

I looked forward to reading *Wind From the Shore* because I wanted to know more about Yeats, the poet who created such beautiful, magical images that are filled with an intense longing for something beyond our existence. As a mother, when I read poetry to my children, I talk with them about the good, the beautiful, the true, and we connect these poems to eternal realities and to our lives as redeemed children of God. I wondered what Yeats knew of revealed truth. Did he ever find answers to all his searching? I wanted a Christian perspective on this poet that was hard to find, so when I heard about *Wind From the Shore*, I was eager to read it and was not disappointed.

I'd like to share the thoughts I had while reading. Your examination of the *Stolen Child* resonated with me first because as a family we had just watched a series based on Astrid Lindgren's book *Ronja the Robber's Daughter*. There are several scenes in which the child Ronja is in danger of being lured away by the "unearthly ones." The pull to this other world is so strong that she cannot resist and must be held back by those who know she will never return once she leaves. Had Lindgren read Yeats, or maybe Goethe? Did she, too, long for the hope of a better reality elsewhere? I love the line "the world is more full of weeping than he can understand." Yeats is not a Christian, and yet he speaks the truth that every human feels in their "deep heart's core"; this world is not our home. We were made for something else, for an eternity built on restoration and redemption. The "dark journey" spoken of on the book's front cover, unfortunately never culminates for Yeats in this realization; as you said, he ended his life believing death is the end and truth is unknowable.

*The Song of Wandering Aengus* reads so beautifully; the words and images feel like music. I love to read this poem aloud. As mentioned, the setting is reminiscent of the *Stolen Child* and has the appeal of innocence which is a bit spoiled when one reads the troubling autobiographical material behind the poem. I liked your description of the last stanza, "He cloaks a steel determination in dreamlike words." You explain the apples as the food of eternity, something other than physical food. I see this as a truth Yeats is speaking without realizing it. We don't live by bread alone. We need something to bring us into that realm of peace where all our longings are stilled, but the only answers Yeats can imagine are the fantastical silver apples of the moon and golden apples of the sun. Without Christ, there is no reality, and this is where Yeats lives—in a false reality where Maud is the "perpetual fairy enchantress" and the "glimmering girl" whose love, like his longing for a happier place, will never be realized.

Although the book contains some biographical information, I wanted to know more. I looked for Yeats on Wikipedia and was somewhat sickened by his life and the lives of those around him, and especially saddened for the children who were raised amid such strange ideas. You mentioned his "homo incurvatus in se" and the concentration of self Yeats had in his later years, but, of course, he was turned in on himself from the very beginning, flattering himself in his own eyes, as Psalm 36 says, and unable to see his sin in spite of the endless, useless introspection he engaged in. Second Coming has Yeats actually looking forward to the new age where the beast slouches toward Bethlehem. I suppose we could horrifyingly say that Yeats has finally realized the vision of his imagination in the new age of his eternal dwelling.

Irish Airman is another favorite of mine to read because of the rhythm generated, as you explained, by the pairings. Yeats's view that life and death are equal to each other and "two levels of one reality" present an opportunity, as I read the poem to my children, to talk to them of death being in actuality, the unnatural consequence of sin, with balance only being achieved through atonement on the cross.

One doesn't have to understand Yeats's intent in writing *Sailing to Byzantium* to love reading it and know the words are beautiful, but I always want to know what the poet is trying to communicate. You say, "Yeats dreamed of a world exempt from the usual sadness of life, and then dreams of this world in Byzantium." I was amused by your question as to how much Yeats actually would have liked living there given his distaste for Christianity. And yet, I still see this poem pointing me toward a Christian truth. As you said on page 97, "it tells the story of the longing of an old man—every man—for another time and place where everything is beautiful." As I mentioned with the *Stolen Child*, this is the longing set forth in the Bible, with the Fall, our sin, our need, Yeats's need. Yeats's inability to find Byzantium is something I sadly reflect on and, as I read to my children, I point out how blessed we are to have the knowledge of salvation and to know the certainty of the resurrection and our eternal home.

The book's conclusion explained Yeats's own final conclusion that truth is unknowable. It is a heartbreaking thought that this man who could choose the finest of words to paint the finest pictures, never saw the real picture revealed through God's Word. You said, "few if any turn to Yeats for answers to the meaning and purpose of existence." Yeats didn't have the answers, but his poetry does have the questions, the questions we all have, and these help me to understand and have compassion for the lost. The questions drive me to the solace of Scripture and fill me with the comfort with which I can comfort others.

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