

# On the Artistic Expressions of When You Are Old by W.B. Yeats

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**Abstract**—The thesis can be divided into three parts. Part one is an introduction about Yeats and the poem *When You Are Old*. The career of Yeats and the background and literary review of the poem are given in this part. In the second part, the brief introduction of artistic expression is given. The third part focuses on the artistic expressions on words' usage and shows their beauty in the poem, such as euphemism, antithesis, emphasis, symbolism. The fourth part focuses on the artistic expressions on the structure of the poem, such as imagination, undercurrent and fuzzy reference pro-form. The last part is a conclusion of the whole paper. A summary is given for emphasize the important role of these artistic expressions for expressing emotions.

**Keywords**—Yeats; Maud Gonnet; "*When You Are Old*"; artistic expression; love

## I. INTRODUCTION

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) was a famous Irish poet who considered as a greatest poet, playwright, mystic and culture activist. He made indelible contribution to advocate Irish national culture. Yeats wrote during one of the most volatile periods of his country's history, and his poetry captures this.

Yeats's career is the most famous one in modern poetry. That is a career that has been seen as a representative story about modern poetry as a whole. He begins as a Romantic visionary. Under the pressure of political and social crisis, he becomes a heroic realist. When he grows old, he changes his writing style again. He started to write poems for himself and his families. Sometimes, his poems of this period describe an experience of getting old or a feeling to the flying time.

In 1923, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He was described as an "inspired poetry, which in a highly artistic form gives expression to the spirit of a whole nation" by the Nobel Committee. He is the representative of symbolism in English poetry. In the aspect of creating poetry, he gained great and special achievement. He made great contribution to the development of modern poetry. He won highly appreciation in this field.

*When You Are Old* is the masterpiece of Yeats. He wrote it for the lady, Maud Gonnet. In the poem, Yeats showed his love with different artistic expressions. The thesis aims at represent Yeats' love to Maud Gonnet through researching the artistic expressions, such as euphemism, antithesis,

emphasis, symbolism, imagination, undercurrent and fuzzy reference pro-form.

## II. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

### A. A Brief Introduction of William Butler Yeats

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) was a famous Irish poet who made great contribution to Irish culture. He was considered as a greatest poet, playwright, essayist, mystic and culture activist, made indelible contribution to advocate Irish national culture. Thomas Stearns Eliot regarded him as "the greatest English poet in our times ... the greatest one in English poetry." Some researchers think that Yeats's career is the most famous one in modern poetry. Langdon Hammer, the chairman of Literature Department in Yale University, believed that Yeats's career that has been seen as a representative story about modern poetry as a whole. He begins as a Romantic visionary. Under the pressure of political and social crisis, he became a heroic realist. When he grew old, he changed his writing style again. He started to write poems for himself and his families. Sometimes, his poems of this period describe an experience of getting old or his feelings to the flying time. In 1923, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He was described as an "inspired poetry, which in a highly artistic form gives expression to the spirit of a whole nation" by the Nobel Committee.

After graduated from middle school, Yeats began to create poetries. Yeats wrote during one of the most volatile periods of his country's history and his poetry captures this. (Frank, 2008) In his lifetime, Yeats completed all together 11 volumes of poetry, 26 plays, 9 books of prose, 5 autobiographical works and 4 books of philosophy and literary criticism. (Chen Qingsheng & Chen Xu, 2009) Generally, Yeats's career can be divided into three periods. Each stage has its own characters.

In the first period, from 1883 to 1899, he focused on Irish folk story and created some romanticism poems. Yeats learned a lot of old Irish legends and songs by talking with peasants and fishermen when he spent much of his time with his grandparents in Sligo Country. Yeats had a lifelong love for the scenery and folklore of this region, which greatly influenced his work. (Chen Qingsheng & Chen Xu, 2009) In this period, Yeats showed his dreamy dream through fairy tales and legends to readers. In 1889, Yeats published his first collection of poems *The Wanderings of Oisín*. Local

color lends peculiar interest to the narrative poem. In 1990s, Yeats was influenced by some temporal poets and painters; his writing style tended to romanticism. In 1891, he created the Rhymer's Club with his friend Ernest Rhys. It is a literary community composed of a group of like-minded people. Yeats was also the leader of Irish Literary Revival at that time. Yeats held the idea that words in a poem should be clear, implied, ultramundane, which just like a dream. In this stage, his play *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), lyric poetries *Crossways* (1889) and *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* (1890) are his famous works. Also, it was a special period when he met beloved girl Maud Gonne and created many love poetries, which showed his permanent love to her. Thus, Yeats created a well-known poem: *When You Are Old*. The poem is famous for his sincere love, truehearted words and wonderful artistic expressions.

In the second period covering from the early twentieth century to the end of world war I, he took part in the Irish patriotism activity. At this time, his writing style got out of romanticism. After using symbolism and Irish folk literature in his poetry, Yeats tried to create poetry which written in rich dramatic narrative. Due to the influence of war, the Irish society was in a turbulent situation. During this time, the social responsibility of poets was aroused. Then Yeats came up with an idea that his duty was to spread moral thought through his poetries. Thus, war and nation are the main themes of his works of this period. His famous works in this stage, such as lyric poetry *In the Seven Woods* (1904) and *Responsibilities* (1914), his play *Deirdre* (1907), his autobiographical *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (1915), show his great love to his country.

In the third period, from 1919 to 1930s, he perceived the changes of values, and decided to change his writing style to conform to the times. This is a brand new stage for Yeats. As time went by, Yeats created poems on time and life with sign of emotion. During this time, his poetries showed the principle of double consciousness. He imagined that he was lived in two worlds, which were earthliness and eternal world. He believed that life and death, soul and body were the groups that one will counterposed to the other but you couldn't have one without the other. During this time, his famous poetries *Sailing to Byzantium* (1927) and *Byzantium* (1933) embody his views on life. The other famous works at this time are *A General Introduction for My Work* (1937) and lyric poetry *Last Poems* (1939) and so on.

#### *B. A Brief Introduction of When You Are Old*

In 1893, Yeats wrote a poem named *When You Are Old*, which is a love poem for a girl called Maud Gonne. The poetry shows his permanent love to the girl. He was inspired by a sonnet of Pierre Ronsard, who was a famous French poet in 16th century. (Li Gongzhao, 2000) It is a poem from the group poem *Sonnets pour Hélène*. It has no title. And the first stanza is "Quand vous sevez bien vielle, an soir a la chandele". In English, it means: when you are old, we sit down with candles lighting at night. That is similar to the beginning of *When You Are Old*. This poetry shows different kinds of rhetoric, which are worth researching.

According to the existing material, Yeats's special love story with Maud Gonne catches much attention. Maud Gonne was an actress. Her father was a colonel of British Forces in Ireland. On January.30th 1889, Yeats met Maud Gonne, and fell in love with the beautiful lady immediately. Maud Gonne was not only an attractive actress, but also a leader of national revolution. Young as she was, she could understand the feeling of the poor. Knowing the tragic situation of Irish people, who were oppressed by the British, Maud Gonne gave up her cozy life in polite society resolutely and took part in the activity to fight for independence of Ireland. She was so charm, so brave and so special that made Yeats loved her so much. Yeats lost his heart to Maud Gonne, but the lady was indifferent to Yeats and the poetry written for her. In July, 1891, Yeats misread a letter from Maud Gonne. He misunderstood that Maud Gonne implied him of love, and went to propose to the woman. Unluckily, Maud Gonne refused Yeats. She said she couldn't marry him, but she hoped that they could be friends. Later, Maud Gonne didn't accept Yeats's love. Finally, she married with an Irish major Macbrad. Maud Gonne was so stubborn that she refused Yeats all the time, though her marriage was not so perfect.

At that time, the famous poem *When You Are Old* appeared. The poem moved many people who read it with its beautiful words and unaffected love. Yeats felt so sad that Maud Gonne refused him all the time, but he couldn't help himself. He kept writing poetry to Maud Gonne and tried his best to accompany her. There is no doubt that the woman, Maud Gonne, made great influences on Yeats. During that period, Yeats created much poetry on love. His love to Maud Gonne could arouse his inspiration on writing. Some of the works shows his passion, some of the works shows his sorrow, but mostly, his works shows his complicated feeling of love and hate.

According to the existing research on Yeats, most researchers focus on his symbolism. Such as Feng Hui's article *On the Creative Development of Symbolism in Yeats's Poems* (2011). Meanwhile, researchers also focus on some special factors which influence his works, such as mysticism and Christianity, Irish elements and so on. Also, researchers are focus on comparing works among Ronsard, Robert Burns and Yeats, such as Miao Yonggang and Jia Yuping's article *Flighty Love and Profound Love: A Comparative Analysis of Ronsard's and Yeats's Poem—When You Are Old* (2008).

According to existing researches on Yeats' famous poem *When You Are Old*, most researchers focus on appreciation of the beauty, artistic characteristics or artistic expressions. Such as Cheng Xiao's article on the artistic characteristics of *When You Are Old* by W.B. Yeats. (《论叶芝诗〈当你老了〉的艺术特色》, 2010). There are few researchers focus on the rhetoric skills except symbolism.

In conclusion, these researches give rise to the following questions.

Firstly, in recent years, studies on the poem *When You Are Old* are lack of creativity. Researchers usually repeat others opinions.

Secondly, aim at the poem *When You Are Old*, study orientations are not balance. Most researchers would like to focus on its symbolism only, less of them study on other article expressions in the poem.

### III. INTRODUCTION OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Artistic expression is one of the factors of art work. It is a device that used by the authors, through which they can express their feelings. There are many kinds of artistic expression, such as narration, emotion expression, argumentation, exposition, conversation, analogy. Generally, in poetries, authors use techniques to evoke immediate response in the emotions of their readers, such as fable, symbol, metaphor, simile, personification, exaggeration, deformation, irony, alliteration, understatement, pun, paradox etc.

In the long cultural development process, human create and accumulate abundant means of artistic expression. As a matter of fact, artistic expression is a complicated problem and it is more than means of expressing emotion. Historically, artistic expression emerges in some literary climate and it develops and matures in this kind of surrounding. Also, artistic expression keeps close relationship with the life and the views of an author.

In western art history, artistic expressions stand alone; at the same time, they link with each other and impact each other. Artistic expression is the result of history. Vice versa, it is a mirror of history. The artistic expressions used in poetry can help us to understand the emotions of the author. And the artistic expressions often show the characters of a time. That is the reason why it worth for us researching.

### IV. THE ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS ON WORDS' USAGE

#### A. *Euphemism*

As we know, euphemism is a very important language phenomenon. It plays an irreplaceable role in human life and cultural communication. Euphemism is defined in dictionaries as a rhetorical device: substitution of mild or vague or roundabout expression for harsh or blunt or direct one. (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 7th edition, 1982). When communicating with others, people often express their emotions directly. But, in particular cases, people use euphemism to talk about something implicitly for expressing some feeling lighter or stronger in some special situation. That is why euphemism appears.

In English literature, euphemism has distinct characters. Basically, it can be summarized in two items.

Firstly, euphemism is affected by times. Language changes when people use it. Thus, in different times, even the same objects, the same spellings, and the same meanings can have different methods to use euphemism.

Secondly, euphemism has its own regionalism. Every place has its own habits and customs. In different places, the meaning of euphemism is different.

Mostly, people want to show their love to their beloved one with some common words. For example, "I love you" or

"I need you", and so on. However, in the poem—*When You Are Old*, Yeats showed his love without any of these words.

It is a short poem with only three stanzas. In this poem, there is no any passionate word. The Poet expresses his love politely. He doesn't make any pledge in his poem, but he describes a picture that he will love Maud Gonne in his lifetime.

In the first stanza, he asks readers to read the book slowly. Reading this stanza, his feeling is known clearly, though he doesn't say any direct words. He doesn't use any superb words to show his love. Seen from this stanza, his great love to the women was manifested through his patience and his concern to her.

In the second stanza, he talks about the past days. In the poem, he wrote: "How many loved your moments of glad grace, And loved your beauty with love false or true; " He doesn't tell the readers how's things going in the past, but readers can get information from his words and stanzas. His beloved lady, Maud Gonne, was welcome at that time. The young loved her beauty. She must be a beautiful woman. In this poem, Yeats doesn't describe her appearance. However, readers can imagine her beautiful face. From this stanza, they can understand that Yeats' love won't fade out as time goes by. Even though she was growing old and moved slowly only, she would own Yeats' perpetual love.

#### B. *Antithesis*

There is a Russian proverb saying, there can be no good without evil.

Antithesis is a writing skill that contrasting two opposite or relative things. In literary works, authors often use antithesis to make comparison, such as beauty and ugly, good and evil, love and hate, sad and happy, and so on.

There are four antitheses in the poem.

In the poem, there are two kinds of surroundings. In the first and the last stanza, the poet presents the scenery when the woman is old. And in the second stanza, the poet described his love to the old woman. At the beginning of the poem, the poet wrote: "When you are old and gray and full of sleep". Reading this sentence, readers can think of an old woman with gray hair, who is sleepy now. In the minds of most people, the old woman is not link with beauty. But, Yeats show the readers different one in the following sentences. He wrote: "How many loved your moments of glad grace, And loved your beauty with love false or true;" This is the first contrast: old and young. The technique, antithesis, makes readers think of how beautiful the woman is.

Yeats wrote: "How many loved your moments of glad grace, And loved your beauty with love false or true" These sentences told us that the woman should be loved by many people. But, in the next sentence, readers can get more information. He wrote: "But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you, And loved the sorrows of your changing face;" This is the second contrast: many people and only one. Among all the people who love the woman, some of them love her out of true heart, but some of them do not. However, there is

only one man loves her soul, and he is always ready to share her sorrow and happiness. He is the only one who can stand by her the whole life, even though she is getting old and she is not so beautiful than before. From the contrasts, readers can understand the poet's feeling to the old woman.

In the last stanza, the old woman "bending down beside the glowing bars, Murmur, a little sadly, how love fled" She was loved by many people when she was young, but she lose them when she is old. This is another contrast: own and lose. People will not realize what they own until they lose it. These two contradictories embody the woman's bright past and her peace life now.

In the poem, there is one more antithesis. Yeats wrote the poem in 1893. At that time, he and his beloved one, Maud Gonne, are young. But, in the poem, he described the life of an old woman to show his love. The writing technique, antithesis, embodies that the character of the poem will be loved by the only one person. Yeats will stay with Maud Gonne all the time. That is what Yeats wanted Maud Gonne understand.

### C. Emphasis

Emphasis is an important tool that can convey information and exchange ideas effectively. Authors use the technique to call people's attention to their works and make them understand and receive their feelings. In literary works, emphasis embodies in pronunciation, word and sentence.

From *When You Are Old*, we can find the technique of emphasis. In the first stanza, there is a word "fire" And it appears again in the last stanza. Even though, he call it as "glowing bars". As a matter of fact, they are the same image. To the poet, it means a fire of love and the fire of life. (Zhang, 2011) Yeats emphasized the image to show its importance.

In the first stanza, the old woman reads the book slowly beside the fire. Here, the fire can be considered as the poet's love to the old woman. Then, the poet recalls the past days of the woman. After that, he takes readers back to the woman. She is still sitting beside the fire. Here, the "glowing bars" can be regarded as the poet's love, as well as the whole life of the woman. In our daily life, we can hear the words: the society is a big vat. Likewise, the glowing bars can hold all the emotions and all the experiences. Yeats expresses that he will stay with Maud Gonne even she's getting old. He will not leave her no matter what she experience.

In the second stanza, there is also a repetitive word. That is "loved". The poet wrote: "How many loved your moments of glad grace, And loved your beauty with love false or true; But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you, And loved the sorrows of your changing face". Poet is trying to tell readers that he love the old woman. There are four "love" in this stanza, but they are different kinds of love. In the first line of the stanza, the poet talked about the past days of the old woman. He thought of the days when she was young. He must be admiring her at that time. And in the second line, readers can get the message that there were so many people loved her when she was young. Some of these were true, while some of these were false. Now, he is a little nervous.

He is afraid of beat by others in the war of love. He is urgent to express his feeling. And so he does in the following line. Actually, the man who "loved the pilgrim soul in you" is Yeats. He shows his love in a special and strong way. This is true love. In the last line of the stanza, poet tells readers what true love is. That should be an unchangeable attitude towards the changeable life.

### D. Symbolism

Symbol is one of those words that often used in a confusing manner. The confusion is increased by different scholars using the word to mean very different things. (Zhang, 2011)

Yeats is the representative of symbolism. According to his creation, there are mainly two catalogues of image, that is, the emotion image and the intellectual image. (Feng, 2011)

There are six symbols in the poem. At the beginning of the poem, the poet wrote: "When you are old and gray and full of sleep". The word "old" is the first symbol. This line shows readers an old woman. Her hair is gray. And she is sleepy now. "Old" is the symbol of years and experiences. These expressions make readers think of dignity and grace.

And the second symbol is fire. In the first stanza, she "nodding by the fire". In the last stanza, there is a "glowing bars". It can also be regarded as fire. Fire means love, as well as life. It burns brightly, just like the poet's passionate love to his beloved lady. At the same time, the fire change all the time. It flickers sometimes, just like the life.

And then the old woman takes this "book" and read it "slowly". Book is the symbol of wise. The woman read the book when she is old. The scene makes readers think of a sage.

And she read the book with "soft" look. Generally, people think eyes are the windows of spirit. The poet describes the eyes of the woman and shows his love to the eyes, in order to show his love to her.

In the last stanza, Yeats wrote "mountains " and "stars". Mountains mean the steady love and stars mean the permanent love.

## V. THE ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS ON STRUCTURE

### A. Imagination

Imagination is a usual technique in writing. Imagination can be defined as a kind of creative mental activity. William Shakespeare, the great thinker, writer, playwright and poet, once said, the lunatic, the lover and the poet are of imagination all compact. (A Midsummer Night's Dream 5.1) He told us that imagination is a basic and important factor in literature. There is a well-known sentence said that art comes from life and it is higher than life. Imagination comes from a strong feeling. It represents authors' attitude towards objective things. The writer writes literary works through imagination to express the emotion vividly.

Yeats named the poem: *When You Are Old*, but he was young at that time. He met Maud Gonne when she was 22 years old. And Yeats created this poem in 1893. They are

both young. Maud Gonne was not an old woman at that moment. In the poem, poet doesn't represent existing reality but describes the future.

At the beginning, Yeats wrote: "When you are old and gray and full of sleep, and nodding by the fire, take down this book, and slowly read, and dream of the soft look. Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;" These sentences represent readers a warm picture. There is an old woman with grey hair and wrinkles. She is sleepy and she sits down beside the fire. She reads the book slowly. Memory is a fortune for every one. While her reading, she can think of her past life. Poet doesn't say anything directly, but he is trying to tell the lady his love in the special way. He wants to say that she can still read the beautiful poem and she can also own the heart of Yeats when she is old. Imagination conveys much message through the stanza.

At the end of the poem, he wrote: "And bending down beside the glowing bars, Murnur, a little sadly, how love fled And paced upon the mountains overhead, And hid his face amid a crowd of stars." Again, this scene is not real. The old woman murmurs beside the fire and thinks about how love fled. The poem tells us the poet really concern about the woman and he wants to keep company with her all his life.

#### *B. Undercurrent*

Mostly, there are some clear points and dim points that can reveal the theme of a literary work. They become lines separately. The confluence of these lines can be called as undercurrent. Undercurrent can be regarded as an artistic expression that can connect each stanza closely with one covert line or more.

For example, in *Medicine* (Lu Xun, 1919), the clear line and the dim line are focused in public. The so-called clear line is the story that Hua Laoshuan goes to buy the medicine for his son to treat an illness, while the dim line is the event that revolutionary was killed for seeking the medicine of saving the country and the people from an impending danger. The two lines get together in "graveyard" and a stirring affect come into being.

In the poem, there are one dim point and two lines. The dim point is the fire in poem. The two dim lines lie in the joins between each stanza.

As it is mentioned in the part of emphasize, the word "fire" appears in the first stanza and the last stanza. Even though, he call it as "glowing bars". As a matter of fact, they are the same image. To the poet, it means a fire of love and the fire of life. (Zhang, 2011) The word "fire" is the beginning of the poem. Through the recall in the second stanza, the "glowing bars" brings readers back to reality.

At the end of the first stanza, the old lady read the book and "dream of the soft look/ Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep" And the second stanza talks about the past days of the old lady. The word "dream" forms a dim line. The second stanza describes the content of the "dream".

Similarly, there is also a dim line between the second stanza and the third stanza. At the end of the second stanza, poet wrote that one man "loved the sorrows of your changing

face", then he brought readers back in the following stanza, which describes the old days.

The dim lines join into an undercurrent, which makes the stanzas linked naturally and smoothly.

#### *C. Fuzzy Reference Pro-form*

Fuzzy reference pro-form is extensively used in literature language; it makes special affect in poem.

Mostly, in poem, regardless its length, types or forms, there will be an "I" or more. This "I" undertakes poet's ideal and pursuit. It can express poet's feelings and emotions. It can be regarded as the model of the poet; meanwhile, it can refer to all walks of life. This kind of artistic expression makes poem wonderful.

First and foremost, the title of the poem, *When You Are Old*, makes it different. The poet doesn't put the real names, such as Maud Gonne or Yeats, in the poem. He used the word "you". Even we've got the answer that this is a poem wrote for Maud Gonne, we can still imagine that "you" here means us or someone we love.

Just as Li Shangyin wrote:

The silkworm till its dead spine from love-sick heart;

The candle only when burned has no tears to shed.

Han Cheng said in his literary work *The Past Seasons of Romantic* (2012), the silkworm and the candle has no names and we don't know when they will die out. Silkworms and candles can be found everywhere. And every silkworm and candle can be regarded as the hero of the poem. The artistic of fuzzy reference pro-form here create an eidolon that make readers believe that time is permanent.

Likewise, in the poem, the word "you" can be regarded as anyone who read it, regardless times and cultures. That is why it survives and be famous through the baptism of history.

Furthermore, there can be four different situations in the poem caused by the word "you". In the second stanza, the character should be the old lady that talked in the poem. But the character in the first stanza and the last stanza can be different.

Often, readers think that the character of the first and the last stanza is the lady that is mentioned in the poem. Or they believe that the lady is Maud Gonne. The first stanza shows readers a scene that an old lady reads a book beside the fire. Compare with the past days that described in the second stanza, the old lady realize that the poet is the one who loved "the pilgrim soul" in her, and loved "the sorrows" of her changing face. In reality, Yeats kept company with Maud Gonne all the time, however, here create a different scene. In the last stanza, she walks out with a feeling of regret, and she miss the great love of Yeats when she looks at the mountain and the stars. Maybe Yeats doesn't love her anymore or maybe he has gone. That is why she feel regret.

There is another one situation, the character of the first and the last stanza is the poet. When the poet is old, he reads "this book" slowly and thinks of the past days of a lady. Here, readers can get the feeling of the Yeats that he will love

Maud Gonne the whole life. In his life time, he wrote a lot of poems to Maud Gonne, which can collect into a book. When he is old, he takes the book, read it slowly, and dream of the past days of Maud Gonne. Even though he doesn't own Maud Gonne, he believes that what he does is meaningful. And in the last stanza, he finishes reading and thinks of that "how love fled". For some reason, he cannot see Maud Gonne again, but he still loves her. Here, "mountain" and "star" mean permanent. The scene implies Yeats's permanent love to Maud Gonne.

The third situation can be seen as the combination of the two situations that list above. The character of the first stanza is the poet, while the character of last stanza is the old lady. When the poet is old, he reads the book slowly and dream of the past days when the lady was young and beautiful. Even they are not married at last, the past days is a warm story for him. While in the last stanza, the old lady murmurs sadly for love fled. She regrets that she refused the man when she was young. When she is old, the only thing she can do is pacing outside and looking at the mountain and stars to cherish the memory of the young days.

Likewise, the last situation is similar to the third one, but they are a little different. The character of the first stanza is the old lady, while the character of last stanza is the poet. The kind of situation creates another different scene. The old lady reads "this book" slowly beside the fire. Though she refused the man, she gets a great deal of poems from him. All the poems collect into a book, which is full of their memories. In the last stanza, the man, who "loved the pilgrim soul" in the lady and "loved the sorrows" of her changing face, blending down beside the fire, and thinking of her. The poet loves the lady so much that he cannot forget her when they are old.

Fuzzy reference pro-form is a crucial artistic expression that can make the poem more outstanding, more permanent and more meaningful.

## VI. CONCLUSION

When people talk about Irish literature, there is a great person cannot be ignored, which is the famous Irish modernist W.B. Yeats. Yeats's career can be seen as a representative story about modern poetry as a whole.

he created his famous poem: When You Are Old to show his permanent love to Maud Gonne. In the poem, readers can get seven main artistic expressions. On words' usage, there are euphemism, antithesis, emphasis and symbolism. On the structure of the whole poem, there are imagination, undercurrent and fuzzy reference pro-form. Each one of the artistic expressions is an indispensable part.

It is a short poem with only three stanzas. In this poem, there is no any passionate word. Poet expresses his love politely. He just describes an old woman and her movements. He doesn't make any pledge in his poem, but he describes a picture that he will love Maud Gonne in his lifetime. That is the contribution of euphemism. Artistic expression is a crucial tool in writing. In the poem, artistic expressions make great contribution. These techniques that list above and some

techniques didn't list in this paper are both worth for readers researching.

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