate is a spirit embodied in human form. As such, we are able to infer that the poet was mostly interested in the spirit that has already traversed the realms of mortality. Conceivably, Gore-Booth privileges the spectre within the form. The speaker diagnoses, “[d]eep in the soul there throbs the secret pain/Of one homesick for dear familiar things”(1-2). Gore-Booth directly addresses the soul instead of form,

deciphering an indescribable ache that arises from a keen nostalgia for the past. “Incarnate” is comparatively bleak in tone and speaks of a world that is wrought with violence and pain. In this vivid stanza, Gore-Booth reveals an acute sensitivity to the violence that marred civilization at the time.

No wave that breaks in music on the shore
Can purify the tiger’s bloodstained den,
The worms that crawl about the dark world’s core
Cry out aloud against the deeds of men. (*Eva Gore-Booth* 174-175)

In this stanza, Gore-Booth paints a macabre imagery that she attributes suffering to the follies of man. The tone is one of defeat, as she illustrates a scene of silence and emptiness where maggots are crawling and blood is smeared in the scene. Following this however, Gore-Booth shifts the tonal treatment and again writes on death. Albeit not directly stated, Gore-Booth euphemizes death and insinuates it as “sleep” in which “the great Dreamer” (15) finally turns to. The violence of the first half of the poem diminuendos into a soporific and more calming tone. The turn in tone begins when Gore-Booth situates the reader to be privy to the “ploughman” and his insight, where he knows “[...]in his heart that he was once a king” (19-20). There is a sense of release and equanimity in this knowledge of a greater life that heralds from the past in which the ploughman has access to in his reveries. The presence of the past that locate themselves in his dreams lingers, and is a space or a “lonely place apart” where he “Stretch[es his] vain hands to clasp the secret whole”. Thus, vestiges of the whole become suddenly visible to us, and yet they cannot come together to literalize a unified image. The poem ends with a sense of burning and loss, where secret knowledge of one’s primordial origins and past can come to intermittently mollify.

As such, a significant difference between Booth's and Rilke's bodies of work is Booth's strict alignment to structure and rhyme—this appears to be the way in which Booth was able to negotiate with pre-existing and traditional forms of understanding while resuscitating her own permutation and response to it. However, as Rilke illustrates in his body of work, so Gore-Booth seems to echo, truth is one that continually returns to its origins, both in the sense of space and time. This truth is an understanding of the world that is transformative in the way that it imbues existence with a sense of eternity and transcendence. Without this understanding, the individual is forcibly cut off from his primal origins—one that he will continue to be nostalgic for and will eternally yearn.

MYTHOLOGY AS MEDIUM

“Mythology, like the severed head of Orpheus, goes on singing even in death and from afar” (Jung 5).

One central feature of Gore-Booth's poetry is her use of mythology which offers itself as a cite or a point of reference for an unreachable beyond. Having discussed Gore-Booth's concerns and explorations of collective memory in relation to esotericism, it is important to look at how this infiltrates the mythological dimension of her work. The idea of the “beyond” is dualistic, both in the ways it reaches a profound inner life, and a cosmic beyond. And it is achieving unity with this beyond that is the poet's strive.

Joseph Campbell, who delved deep in the study of mythology states: “[t]here is a basic mythological motif that originally all was one, and then there was separation [...] How did we lose touch with the unity?” (62). This question, as posed by Campbell, is one that the poets in this paper have committed their lives attempting to answer. In the previous chapter, we examined Rilke's lifelong endeavour for this sense of unity that which mythology has some promise of

recovering. Gore-Booth, evidenced in her works, also demonstrated a longing for this sense of unity (one that was important to mankind) that has gradually been eroded from the collective consciousness. In contemplating the varying bridges towards “spiritual” and “esoteric” truths, we see that Rilke and Gore-Booth, albeit through the employment of differing poetic techniques, desired to transcend beyond the minutiae of the everyday. Borrowing Campbell’s definition of the word, he describes, “[...] transcendent means to “transcend”, to go past duality. Everything in the field of time and space is *dual*. [...] You’re born in only one aspect of your actual metaphysical duality [...] This is represented in the mystery religions, where an individual goes through a series of initiations opening him out inside into a deeper and deeper depth of himself” (Campbell 58). Campbell succinctly expresses the impulse of transcendence and this is precisely the sentiment extrapolated by theosophical writers and thinkers. In the case of Rilke, he connects metaphysically to angelic figures in order to build a bridge towards sacred places and knowledge. Therefore, considering Gore-Booth’s oeuvre, we are compelled to examine the instruments she uses to facilitate the illustration of this mystical duality.

Closer inspection of her works would reveal that Gore-Booth approaches this transcendence into the nonbeing through the usage of mythology as metaphors. In other words, myths employed by Gore-Booth confer a poignant and visceral sense of recognition which facilitates her poems’ aspirations towards transcendence. As we will begin to see, mythic symbols are featured as evocative tools that are employed speak of a greater tradition. In addition, they are also accompanied by the scoring of Gore-Booth’s imbued rhythms and rhymes. For the image of the Greek gods and figures of the past form a symphony that transports the reader emotionally and imaginatively. The body of information where images of these mythological figures carry continually reference themselves to a primordial time, creates a cyclical loop,

perhaps, reminiscent of Blavatskian and Yeatsian gyre, and on this spherical loop, there resides the mythical figures who fulfil the role of satellites.

The role of myths in Gore-Booth's poetry is demonstrated in "The Quest", written early in her career, to carve a clearer picture of how myths can collide with Gore-Booth's spiritual endeavours. She writes, "For years I sought the Many in the One,/ I thought to find lost waves and broken rays" (1-2). The poem illustrates, in two quatrains, Gore-Booth's journey in seeking such phenomenological and existential truths. The kaleidoscopic nature of her consciousness and psyche sought for a sense of consistency. The second stanza reveals, "[...] now I seek the One in every form,/Scorning no vision that a dewdrop holds,/ [...] The Dream that many a twilight hour enfolds" (5-8). Gore-Booth splinters the image of oneness and through the imagery employed, poignantly pluralizes it. Here, she demonstrates an attempt at discovering unknowable truths through the images of oneness and nature. We witness here a progression in her understanding of this sense of unity and fathoms, on a more profound level that hidden knowledge presents itself kaleidoscopically and inconspicuously in material reality.

In comparison to Rilke, Gore-Booth was considerably more reliant on the surviving and flourishing myths, insisting on a more mythological approach in her expression and excavation of theosophical related tenets. In addition to figures such as Plotinus and Socrates whose words framed and prefaced her poems, a significant figure featured repeatedly is Queen Maeve. Maeve, "Medb" or later iterations of the word, "Meadhbh" and "Maeve", is a powerful and hypnotic goddess and Queen of Irish Mythology. In the preface written by Michael D. Higgins, he acknowledges, "Much of her poetry is inspired [...] by Ireland's ancient mythological figures, most notably Maeve, Queen of Connaught, whose burial ground, [...] overlooked the estate of Lissadell where Eva was born" (11). This is evident in her poem "Immortalities", where she contemplates the power and significance of these mythic figures. In acknowledging these

immortal figures, she expresses “[...] still does Apollo hide/In little songs the world’s great mysteries[.]” (5-6). Thus, Apollo, the Greek God of poetry and music hides in his songs ancient truths that become available to the listener. This, hidden like a trinket in melody, poignantly connects the modern listener to a universal and eternal experience. She completes the poem in the last stanza with this, “[m]y secret treasure- house beyond the grave/ Holds but the stars of heaven, the gods of Greece, And some faint echo of the voice of Maeve” (9-11). Through such references to mythological figures, Gore-Booth evocatively crafts a poetic space that extends beyond birth and death, in which the transcendent unknown is cited to hold within them the truths of these immortal figures, the essence of the cosmos, and the voice of Maeve. The evocation of Queen Maeve speaks of the poetess’ own history in which the statue of Maeve has not only become a powerful symbol of her past, but also a remote past. In this instance, her personal past and the mythic past coalesce and become “the One Voice that is the Eternal Peace” (12). Inferring from this, Gore-Booth vividly creates a movement of time in which songs of today and the whispering voice of Maeve can exist on the same chronological plane. This usage of mythological figures resonates profoundly with Campbell’s idea of the “mythological experience” in which the individual is repositioned at a vantage point where “[...] this moment of [their lives]” is revealed to “actually [be] a moment of eternity, and experiencing the eternal aspect of what you’re doing in the temporal experience” (111). The intelligible sphere of experience in which the modern man inhabits intersect with the “mythological experience” as evoked and provided by the poetess.

Taking a closer look at other mythical figures conjured in her poetry, we look to the poem “The Goddess of This World” in which Prosperina, Aphrodite and Pallas are also featured. The poem, again, begins with a saying borrowed from a figure of the past. This time it is Proclus who writes, “[m]atter exists for the sake of the Form which it contains” (201). In this poem, Gore-

Booth bridges the chasm between primordial and modern consciousness—creating a space connected by a door in which the speaker keeps ajar. In the beginning of the poem, she addresses the Greek goddess directly: “Queen Proserpina, from yonder shining star,/Came long ago to our brown world of clay; Because of her I keep my door ajar” (1-3). The imagery painted is a dualistic one in which she articulates the texture of the two dimensions she describes. Queen Proserpina’s celestial imagery is juxtaposed with the representation of the earth. This sets the tone for the poem in which a multi-dimensional space of the earthly and heavenly. The image of the speaker’s room is made to co-exist with the realm where Queen Prosperina resides, and are accessible to each other by way of the door’s passage. She continues in the poem, to attribute the beauty of nature to Queen Aphrodite, and lastly Queen Pallas, who was unable to live out her earthly existence and fled after a few hours. The poetess reveals, “[b]etween her and the Wisdom of the Wise,/And thus she lived a few short hours concealed” (21-22). In this, Gore-Booth brings to attention Queen Pallas’ ephemerality, clarifying that the reason for Queen Pallas’ brief stay on earth is a result of an inherent frailty attached ancient wisdom. Her representation of ancient wisdom that underlies religions resonates profoundly with the Blavatskian esoteric thread where the philosopher often allude to the tenets of theology. An important example of this is written in *The Secret Doctrine* where Blavatsky states, “Only a certain portion of the Secret teachings can be given out in the present age” (11). Therefore, like Sappho’s works, only fragments of these ancient truths, can be revealed to humankind. The imagery of goddesses as mythic symbols is poignant here. For example, Gore-Booth’s Proserpina is stated to have transformed the barren lands into one that is abundant and green. The myth of the divine females brings the readers back into the wombs of the origins, in which the umbilical cord to ancient truths is still inextricably linked and can be excavated and traced. She moves on to praise Queen Prosperina for the abundance of the earth in which “[...] the green earth is hers, is hers” (31). The Greek

mythological figures become an emblem of a primitive and nascent past in which Gore-Booth, through the poem, attempts to connect the modern psyche to. In constructing the space of a room against the realm of the mythological figures, a symbolic structure and order of the world is created. The speaker in the poem thus, invites a transmission of secret and ancient wisdom these goddesses possess. Thus, a process of anamnesis or a recollection of previous existence is enacted through the mythological symbols.

In addition to this, the impressions in which these female goddesses have left her, the speaker considers the reveries of the divine figures: “For every thought or dream that comes my way, Since to our world of brown/ Proserpina came down” (4-6). The dreams of these ancient goddesses have left an imprint on the speaker’s modern consciousness, physicalizing a subconscious bridge between the ancient and the modern. This consequently sculpts a chronological space which always returns backwards into a forgotten time, Gore-Booth imbues this place with a mythic quality, delving into metaphorical symbols of the past that are charged with transcendental mystique. If Jung was right, then these mythological emblems facilitate a “movement” of the “immemorial and traditional body of material contained in tales about gods and god like beings” (3). Hence, the poetry by Gore-Booth is precisely this theosophical daydream set into motion. The God-like being introduced in her poetry serve the symbolic function of affectively linking our modern consciousness to archaic times. Gore-Booth’s notion to the world becomes increasingly relevant to the tradition of esotericism that seemed to permeate during the early twentieth century. If Rilke sought the invisible for truths that were eclipsed by modernity, Gore-Booth alleviated the weight of the chaotic world by deriving hope and truths from mythological figures. The poet’s impulses thus, share parallels but manifest in variations. For Yeats, the concept of disembodied apparitions provide a vehicle to hidden truths because they transcend cognitive boundaries and therefore are the carriers of the answers he sought. In

Rilke, our ears are repeatedly pulled to the angel's song. Finally, for Gore-Booth, who feels just as alienated in a world that dismissed this impulses, her calls return and reaches out to mythic goddesses.

CHAPTER FIVE

CRISIS OF THE INVISIBLE

In examining the tenets of esotericism in relation to the poets, a radical aspect of the philosophy is revealed. Esoteric ideals provide alternative solutions to irresolvable mysteries of death and invisible forces that govern the universe, subjects that might previously be seen as taboo. The philosophy affirms an inextricable connection between earthly existence and the cosmos and the poems we read have the function of excavating and exemplifying this connection. It is this intuition of a “beyond” that is a central concern within these writings. The poets we’ve previewed in this paper found something in esoteric traditions that appealed to their poetic sensibilities. Religious traditions, that also deal with such mysteries, proved inadequate as a site of knowledge. Rilke repudiated the Christian angel, dissatisfied with the centrifugal understanding of the symbol. Yeats and Gore-Booth both turned to occultist texts by Blavatsky, as opposed to narratives of popular organized religions, to seek spiritual amelioration. The logic of esoteric teachings relies heavily on the idea of the dissolution of the self and also various constructs of logic. Additionally, its writings reflect a mistrust of objective language, opening to alternative modes of representation. Looking for ways to articulate their more intuitive sense of the world, the poets found solace in these other traditions.

Esoteric ideas have often found their way naturally into the literary space. In particular, poetry plays a key role in these endeavours. Poetry, as practice and product, provides a meaningful way to access these realms of the “beyond”. Like a ciphered text or secret scripture, poets, too, create works that, through a certain positioning of language, address an ineffability. Mapping out new spaces of consciousness through artistic permutations, we are introduced to that intuitive sense of “hidden” worlds. Campbell underscores the similarity between the poet

and the ancient shaman: “[p]oetry is a metaphorical language [...] but it also suggests the actuality that hides behind the visible aspect [of existence]”, and this reflects the ancient shaman’s ability to experience an “unconsciousness [that] opens up, and the shaman falls into it” (107). Thus, the poets find themselves in a constant engagement with veiled truths. The esoteric finds its conduit in the figurative, gestured to but never fully present in and of itself. Therefore, poetry functions as a bridge to these worlds, a medium particularly suited to the expression of more obscure phenomenon. Campbell’s likening of the poet to an ancient spirit healer reaffirms the spiritual nature of poetry; and how, through poetry, one can approach a deeper connection to the cosmos.

This is perhaps why we discover the significant influence of esoteric philosophy in the poetic works discussed. Clearly evident in the works of Yeats, Rilke and Gore-Booth, the link between esotericism and literature is irrefutable. Sketching out an esoteric literary tradition therefore plays a crucial role in ascertaining the vital thematic concerns that were circulating in this climate and milieu of the writers. Even though the legitimacy of esoteric, occultist and theosophical beliefs as reliable systems of thought will continue to be questioned, its place in the poetical tradition must, nevertheless, be recognized. The many references and interactions with occultist ideas these works explore need to be recognized for the connections they have with esoteric traditions. Esotericism often affirms an inextricable connection between the individual and cosmos, and the poets we have discussed seek various avenues to excavate this synchronicity. Such avenues have to do with heightening one’s sensitivity, receptivity and proclivity towards hidden rhythms of experience. It is this intuition of a “beyond” that is a central concern to esotericism. Through poetry, these different figures, that form an esoteric tradition, mediate their own articulations of that which remains hidden.

In this final chapter, we will be locating the intellectual inheritance of the poets we have featured and how their influences have evinced in the works of poets who came after. In asserting that there was indeed a semblance of a tradition that constellated during the early twentieth century European literary landscape, we necessarily look beyond the poetic tradition of central Europe and the time frame of the featured three poets. In other words, it is pivotal that we survey how the esoteric framework reverberated beyond Yeats, Rilke and Gore-Booth's bodies of work. This chapter will thus establish the continuity of this tradition by discussing two poets who will give brief examples of such occurrences in Eastern Europe and later in the twentieth century. The two poets whose works we will survey are Arsenii Tarkovsky and Dylan Thomas. Of course, they are not the only ones who participated in this growing tradition. Other writers whose works heavily feature and reference esoteric impulses include figures such as André Breton, Fernando Pessoa and Ted Hughes. However, in the interest of space, I will focus on Tarkovsky and Thomas, thereby demonstrating the ways in which the esoteric tradition proceeds from Yeats', Rilke's and Gore-Booth's time. The poets, and the significant resource of esoteric and spiritual works in which they referenced, have proven, through the analyses of their oeuvres, to have transcended both spatial and temporal boundaries.

Tarkovsky's works have been chosen for the last chapter as a way to illuminate the trajectory of poetry in Eastern Europe and Russia. This is important because Russia is a significant backdrop for the development of many esoteric tropes in which the poets continually reference. These include the ideologies developed by Madame Blavatsky's and Ouspensky's text on the Miraculous and the fourth dimension which were developed during his attendance in secret meetings in St Petersburg, Russia. In addition to this, even Rilke's poetry and spiritual ideas were heavily influenced and shaped by his travels to Russia and his intensive study of Slavic culture, language and the arts. Hence, an examination of Tarkovsky's works will provide some

insight on one of the points of origin of this research paper. Moreover, the poet's works represent an important connection between the aforementioned poets where key images, motifs and themes reappear. To relate back to the aspirations of poetry and its interconnectedness to esoteric ideals, I return to Bachelard's commentary on poetry and its commitment to the "invisible". Not only does Tarkovsky's work illustrate the traces of this tradition in Eastern Europe, his body of work is centered upon the invisible forces and its varying manifestations in earthly existence. Tarkovsky's unique treatment of the poetic form articulates an important "vanishing point", a concept and style that creates a sense of ghostliness and a specific point of departure for poetry that assimilates esoteric ideas on the disintegration of the self and an engagement with hidden modes of cognition. Thus, we will be examining Tarkovsky's poetry and its reflection of disappearance and its aspirations reflecting the mechanism of hidden worlds, thereby revealing itself as a viable expression of the beyond.

Finally, the last section will feature the works of Dylan Thomas in order to address the prevalence of the esoteric strands beyond the early twentieth century. Thomas' works feature references to Yeats and reveal a sensitivity to other temporal rhythms more closely tied to a primordial sense of existence. His works provide a consolidation and an important reflection of the poets' disposition and their receptivity of the beyond, as well as how poetry function as responses to a "divine calling". The thematic concerns of his works might vacillate between the real world and essences of another world through the medium of poetry, but what is significantly captured is an proclivity towards esoteric influence and manifestations on our experience of temporal and spatial dimensions.

TARKOVSKY'S WORDS ON ESCAPING THIS MORTAL COIL

The poets that are included in this elusive tradition in the early twentieth century Europe literary landscape, invite us to be privy to their spectral extensions that appear always situated in the intermediary between this realm and the beyond. In order to elucidate this spectral positioning, we must no longer avoid or invalidate the vantage point of the spirit. Meaning, our gaze, as readers, are continually positioned in the direction of a tangible self is always at the brink of effacing into and towards an ethereal world where objective reality is in flux. Referring back to an important tenet of the Ouspenskian ideal, an attempt to fathom the miraculous necessitates a disintegration of the self. Ouspensky explains the importance of this vantage point, he says, “[...] man has always understood that the causes of visible and observable phenomena lie beyond the sphere of his observation. He has found that among observable phenomena certain facts could be regarded as causes of other facts, but these deductions were insufficient for the explanation of *everything* [...]” (*New Model of The Universe* 63). Therefore, the endeavor for a more unified phenomenological understanding requires a method to explain phenomenon that are unaccounted for. “Therefore, in order to be able to explain the causes it was necessary for him to have an invisible world consisting either of “spirits” or “ideas” or “vibrations”” (63). The “invisible” world refers, broadly, to the world which escapes human perception; and within these worlds, “spirits”, “ideas” and “vibrations” are floating percolations that psychologically account for questions we may have that are unanswerable. A poet who displays a natural predilection for this is Arsenii Tarkovsky.

Arsenii Tarkovsky was a prolific Ukrainian poet and translator. His works have most notably been featured and interpreted via his son's films. Tarkovsky's works were obscured by Stalin's “anti-cosmopolitan” campaign in 1946 and his first publication was recalled. In considering his positioning within this research, Tarkovsky's background provides insight on the

circulation of ideas that began in Russia and was disseminated around Western Europe, landing in vestiges within Yeats', Rilke's and Gore-Booth's works. There are several tracks that tie Yeats' works back to our three poets. In an essay written about Tarkovsky, the critic observes, "Arsenii's angels have something in common with those in Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies*: 'transcendent of perfect consciousness, beyond time and the limitations of physicality... [who] guarantee the recognition of higher reality'" (Blair 21). A recognition of a higher reality, that exists beyond our mental plane, is shared between Rilke and Tarkovsky. Both poets believe in a transcendent sphere where a more unified consciousness can be gained through spiritual explorations. Much like Eva Gore-Booth whose works were eclipsed by her more active social and political engagements, Tarkovsky's body of works, too, were written within a certain obscurity, and his reputation as a poet was greatly overshadowed by his achievements as a translator. This was because of his extensive knowledge of languages of the Caucasus and central Asia. Tarkovsky's own collections of poetry were read mostly by a close-knit circle of friends, not widely circulated in the literary circle. The poet wrote prolifically about his own interior world, exemplifying a profound awareness of the movements of interiority. This often finds elaboration and illustration in his poetic form, where we find a survey of that which is reflected in natural and elemental forces, such as water and fire—symbols prevalent in his works. Perhaps, it was a result of his exposure and insight into the inner-workings of other poets' interiorities that cultivated a sensitivity and intuition towards the profound nuances of the human psyche and their desires. In reading his collections of poems, it is conceivable that Tarkovsky's technique is one that combines the sensitive lyricism of Rilke's work with the yearning for the understanding of the beyond as exhibited in Gore-Booth's works. In his poetry, readers are able to glean that the poet had an innate understanding of the depths of existence and phenomenological experiences that seems to resonate with the other two poets. As a pivotal mediator of meaning, the poet and

translator had the responsibility of preserving the creative nuances of works that were a labour of the original creator. Despite his success in the realm of translation, Tarkovsky's ten collections of poetry received very little critical attention. The amount of works written around the poet's oeuvre was meagre. This section of the research, thus, intends to revitalize the discussions surrounding his works.

For Tarkovsky, this aspiration to account for the invisible world, and the vantage point of the soul or spirit is prominently reflected in his tone and structure of his poems. If we pay close attention to the ways in which Tarkovsky structures his poems, a recurring pattern that can be gathered is a particular treatment of the beginnings of his poems. These initial lines or stanzas not only frame their preceding narratives, but also double as an evocative "vanishing point" of phenomena. The composition of his work, as noticed by Yuzefpolskaya and Rueckert, mirrored and was centered "on a vanishing point" which "expresses the senseless eternal repetition of phenomena devoid of spiritual essence" and it is through his poems that Tarkovsky can restore this precise "spiritual essence". What can be inferred from such a poignant and instrumental composition is that it facilitates a kind of internal disappearance in which the poem provides for both poet himself and the reader, and through this, a release of meaning is instigated. Such kinetic motions imbued into the form of a poem is exhibited in works such as, "And I come from nowhere" (152) and "I have dreamed of this, and this is what I dream" (164). In the first poem, Tarkovsky begins, "And I come from nowhere/To cleave asunder/The integral wonder/Of soul and flesh" (1-4). The initial point of entry for the speaker is one of disappearance, in which he emerges but from an untraceable location. The effect of this is a sense of dissonance where the speaker crafts a sense of presence of his being yet simultaneously declares the void to which he belongs and originates from. Such a declaration has the double effect of pronouncing one's existence and arrival, but also conveying a sense of ghostliness that is attached to the speaker's

entrance. In the lines that follow, Tarkovsky provides some clarification for this moment. The speaker continues by proclaiming his strangeness and alienation from his humanness, ergo, he has arrived, but continues to clarify a distance from his “soul and flesh” to which he can only look upon only with fascination. This illustrates an important point of perception of the spirit whose origins are unknown, dislocated from ordinary human experience. Tarkovsky dichotomizes the realm of disappearance and appearance. He writes, “The kingdom of nature/ I have to divide/ Between the song and water/ Dry land and speech” (5-8). It is this insight that we find: the speaker is compelled to see the world by acknowledging inherent multiplicity. The image of “[d]ry land and speech” symbolizes immediate reality in which earthly presence and the expression of which is highly dependent on linguistic expressions that has come to define our experience of the everyday. This image of tangible materiality is juxtaposed against “song and water” that represent the metaphysical and spiritual world. The image of the water and song fortifies the presence of the spiritual world where access to it requires a more mobile and intuitive mode of cognition. Therefore, just as Yuzefpolskaya and Rueckert have insightfully claimed, the beginning of this poem signifies an entrance towards the beyond, where the reader is held at vanishing point. The reader can no longer stay rooted in the quotidian and must enter the procession of dissolution and recognize the looming of the fluid, intuitive realm. In reading his poetry, the reader enters a procession that effaces a stable sense of self. Furthermore, what can be observed in the form of his poetry, is a sense of recurrence that is imbued within his works. As evidenced by the repetition of the word “nowhere” in the last line, the effect of recurrence evokes a sense of sublimation, i.e. the poem gestures towards its own disappearance by bringing the reader to this non-location. Moreover, the last stanza demolishes the numerical patterns of the former stanzas. Unlike the previous four stanzas composed in quatrains, the last stanza contains five lines, with the last line that reads “nowhere further”. In departing from the traditional

engagement of poetry where the reader participates with the dominant elements featured within the poem, Tarkovsky facilitates and engages with the gaps in the invisible reverberations within his poem as evidenced by the treatment of form.

Following this vein of discussion on repetition, Tarkovsky's structuring of words can also be said to formulate a circular model. This motion is repeated in the poem, "I have dreamed of this, and this is what I dream":

And I have dreamed of this, and this is what I dream
and some day I shall dream of this again,
and all will be repeated, all be made in incarnate
You will dream everything I have seen in dreams

There, at a distance from us, distanced from the world,
Wave follows wave to break upon the shore,
And on the wave are star, and human being and bird.

(Artistic Kinship Between Arsenii and Andrei Tarkovsky 164)

In this poem, Tarkovsky's speaker contemplates a recurring dream that permeates his past, present and future that seemingly bestows him with an epiphany regarding his existence. It is through the precise dreaming of this dream that he is "incarnated" and his sense of "being" complicated by the interjections and vestiges of past lives. The reality of his existence is suffused with a oneiric quality that can travel to the "You" in the poem by psychical transfusion. Again, we pay attention to the beginning of the poem where the poet enacts a vanishing point. The opening lines convey a sense of relentless cyclicity where the individual cannot escape the irrevocable repetition of existences. Further on in the poem, it is conceivable that Tarkovsky withholds answers or simple conclusions to the questions he poses. As it reads, there are no

explicit explanations of the premise of the dream or any precise subject material the speaker is attempting to allude to. Tarkovsky adopts a tone of restraint where he relies greatly on speaking symbolically in order to convey his desired intention. While the specific intention remains nebulous to the reader, an important sense of ambiguity evoked is further established through the poet's usage of dreams as the main mode of cognition or the mode of cognition in question here. In dreams, the dreamer has no viable mode of verification, its contents often cannot be recovered in consciousness. However, in this poem, Tarkovsky postulates that these dreams are not as lost to our perception as we might believe. He does this by placing emphasis on the element of synchronicities and the connections dreams have to the human psyche. He writes, "You will dream everything I have seen in dreams" (4). Therefore, the poet hints at an afterlife of all the forgotten dreams, that they will continue to recur on different levels of consciousness (waking and sleeping), outliving even the individuals who are the authors of the dream. This observation, embedded in the mysterious symbols, alludes to a space where experience is structured by such unexplainable and involuntary forces that oversee the immortality of these dreams. This, again, accounts for knowledge that is precisely at a "[...]at a distance from us, distanced from the world" (5). Again, Tarkovsky ends the poem ambiguously, replacing logical explanation with symbols. The information in which the poem was building up to is met with the silent diminuendo of these symbols, the "wave", the "star", the "human being" and the "bird" that are metaphors for the mortal world of the celestial and nature. By choosing to end the poem with such metaphors, a sense of erasure is elicited and nullifies the significance of the recurring dreams he discusses earlier in the poem, as if to recreate and enact the physiological and visceral mechanism of the act of dreaming and the process of the memories of dreams evaporating. In entering the realm of this poem in which Tarkovsky creates, we experience this cycle of amnesia and recreation in which there is little point of individual reference. Moreover, he quickly removes

all structures that might provide stable conditions of understanding. In order to properly enter the significance of this poem, it requires the readers to abandon and dispel their own memories and dreams, or memories of their own dreams. Thus, through the artful usage of the poetic form, both poems enact the “vanishing point” where we find a harking back to the literal beginning of the poem, and, by extension, a metaphorical, primordial point of origin. The poems ultimately stage a complex negotiation between appearance and disappearance, and the effects upon phenomena and psyche.

Critics Yuzefpolskaya and Rueckert suggest: “[i]t was characteristic of Tarkovsky to search for the immortality of the human soul in an intense perception of life-energy weaving an invisible thread between this realm and the beyond” (293). Therefore, Tarkovsky’s poetry expresses the poet’s perception of life-energy blended with a keen inclination for the beyond. This is reflected in his works that explore the human psyche and its entanglements with the etheric realms. As mentioned before, this intuition of higher realms is shared by Rilke. It is an uncanny coincidence (and perhaps a cosmic one) that the two poets have such similar spiraling and transcendent imagery that symbolize existential wonderings and wanderings as illustrated in the orbit and the recurring dream. The esoteric quality of Tarkovsky’s and Rilke’s poem can be gleaned as a conscious, subconscious or unconscious stimuli where the speaker’s psyche does not seem to reside in an immediate and material reality. They are always looking elsewhere. In a poem titled “In universe our happy reason”, Tarkovsky writes,

In the universe our happy reason
Cannot build a solid home,
People and stars and angels have life
By gravity’s spherical pull.
Before ever a child is conceived,

Already from under his feet

A film arches out towards nowhere,

Describing his orbital path. (*Poetry and Film* 159)

The references to angels and stars again, bring to mind Rilke's recurring motifs. Rilke's angels were a reflection of his spiritual commitments and his dilemmas of the quotidian. Tarkovsky's poem suggests that "stars and angels have life" and their influence are deeply embedded in the cosmic fate of a mortal being before his spirit evolves into mortal form. The "film" that "arches out towards nowhere" evokes the imagery of an etheric pull, a force from a beyond that comes to govern the rhythms of our current existence. This force brings us towards a "nowhere" shaped like an orbit, condemning us to an endless spiraling cycle, the soul shall return as it departs. This is reminiscent of Gore-Booth's own fixation with the movements of reincarnation. She writes in a poem titled "Re-incarnation", that the mortal is "[d]eaf to the flowing tide of dreams divine/[...]" The rhythms of eternity, too fine/To touch with music the dull ears of earth—" (37-40). Indeed, Gore-Booth and Tarkovsky share a sensitivity and an acute sense of a world beyond ours, that consequently grants them access to the melodies, overtones and undercurrents of an eternal time that fall deaf to many of our ears. These are the overtones of a phenomenon that oversee the reincarnating process: "Arsenii saw the poet as a humanity's 'organ' for exploring reality, and poetry as a 'cognitive' process for exploring the world and the essence of being" (Blair 30). Tarkovsky's view of the poet being a conduit for forces from other realms and a vessel for explorations in reality is a view echoed by Rilke's and Gore-Booth's works. Their works reveal a common underlying thread of thought where poetry transcends its literary functions.

ESOTERIC POETRY: A RESPONSE TO THE DIVINE CALLING

Another poet who reveals a continuity of the esoteric tradition in the literary strand is Dylan Thomas. Dylan Thomas' poetry demonstrate an attentiveness to "otherness". His works facilitate the argument that there was indeed continuity in the line of esoteric poets from Yeats', Gore-Booth's and Rilke's time. This can be gleaned from the way he frames poetry to be a form of response to a sacred calling or acknowledgement to certain divine synchronicities that find their way to earthly existence and manifestations. Thomas' works also bear within them uncanny echoes of Yeats' works and more importantly, the mystical ability of their poems to transport the reader, just as Yeats' works have done. Thomas caught the attention of the literary world between the 1930s to the 1950s before his untimely and early demise at the young age of 39. In examining his works, I hope to make a last note on the poet's attempt to inaugurate a phenomenological approach that includes an awareness of cosmic forces at play within and without the dimension of our selves. Thomas' works, more so than others, mocks, in a playful manner, the desire for the certainty of knowledge. As such, he often deliberately situates his readers in a space of the "unknowing", a realm that is compatible to the esoteric knowledge discussed in this paper.

A year before his death, Thomas writes candidly, reflecting on the purpose of his collection of poems, "I read somewhere of a shepherd who, when asked why he made, from within fairy wings, ritual observances to the moon to protect his flocks, replied: 'I'd be a damn' fool if I didn't!' These poems [...] are written for the love of Man in praise of God, and I'd be a damn' fool if they weren't" (xix). While this might veer into an overly romantic view of his poems, what it significantly shows is that Thomas, simply put, dedicates his poetry to the interconnectedness between the mortal and the divine. Thomas undoubtedly saw the origins of men as undoubtedly linked to a greater, invisible force. He often addresses the unique

relationship between the quotidian and time as a “prophetic” medium, in which Thomas seems to entrust his understanding of life. As we shall see, his works have the effect of communicating cosmic synchronicities that allow human consciousness to provide an avenue momentarily detached from earthly significance. Within his poems, Thomas displays an acute awareness of a “divine” time that was also practiced as a form of self-consciousness. This sensitivity, receptivity and proclivity towards an “other” chronology, which governs a part of our human experience, is one that is shared by the other poets in question. They ask readers, through poetic discourse, to come to envision a sense of time that departs from a universal understanding of linearity, where our understanding of existence in relation to chronology trickles from moment to moment. Instead, time is depicted as a force from the beyond that is appealing to the human psyche, whose “calling” is answered by the poet.

The poem “I Dreamed My Genesis” (30-31) exemplifies these speculations. It begins with a description of a dream: “I dreamed my genesis in sweat of sleep, breaking/Through the rotating shell, strong/As motor muscle on the drill, driving/Through vision and the girdered nerve” (1-4). The speaker explains the physiological impact of the prophetic dream, through visceral imagery that enacts the tension between movement and its inhibition that the speaker experiences. This stems from the speaker’s inability to emerge from the dream, entrapped in a “shell” or a barrier which blocks him from awakening from reverie. Thomas amplifies this sense of entrapment and fear through the usage of assonance and the repetition of similar sounding words. For example, in the 6th stanza of the poem, Thomas writes “[...] power was contagious in my birth, secom/ Rise of the skeleton and/ Rerobing of the naked ghost. Manhood/Spat up from the resuffered pain”, an emphasis is placed on the sound of the words beginning with the letter “R” (21-24). Additionally, the “r” sound is embedded within the words themselves, signaling Thomas’ effort in structuring an internal rhythm resonant of the initial sound of the

words. Paying even closer attention to the form of the poem, it is also evident that Thomas employs a similar system of recurrence as Tarkovsky, which assists in articulating and mirroring the prophetic nature of time or this “other” time, that can be loosely attributed to divine forces. In the poem, we are able to observe that the first word of the proceeding line is always enjambed. Therefore, the first word of a statement is always attached to its precursor. In the final stanza, he writes, “I dreamed my genesis in sweat of death, fallen/Twice in the feeding sea, grown/ Stale of Adam’s brine until, vision/ Of new man strength, I seek the sun” (25-28). Through the usage of such a pattern of enjambment, Thomas brilliantly imbues, within the poetic form, the mechanism of prophecies and genesis. Each line now bears within them a psychological semblance of what is to come after. By the final stanza, the speaker has reiterated the phrase “I dreamed my genesis” thrice, and yet each version differs slightly from the other. The speaker firstly dreams his genesis in his sleep, the second version ushers his first death and the third permutation of the genesis is dreamed in death itself. This variation of the repeated line brilliantly animates the sense of cosmic recurrence where it mirrors, or at least gestures towards, the cycles of a reincarnating soul, thereby mirroring the subject of the poem itself.

This idea of an unseen, invisible time, is found again in a poem titled, “Was There A Time” (55). Thomas meets “time” eye to eye, assessing its safety on earth. He writes, “[b]ut time has set its maggot on their track./ Under the arc of the sky they are unsafe./What’s never known is safest in this life” (4-6)—Thomas expresses himself elusively; and the poem moves on a rotational movement seemingly turning inward and outward. This effect is enacted through a sort of paradoxical positioning: the imagery and metaphors of the poem points to a living organism exposed on the tracks, under the vast, open sky; yet, it is subsequently hidden and turned inwards, seeking shelter from exposure. This kinetic energy of the poem enriches the concept of lost time and the rhythms of the hidden realm that flit in and out of our consciousness.

In questioning the existence of time as exemplified by the title of the poem “Was There A Time”, Dylan Thomas offers no easy solution. The poet delineates an esoteric time that is kept obscured from the world. There is no consolation in revealing the precise mechanisms of it as the virtue of esoteric time lies in its intrinsic invisibility. He therefore presents to us a permutation and an attempt to interpret a sense of time that is fractured from its original and universal sense. The version that appears to us in the everyday is but a maggot set off on its tracks to replace time’s original and pure form. Thomas sees, only the “blind man [can] see best” (33), unperturbed by the intrusion of the conspicuous, visible world, the essence of “real time” can be experienced in an unmediated and transformative permutation.

Thus, having previewed both poems, it can be said that Thomas displays a penchant and a natural intuition for more elliptical facets of existence. The rendering of the ethereal subject material collides with a playful usage of tangible and familiar motifs of the regular quotidian. Meditating upon the poet’s answer to an awareness of the greater unknown, Tarnas has this to say, “[i]n its primordial condition, humankind had possessed an instinctive knowledge of the profound sacred unity and interconnectedness of the world [...] and the sphere of influence that transcends human sight” (13). Relying on the esoteric poet’s, such as Thomas’ voice, we are repeatedly reminded of an alternative story of human purpose and psyche that is not centered on the vicissitudes of the everyday. Rather, it draws attention to an intangible instinct towards a primordial origin where the aforementioned poets continuously invoke returns to. The subtle governance of the world, and the world beyond, presents itself as an “instinctive knowledge” which bleeds its way into the poetic force of these poems.

A poem that elucidates and develops this idea is “Fern Hill” (170). In it, Thomas presents to us a roaring, poetic interpretation of the “Anima Mundi” as discussed in the first chapter of this paper. “Fern Hill” creates an imaginative landscape utilizing unstable metaphors with

meanings that are and remain oblique to the reader. The mythic nature of the poem is disguised by its pastoral semblance. However, peeling away the epidermis of a rather nostalgic looking back into his life, the poem's mirage-like vigour begins to reveal itself.

In the first stanza, Thomas writes, "Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs/
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green, /The night above the dingle starry,
Time let me hail and climb/ Golden in the heydays of his eyes" (1-5). Thomas speaks in retrospect, but the perspective is pulled into immediacy from the first word, "now", and so he speaks in multiple time frames, both from the "now" and from the future where the speaker has the benefit of retrospect. Thomas complicates the sense of chronology and our understanding of time, allowing the boundaries of linearity to dissolve. The speaker recollects his youth as he situates his voice and vantage point from above and beyond. In so doing, the younger version of the speaker can be seen flourishing in his childhood amongst the grandeur of nature. As the poem continues, Thomas addresses "Time" as an autonomous force that governs the experience of his existence. In this poem, the depiction of time is similar to the concept of "fate" where the trajectory of a person's life depends on a cosmic force. He writes in stanza two, "Time let me play and be/ Golden in the mercy of his means" (13-14). This illuminates the duality of realms as illustrated in "Fern Hill". An illusion of the domestic and rural is created, sewn together by words such as "farm", "barns", "hills" and "hay". However, the soft consonants and sibilance create an atmosphere of susurrations that transport the readers into a lull or a trance, connecting the readers to Time's uncanny "knowing". In this, we witness the speaker's simultaneous acknowledgment of his bondage to Time while displaying a psychical sense of the passage of his experience. These movements of the events as Thomas describes thus allude to a larger macrocosm and our intrinsic interconnectivity to "Time"; but more than that, a "time" in which our fate has been embossed.

Moreover, what is stressed in this poem is neither the actual depiction of his childhood, nor is it a tribute to a literal fern hill. In addition to the poem's insistence on an interconnectivity between the universe and the individual's psyche, "Fern Hill" also bears uncanny resonances with Yeats's "The Tower" (*W.B. Yeats Selected Poems* 129). In both poems, the speakers reminisce about the past and the directions their lives have taken in retrospect. A distinct feature of both Thomas' and Yeats' poems is the elevated vantage point employed by both poems. In "The Tower" and "Fern Hill" we detect a heightened consciousness, both literally and metaphorically, unfettered by the chains of everyday minutiae. Thomas' "Fernhill" and Yeats' "The Tower" come together to exemplify the unique position of participation in the esoteric tradition and their closeness and sensitivity to the "other" realm. The treatment of meaning in these two poems come together to indicate a poetic tradition that has travelled through a continuum beyond Yeats's own time. To exemplify this comparison, we look to "The Tower". It reads,

Now shall I make my soul,
Compelling it to study
In a learned school
Till the wreck of body,
Slow decay of blood,
Testy delirium
Or dull decrepitude,
Or what worse evil come—
The death of friends, or death
Of every brilliant eye
That made a catch in the breath—
Seem but the clouds of the sky

When the horizon fades,
Or a bird's sleepy cry

Among the deepening shades. (*W.B. Yeats Selected Poems* 129)

The tone is terse, abrupt and brazen. It tells the story of every soul and every breath reduced to ephemeral “clouds of the sky”. Written in a eulogistic tone, “The Tower” takes us back through retrospection, as the speaker contemplates a past amidst the backdrop of death and violence. Expressions such as “wreck of body”, “decay”, and “blood”, evoke a macabre scene, a gross degradation of the human body in which death awaits to receive. Yeats’ version of looking back into one’s life thus, entails a relooking into the destitute of the soul, and a journey that is predestined. In his Tower, above the town it is situated in, the poet pieces together the movements in time, and these movements capture a fragment of an eternal cycle that we are condemned to. Thomas, too, experiences a similar moment of illumination. Above and beyond his hill, the speaker is close to the man who has risen, and from beneath the higher grounds he witnesses the barren land and the shadows of children whose presences have faded:

I should hear him fly with the high fields
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.
Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
Time held me green and dying

Though I sang in my chains like the sea. (*Dylan Thomas* 170)

However, in the poem, Thomas does not spotlight the destruction and violence of death. Instead, his consolidation of the experience of existence is marked by a sense of release where the inconspicuous, hidden sphere of existence is revealed. Thus, the poet releases a previously eclipsed flow of time. For one, there is a strong use of fricatives in the final stanza, encapsulating the physical sensation of breathing out into the atmosphere so the quality of sound is diminished.

This idea of release and flight is mirrored in Yeats' depiction of the bird whose "sleepy cry/Among the deepening shades" yelps into oblivion (196-197). Finally, what takes over is that sense of a great unknown and vastness that which we must dissolve into.

Both Yeats and Thomas thus, display an intuitive impulse and understanding towards the hidden and unknown spheres of life. Just like the "sea" (Thomas) and the "deepening shades" (Yeats), this is the inevitable darkness and places of mystery that we are destined to sojourn towards. Thomas and Yeats thus, through their poetry, indicate that we should live beyond and towards where our sight can no longer reach. Thomas displays his premonitions of a cognitive boundary which we were unable to cross. "Time" might have held him in the illusion of immediate reality, but the final line of the poem reveals the poets' insight of this greater unknown. Thus, Thomas' descend into this realm does not build up as in "The Tower", yet, as Muldoon suggests, "[...] our impulse to reach for him when our sense of the world is obstructed or obscured turns out to have been well founded" (xviii). The enveloping and undulating power of "Fern Hill" directs our prejudiced vision to the "divine plan" and Thomas has this to say, "[...] anyway, but I certainly intend to spend more time lying on my back, and will even, if circumstances permit" (279).

CONCLUSION

All the poets within this paper share a similar consensus, that is, modernity has eroded a crucial sense of connectedness between us and the divine. Meaning, and the unification of truth has been severely displaced and dismembered over the course of time. Through poetry, the poets indicate that the collation of truth begins from an excavation and exploration of the beyond. Their works have ceded to a different form of oration, where meaning resides in a cosmic sphere, and an invisible other. Their participation in the esoteric milieu and the development of it prevent their sense of truth from always floating further away from our perception. Critic Patricia Silva McNeill opines that esotericism as a philosophical depository “informed a substantial segment of [...] poetic production, and embedded [them] in arcane imagery and symbolic language. They [these] supplied the poets with metaphorical constructs – what Yeats called ‘metaphors for poetry’ – with which to edify a theory of poetry” (163). In other words, McNeill suggests that the philosophy is integral in its role of providing poetic frameworks for poets who were predisposed to such esotericism. Poetry in all its elusive departures and meaning promised to the invisible reader, as proven by the works of the poets in this research, is a viable approach towards the miraculous beyond. This is a praxis that is simultaneously forgotten, yet also central to our human experience that is marred by pain and the strains of everyday minutiae that threatens the very essence and significance of existence. There is value in recognizing this tradition as it continues to unfurl within the literary, poetic sphere. This is because the poet’s explorations not only demarcated a concentrated time space where there was a collective desire to examine modernity and its repudiation of the invisible. More than that, they crafted a significant medium and apparatus to expand our ideas of the self, consciousness, and cosmic coincidences. Poetry and esotericism thus trace a line both backwards into a primordial,

irretrievable past and an elusive present. They have found communion in hopes that a greater beyond exists. And in listening to its pulse, it will in return, listens to ours.

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