

Myth in Modernist Poetry; Analysis of the works of Yeats and  
Charents

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## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Literature Review .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Research Questions.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Section 1 .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Mythology Under the Attack of Reason .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>The Seekers’ Efforts; Creation of Conscious Mythology .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>The Role of the Poet in the (Absent) State .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Section 2.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Myth In-Between Art – Life – Dream .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Past and Present (Myth Inside the History) .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>37</b>

### **Abstract**

The capstone project is a comparative study of the application of mythologies and legends in the writings of Irish poet William Butler Yeats and Armenian poet Yeghishe Charents. The examination does not question the literary value of the works. Instead, the spatial difference and sameness of the temporal dimension are observed. The role and positioning of the poet in the twentieth-century are central for the research as it discusses Yeats' and Charents' in the context of Modernist mentality. The historical period is examined through the subjective history of the two poets. The uniqueness of Yeatsian and Charentsian usages of myths and legends by deconstruction, the relationship of past and contemporary, and mythologization of present is observed with the help of the examples of poems.

## Introduction

Literature can be easily considered the nearest standing communicative medium to myths and legends. The ancient story-creators collectively formed the phenomenon of an "author" with their strong beliefs and acceptance of the undeniability of the created truth. Literature, on the other hand, is more recognizing of a narrative's seeming delusions and does not undermine their potential in story-telling. Writers, both ancient and modern, though conscious of their stories' imaginative qualities, never really restrain from maintaining myth-creating impulses.

Myths and legends have very mutable definition and explanation varying from different periods in history and from scientific spheres. They are considered to be the verbal expression of rituals of the primitives, they were qualified as fictitious narratives attached to religious and spiritual practices, and also the symbolic and metaphoric interpretation of the world.

The dividing line between a myth and a legend is, also, quite ambiguous. The inclination and a way of creating the story are similar if not the same. The difference is the scale of inclusiveness. Myths may deal with more universal subjects or cover the topic more universally being part of foundational, ethical stories of religions which were and/or currently are the most prominent and widespread. Legends, on the contrary, are mostly based on national themes, thus touch narrower subjects or present the broader topics tightly related to the local circumstances.

The attitudes towards the mythology modified depending on the mindset of each era. In any phase of history, whether it was a passionate belief or deep scepticism towards the verity and meaning of myths, it preserved the existence of the mythic stories. After the rational scope of the Enlightenment and sentimental counterbalance of Romanticism,

the twentieth-century literature adopted very different, meanwhile continuous synthesis of the previous centuries' views on mythology.

One of the most distinctive features of modernist writers is their conscious usage of mythical themes. These can be widely found in Irish poet William Butler Yeats's and Armenian poet Yeghishe Charents's literary works. Having different historical and political contexts, the two poets share conceptions on mythology typical to the twentieth century. There are various studies on the Yeatsian and Charentsian application of mythology separately, and also comparative analysis which, in Yeats's case is limited to English and American, in Charents's case to Soviet literature. This research intends to free the poets' literary works from those classifications and discuss them on the broader context taking into account the historical circumstances crucial to the themes of the poetry produced.

## Literature Review

The observations around the phenomenon of mythology are one of the central subjects for theology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and literary criticism. For understanding the linkage between the literature and myths and answering questions such as is the literature continuation or result of myth-making mind, how and why does literature circulate the ancient myths etc., the synthesis of fields mentioned above are necessary. For a comparative analysis of William Butler Yeats's and Yeghishe Charents's poems, it is essential to explore those question and then project it to the specific time and geographical space.

Friedrich Schelling refers to the philosophy of mythology stating that he intends to explore the essence of mythology and no to do historical investigations, thus concentrate on factual aspect (2007, p 8). The core idea Schelling puts forward is that myths can be considered erroneous but contain truth in them.

Schelling, regarding poetic viewpoint of explaining the impulses for myth creation, does not concur that the reason of generation of mythical stories was "only in order to satisfy a [...] poetic drive for invention" (2007, p. 13). And for endorsing his view of some part of the truth, he points that "All poesy requires some sort of basis independent of it, a ground from which it springs forth" (Schelling, 2007, p. 13). Thus, undoubtedly that there is some truth in mythical stories, but the application of it is not intentional.

On the contrary to poetic viewpoint, the philosophical accepts that "that truth was at least originally meant in it" (Schelling, 2007, p. 23). But Schelling suggests that, "mythology says or seems to say something different than is meant" (2007, p. 23) and that the interpretations stay in the level of allegory. The emphasis for differentiating the poetic and philosophical views on the mythology is the line of accidental and intended application of the truth. However, Schelling is suspicious about the absolute bypassing of

accidentality as he states that “the philosophical the poetic is now rather that which is more or less artificial, and thus simply accidental in another way” (2007, p 37).

Schelling briefly refers to the linkage of language and mythology to also show that the essence and attempts of explaining the mythology are more than the mentioned two viewpoints. The language is considered to be more than a conscious product of mind. Schelling does not suggest that mythology emerged as a result of language. But he stated that “language itself is only faded mythology; what mythology still preserves in living and concrete differences is preserved in language only in abstract and formal differences” (Schelling, 2007, p. 40).

Ernst Cassirer’s theory on symbolism is one of the most important philosophical perspectives of the twentieth century for interpreting the mythology. He states that the concern of the observations is not the content of the myths rather “mythical imagination and religious thought” (Cassirer, 2008, p. 113). The author emphasizes the role of symbolization as a base of the rite, myth, language, and religion. Cassirer opposes to the beliefs that symbols distort the reality. Instead, he supports the idea of perception of reality by narrowing and giving form to it, thus transferring into symbols.

Cassirer sees myth, art, language, and science as symbols stressing that they “are not imitations, but organs of reality since it is solely by their agency that anything real becomes an object for intellectual apprehension, and as such is made visible to us” (1953, p 8). The explorations about a tight link between the language and the myth are fundamental to Cassirer’s thoughts. He confirms that language is metaphorical in its essence (2008, p.168). Cassirer recognizes that “intellectual link between language and myth is metaphor” but does not favor the Mullerian view that mythology appeared as a result of ambiguity and “paronymia” of words (1953, p. 4).

The myths are not unorganized ideas but depend on a way of perception. Cassirer acknowledges that the ancient myths influence literature and especially poetic mind. He

agrees with Frederick Prescott that poetry myth-creating mentality still to be the ground of poetry. But they are not the same. For distinguishing their opposing sides, Cassirer points Immanuel Kant's observation that "aesthetic contemplation is "entirely indifferent -to the existence or nonexistence of its object"" (2008, 117). On the contrary, a myth cannot tolerate the absence of belief as it will erode the basis of the story.

Carl Gustav Jung brings an entirely new theoretical perspective towards the examination of mythology. He coined the term "archetypes" which is equivalent to "motifs" and "primordial images" (Jung and Kerényi, 1989, p.72). The research is based on finding and interpreting the common and founded archetypes that are the foundation and preserved parts of myths. Jung asserts that " [...] archetypes are not determined as regards their content, but only as regards their forms and then only to a very limited degree" (Jung, 2003, p. 12).

When it comes to the content of archetypes, Jung affirms that they are "manifestations of processes in the collective unconscious" (1989, p.75). In the Jungian approach, the creation and hidden preservation of mythological thinking are rooted only in the collective unconscious that becomes a part and influences personal unconscious. Jung introduces to various archetypes, such as Child, Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster, etc. that have the specific interpretation as a part of the collective unconscious and are very commonly expressed in myths. The suggested interpretations by Jung are applied in literary works to uncover the hidden layers of a plot, characters, symbols, and events as "An archetypal content expresses itself, first and foremost, in metaphors" (1989, p.76).

Joseph Campbell analyzes the content and function of the myths coming to the same opinion as Jung that "The primitive mentality does not invent myths, it experiences them," (1989, p. 73), and sees it as a way of "experiencing life" (1991, p. 5).

Campbell also favors Jung's theories on collective unconscious and widely uses it in his research. As a thing to experience, Campbell viewed mythologies (or rituals as it is

considered to be the prototype) serving the function of integrating and forming relations between an individual, a society (tribes), and nature. This is the base for a classification of the two types of mythologies; nature oriented and socially oriented. The Biblical text, for instance, belongs to the second type. Campbell defined four functions of the myths which are mystical, cosmological, sociological, and pedagogical. His observations lead him to conclude that mythology has the idea of duality in its base such as the concepts of good and evil, heaven and hell etc.

Campbell considers myths and dreams identical in respect of their inclination “to find expression in symbolic forms” (1991, p. 32). The human beings’ experiences are not comprehensible as they are not interpreted. So myths serve the function of interpreting the reality (experience). Campbell sees mythology as the underpinning of the inspiration for art and poetry. Nowadays, those two are not only affected by the mythologies but are also the key to its preservation. Campbell states that “[...] unless the symbols, the metaphors are kept alive by constant recreation through the arts, the life just slips away from them” (1991, p. 59).

The essential characteristics of myths, Campbell believes, is metaphorical thinking. He views poets as the people who maintain it by speaking in “metaphorical language” (Campbell, 1991, p. 59).

In their co-written work, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, discuss literary theory, history, research, and many other important aspects combined with a work of literature. They define a symbol “as an object which refers to another object but which demands attention also in its own right, as a presentation” (Wellek and Warren, 1949, p. 193). Wellek and Warren present two types of interpretations of symbolism. The first is “reducing religion and poetry to sensuous images ritualistically arranged or evacuating the presented "signs" or "images" in behalf of the transcendental realities, moral or philosophical, which lie beyond them” (Wellek and Warren, 1949, p. 193). While the

second option is “a deliberate mental translation of concepts into illustrative, pedagogic, sensuous terms” (Wellek and Warren, 1949, p. 193).

Wellek and Warren discern the difference between the image and the symbol based on its persistence. The image can be turned to a symbol or “even become part of a symbolic (or mythic) system” due to its recurrence “both as a presentation and representation” (Wellek and Warren, 1949, 194). Wellek and Warren are cautious about private symbolism. They point that even Yeats and Blake as the poets known for their preference of creating and using internal symbols did not succeed in escaping from the traditional symbolism.

Michael Bell examines the peculiarities of usage of myths in the twentieth-century literature through the specific works of different poets and writers. The word mythopoeia is pervasive in the text, as the central question is the process and metaphysics of usage of myth, rather than the concern what myth is (Bell, 1997, p. 2).

Bell emphasizes that it is important to take into consideration the self-consciousness of modernist writers while analyzing their works. The book covers this feature in the context of the usage of mythology and how it becomes the tool for influencing and justifying political and national issues. The other theme typical to literary works of the modernist era is the sharpened sense of individuality, and meanwhile, the collective function that mythologies play.

All of these categories are applied in Bell’s observations on William Butler Yeats. He examines the two layers of poetry, “precision and mystery” (Bell, 1997, p. 43) with its linkage to Yeats’s references to myths and legends. The other fundamental point that Bell wants to show with the analysis of poems is the modification of Yeats’s understanding of myths from local and political meaning to universal level. Bell argues that they are subtle differences in Yeatsian perception and application of myth, belief, and dream.

Siranush Dvovyan analyzes direct and indirect usages of myths and legends in Yeghishe Charents's poems on the bases of the chronological order of the poet's creative phases and in terms of Charents's attitude towards myths and legends. Dvovyan observes the application of these formulas taking into account Charents's message of reading the poems in "internal chronological order," (Grigoryan, 2017, p. 291) thus to capture the interaction between the poems written in different time.

In the Romantic stage of Charents's poetry, Dvovyan sees the late Romantic perception of the contradistinction of a poem to reality. This leads Charents to view the poetry as an alternative to everyday life (Grigoryan, 2017, p. 292). In this context, death is embodied as a legend next to which stand quite positive adjectives. Dvovyan stresses that in Charents's poems death is not opposed to life as much as the dream and real life are in contrast (Grigoryan, 2017, p. 294). The illusionistic aspect of death makes it desirable for Charents like the legends.

The negative view of myths in the sense of falsehood was also present in Charents's Romantic period of writing. Using the poems referring to the myths of "Vahagn" and "*Ara Geghetsik (the Beautiful) and Shamiram*", Dvovyan reveals the enchanting aspect of "the foreign" for Charents. The poet is doubtful towards the national mythic characters while the foreign ones are presented as authentic.

Charents enters the classical period after overcoming the Romanticism and adopting the view that poetry should have a practical significance for serving the class struggle. In the series of sonnets *Dauphin of Nairi*, Charents draws parallels between the Soviet reality and Armenian legend *Ara Geghetsik (the Beautiful) and Shamiram*. Dvovyan mentions that Charents sees the death (or supposed assassination) of Aghasi Khanjyan as the repetition of *Ara Geghetsik's (the Beautiful)* fate. Even though the two "heroes" are identified as the same, Dvovyan's textual analysis of the sonnets reveal subtle differences of Charents's perception of their death. The theme of "native" and "foreign,"

according to Dvoyan, is the principal subtext in which the similarities between Ara Geghetsik (the Beautiful) and Khanjyan are presented. The analysis shows that while in the case of *Ara Geghetsik (the Beautiful) and Shamiram* the dualization between the “native” and the “foreign” is visible, in Khanjyan’s case it is indirect and refers to his political convictions and activities. Dvoyan concludes that the plot of the legend and Charents’s reality is the duplication of the formula of being “captivated by the foreign and captured by the native but acting for the sake of national” (Grigoryan, 2017, p. 309). Satenik Avetisyan also does the textual analysis of the sonnet series of Dauphin of Nairi to reveal Charents’s understanding of myth, history, and modernity (Grigoryan, 2017, p. 205). Avetisyan applies the wider scope for deciphering the repetition of the scenario of the death of the Armenian kings and other historical figures as a deceived but also sacrificed characters for their fatherland.

Avetisyan asserts that the most essential similarity underlying in Ara Geghetsik (the Beautiful) legend and the real events of Khanjyan is the contrast of homeland and foreign land. Avetisyan refers to early usages of the legend in Charents’s poetry concluding that after the death or assassination of Khanjyan the depth of the interpretation of the national myth changes and is perceived as a metaphor hiding the historical truth (Grigoryan, 2017, p. 214).

The comprehensive research about mythologies and literature gives a broader frame for linking those two and then thoroughly observing the ways of application of myths and legends in William Butler Yeats’s and Yeghishe Charents’s poetry. Interestingly, almost none of them touches to the definition of what is a myth. In addition, there is no discussion if the writers using myths and legends repeat and transmit the existing stories or become the continuators and creators of the mythology.

## **Research Questions**

The central research question on which the sub-questions and new directions of analysis will underlie is how Yeghishe Charets and William Butler Yeats use myths and legends in their poetry. The research aims to find out the similarities, as well as differences of both poets' application of myths and legends, considering the impact of the historical and political situation on their way of interpretation. The Modernist worldview and poet's role in that scope will also be examined. Myths and more precisely national legends are mostly preserved by the glorification of the heroes and stories, especially among the nations who sharply need self-definition. By observing Yeats's and Charent's distinguished representation of myths, I will try to find the answer to the question how poets' new and fluctuating perceptions on nation changed their appreciation of myths and legends.

## **Methodology**

The research does not pose a question what is myth and legend or what is more accurate from existing theories. Instead, the comparative analysis of Charent's and Yeats's works is aimed to find out their attitudes towards the myths and legends taking into account their historical, political, and social background. The study will observe to which category Yeats' and Charent's thoughts and representation of myths and legends correspond, again, not having an intention to examine the authenticity of their interpretation.

The study has an objective to reveal the patterns in portraying and interpreting national and universal mythologies. The differences will provide an understanding of the factors affecting Yeats's and Charent's views of myths and legends.

For fulfilling the preliminary purpose of the research, direct and implicit usages of myths and legends in the poems will be examined. The selected poems of both poets, are classified based on creative phases and thematic generality.

The sources, used as a base for defining or describing the phenomenon and concepts such as myths, legends, metaphors, symbols, nationalism, colonialism are from various spheres including literary criticism, psychology, philosophy, political science, anthropology, history, and theology. The views and opinions of scientist do not necessarily come into line with each other giving wider space for analyzing to which category or categories Yeats's and Charents representation of myths and legends correspond. Besides the accordance, to understand the poets' interpretation, it is necessary to notice what is omitted from the major theories on mythology, nationalism, and related concepts.

One of the theories applied in the research is be archetypal criticism. This study is not concerned in discovering the archetypes used in Charents's and Yeats's poems. However, the idea of sameness of the world perception even expressed with distinct symbols or plots will be central for comparing the two poet's application of myths and legends. Also, the high emphasize of archetypal criticism on symbols, images, and metaphors are quite significant for drawing parallels between the poems.

Yeats's and Charents's literary works are influenced by political and social situation and even served as a tool for implementing the poets' political convictions. To observe the two-sided impact of the certain historical period and written poems, the theory of New Historicism is applied. During the lifetime of Charents and Yeats, the reality in Armenia and Ireland changed quite quickly bringing new ideological waves. Thus, the beliefs about present and the future and how they modify the perception about the past requires analysis for having the complete picture for the comparison.

The Interest scope of The New Historicism is not a factual information but the prevailing ideas and interpretations in certain time. The criticism is used to reveal if Charents and Yeats adhere to or vice versa disagree with dominant frames of minds. As writers, they were not only affected by the leading ideologies but created the mood and opinions with their literary works.

Within the New Historicism, the Postcolonial criticism is applied in the research. Both Ireland and Armenia were colonialized states and struggled for independence in which the poets took both passive and active participation. Living as a colonialized country, Charents and Yeats were forced and also by their will prioritized or more precisely, integrated the dominant countries' culture with theirs'. The theory will lead to finding out and comparing the personal and collective presentation of shaped identity as a colonialized nation. The analysis will be made about how the colonization added new layers to their perception of the image of a nation. In this context, what new meanings and values myths and legends gained in Charentsian and Yeatsian poetry.

## Section 1

### Mythology Under the Attack of Reason

Irrevocably losing the mythopoeic mode of thinking, the rational man unearthed the ways of relating the myths. The very discovery of the manner of communication, however, confronts with the essence of myths as its only possible way remains rational contemplation.

Ernst Cassirer comments on the tension between reason and myths saying that "...the character of intellectual unity is directly hostile to its spirit" (1953, p.32). But myth and (rational) explanation should coercively exist in a truce as it seems to be the mere form of correlation between them.

Parallel to the growth of consciousness and its peak - the Enlightenment, the mythological story-creating mentality decreases. Jungian observations suggest that in the ancient time, myths were not invented rather experienced (Jung and Kerenyi, 1989, p. 73). The world that loosened spontaneity and defined boundaries between thought and reality is therefore deprived of the mythopoeic thinking. But the myth-making mind did not completely cease the connection but intensely followed subsequent eras. It hints about its age-old existence through the invented and fictional stories that come up/out with the general name - literature.

At the advent of the twentieth-century, the anthropological studies and literary criticism made the residues of mythopoeic thought visible. The hermeneutics of myth criticism was formed seeking the genealogical relations between mythology and literature. Myth is a mediator between ritual and fiction according to James Frazer's theory. When ritual fixes as a story, it turns into myth. So, the latter is a linguistic and pictorial expression of rituals (Turisheva, 2017).

To the evolutions chain from ritual into literature, Carl Jung added another circle locating in-between myth and fiction. Myth shifts the archetypes to the collective unconscious from which they penetrate to literary work. Though in comparison to prehistorical stage the man gradually became aware of his creation and was able to attribute meaning to it, the mythical foundation continued to operate through unconscious as a base for any type of fiction. This idea progressed quickly and in the middle of the twentieth century forced to claim "the death of the author" as soon as "writing begins" (Barthes, 1978, p.142). The narration that is an end in itself is fed from already existing writings and depleted language, thinks Roland Barthes, and thus is limited to mimicry and repetition. Barthes claims the annihilation of the originality of the author stating that the phenomenon of an author is a recent creation (sharpened by capitalistic mentality) (1978). That is why the removal of the author will endow the written work with the new space of interpretation placing the reader who is the carrier of cultural codes in it.

The maturation of the idea did not occur smoothly. At the time of the Enlightenment, when the tribute was given to scientific judgement, the myth had negative connotations being perceived as an irrational, fictitious story. Only in the late of the nineteenth-century, the legends ceased to be viewed by the lens which had a function of differentiating truth from the falsehood. A new conception started to circulate; "the truth" is that myths are an integral part of the culture of humanity (and not the counterpole of history, philosophy, and other sciences).

It is impossible to completely disconnect mythological past from relatively demythologized present of humanity as contemporary man conserved language – the tool for the narration of myths. In fact, one of the theories proposing the linkage between language and myth belongs to Max Muller. Though quite debatable, the philologist states that myth is the result of the ambiguity of language (Cassirer, 1953, p. 3-4). The

verification of the theory is vulnerable, but the interdependence of language and myth is undoubtable. The verbal manifestations are metaphoric and symbolic language, found in everyday speech, to a greater extent in fiction, and in the highest degree in poetry.

The language striving to establish relations with reality in order to explain it includes the threat of forming other dimensions of reality. Since human beings no longer deal with the reality directly (language is the example of distancing) the metaphors and symbols endure. The Greek meaning of "symbol" that is "...to throw together, to compare, suggests that the idea of an analogy between sign and signified was originally present" (Wellek and Warren, 1949, p.193). Poetry, considered medium that "imprisoned" mythopoeic mentality most of all, in Barthes' semiological analysis is turned against myth's aim. Myth strives for "ultra-signification" while the ideal for the modernist poetry "... would be to reach not the meaning of words, but the meaning of things themselves" (Barthes, 1991, p. 132). But these are only the intentions of the myth and poetry and not the way they work. Thus, poets' envy towards the unity of mythic mentality directs them to it, irrespective of myth's ambitions.

In the world, where the symbiotic relationships between nature and man, thought and experience are replaced by fragmentation and categorization, the poetry as the primary representative of the mythopoeic mentality does not refuse to continue living. Poems do not fade away as mentality remains poetic.

### **The Seekers' Efforts; Creation of Conscious Mythology**

When the maintained poetic mindset meets with the opportunity of actualization in a tiny proportion, the rupture with the harmonious life enlarges. The question whether the symptoms of poetic mind should be expressed or the reality is a construction based human being's needs where the allocation of the fulfilment of mythical mind is dimmed, can be put in question. The nineteenth-century German intellectuals most of all, saw the necessity of restoration of myths. The acceptance of exhaustion of traditional narratives and its discrepancy to current mind states did not despair them. The solution was suggested to be found in the creation of a "new mythology" (Bell, 1997, p. 20).

Close to the mythopoeic interpretation of life stand poets. Obviously, they are in the front line who speak in metaphorical language and form expression by symbolic forms. In a search for unity between the world and a man, poetry does not resist, as myths tend to echo direct experience while poets deal with the meaning. This does not snatch the meaning from myths; rather it almost entirely depends on the unconscious. The poetry operates in a reverse direction. The hidden unconscious schemas sieve from poets' aware attitude towards reality. Thus, it becomes the interpretation of the unconsciousness of the conscious.

Though poets are endowed with living (or writing) in mythopoeic thinking, it is unanswered if poets can take the responsibility of recreating myths. The early period of Modernism had its own way of creating "new mythology." It simply deconstructs, sometimes even destroys the existing myth stories. Living on different sides of the word, with unrelated political and cultural realities straightforwardly, both Yeghishe Charents and William Butler Yeats adopted and contributed to the Modernist mechanism of treatment to myths and legends.

Rising from the rational understanding and reason, the pivotal characteristic of modernist perception is the realization of "... one's own world view *as* a world view" (Bell, 1997, p. 11). Modernism, first and foremost requires the recognition of the limits of the reality by the world view, and not necessarily a comprehension of that very viewpoint. The alertness to the existence of the world view, and the capacity of understanding it, results in the mutation of a myth; the mythology is replaced by the ideology.

Accordingly, the task of the poet becomes a formation of the mythology that will address and serve to ideologies (Stepanyan, 2009). From this point, poets turn into active seekers to bridge those two orders of thinking. They stubbornly search for means to shape the mythology of reason.

Returning to the sorrowful question of mismatch between the essence of mythology and the involvement of the reason to explain it, Frederick Prescott states that "... myth makers have no meaning in mind, but only a story..." (1927, p. 102). Since, contemporary man does not acquire the tools for deciphering the nature of myths, both Yeats and Charents rely on the sole approach; the historical.

The preference and call of the Irish and Armenian poets to be read in the chronological order, signals the similarity to historical time in the sense of linear structure. Despite the sequential order, in the inner organizations of poems, the past loses its rigidity when observed from different points that relative to that is present or future. Yeats and Charents re-illustrate time and space. They break the non-linearity locating the ancient figures in the present or thinking of present through the ancient heroes and events. In the writings of Charents and Yeats, legends serve as a linkage between past and present. They perceive the past from the current standpoint and re-realize the "now"

through the past. These examinations awake the conceptions about the fate of the nation, that is basically the fusion of the past and future.

The poets' observations of temporal crater, leads them questioning the accepted "truth" that is part of their identity. The response to the acknowledgements of "falsehoods" of national history, does not end by distancing from that episode of history or not identifying with the mentality with which both of the poets have conflict. On the contrary to this, they undeniably see themselves as a part of the whole. The aspirations of Yeats and Charents to shift from local to universal history, are the confirmation of their will to find unity.

## **The Role of the Poet in the (Absent) State**

If the attribution of conservation and construction of conscious mythology (or mythology for consciousness) to the poet is a relatively recent phenomenon, the function of literature and poet next to the other intellectuals have been questioned for centuries.

Generally, the purpose and influence of literature is quite controversial. Next to the philosophy and history what is the power of literature that prevents its wreck? As already discussed, is it just a remnant of the mythology where the religious part is removed? Or it brings the other dimension of cognition where other sciences did not reach? None of the numerous debates on poetry's functionality and its necessity, the inclusion of ideology and its quality, were unequivocally agreed. However, the factor of the state or the absence of it is eager to ascribe a function or complain from the role the poets play, confirming that it has a capacity and tools for influence.

Right after the Sovietization of Armenia Charents witnessed the reality where poems became one of the prime methods for agitation. The value of poetry was determined by its usefulness and impact on masses rather than based on its literary quality. The unprecedented importance and publishing of poems in the press, had its roots in Bolsheviks' violation of the sequence of Marxian theory. According to Karl Marx, the political revolution is the result of a mature social revolution (Tucker, 1969). In other words, the political revolution is the complete form of the social revolution that proclaims the birth of a new system. The reversal of the succession leads the Soviet government to force society to change the mentality after the political revolution, to adjust to the new political and social reality. Thus, the victorious socialism gains the political power but faces to the ludicrous issue; there was no proletariat (mentality of the class). Consequently, the film, poster, and poem as mediums having the potential of quick impact were chosen as the means for the formation of class mentality.

Marx associated the conception of freedom with the liberation of an individual's creativity, considering the limitations of activities against human nature. While the Marxist theory qualifies as injustice the deprivation of individual's real functionality because of mastering in narrow means, Plato's *Republic* rejects a "double" or "manifold" man, "...since each man does one thing" (1991, p. 76). In the USSR, the role of the poet does not merely lay on the elimination of proficiency in one thing through giving the freedom of creativity. As Plato's Republic is built due to a need, poets do not consider to be the satisfiers of the prior needs. They appear only in the stage of prosperity. Oppositely, in the Soviet Republics, the poets were the immediate constructors of the socialist state, taking into account that the Union had a pressing need to abolish illiteracy and raise the awareness of the victory of socialism among people. The poets (either professionals and proletarians) had to discover and even "teach" the present. Being out of Plato's categorization, poets were considered to be imitators, that had a negative connotation as identified with an incomplete cognition. The position of the poet in the USSR was entirely different. The situation in the Soviet Union made an imperative to have "innocent spontaneity" between "literary work and reality" (Beledian, 2009, p.327) that Charents advocated in the *Declaration of Three* with two other futurist poets.

The conditions where the boundaries perish, the poet takes a duty of "filling" the masses by ideology, reflect and reproduce their everyday life to drive the people to cognition. Next to the defacement, extinction of personality, and finally death of the author, the revolution and struggle for the national independence, gave birth to "literary personality" (Boym, 1991, p.22). Though Yury Tynyanov defined the concept for the Soviet reality, in the case of Yeats' it is also valid to talk how "...some fact of the poet's personal life can turn into literary facts and vice versa" (Boym, 1991, p.22).

The existence in the age-old absence of the statehood, provokes the specific sensitivity, stereotyped image and attitude towards the "enemy." In the major part of Charents' life and literary path, the Bolshevik revolution concentrated the poet's interest in struggling for social model. In this context, the role of the "enemy" transmits to the bourgeoisie. Thorough examination of society's social functioning then is attached to the Armenian history and nation generating Charents' frustrations. Bringing closer the two geographical places by comparison, Ireland's interest was more political rather than social. The role of the "classic enemy" belonged to Britain. However, both poets avoided traditional depiction of the enemy concentrating the vector of "blame" and "salvation" on their own nation instead of external factors.

Yeats' devoted involvement in the Irish Literary Revival (also called the Celtic Twilight) already has bestowed him with a mission. Fearless from diverting the prevailing viewpoints, Yeats advocated cultural nationalism enriched with his visions. The poet prefers to left out the politics, focusing on the reconstruction of culture. The possibility of staying in the frames of culture exclusively, is another question to pose, taking into account that Yeats later became directly involved in politics. What Yeats had in mind was restoration and at the same time creation of the national history that would affect every Irishman becoming the weapon of gaining independence in a place of futile violent fighting. The multiplicity of political and religious (in its foundation also political) beliefs in Ireland of Yeats' time, also pushed him to increase the distance of culture and politics, "Because the movement must accommodate everyone," thus, "the societies have to "decentralize" to consolidate all the different aspects of the nation" (Feys, 2010, p.29). This was a formula of Yeats' ideal; the "Unity of Being" that would pave the way for the "Culture of Being" (p.49).

In the path of borrowing from Irish legends to build a modern understanding of the past, Yeats confronted with the most painful obstacle; the faded Gaelic language. The initiation of redesigning the culture revealed that there was a loss of the leading part of it. Here the ideological clash between Yeats and some other poets and intellectuals occurred. Yeats raised a question, "Can we not build up a national tradition, a national literature, which shall be none the less Irish in spirit from being English in language?" (Platt, 1999, p.128). This risky doubt marks the redefinition of Irish identity; the division between English as the language of colonizer and English as an integrated part of the Irish culture. Additionally, the actualization of Yeats' program required the comprehensibility for the various layers of society. Writing in Gaelic would definitely prevent the uneducated and lower class of Ireland from understanding. The arduous dilemma for Yeats was to discard one major component of the culture for the sake of the others that were more plausible to revitalize.

In the two worlds, the literature occupied a central role. Moreover, it turned into a tool. Both Yeats and Charents had problems and what they did is to follow and find the way of solution. The poets themselves turned into cultural figures, unlike the European new tendency that does not credit the author with a mission. As reflectors and creators of the modernist attitude toward myths and legends, and poets' role for the nation and state, Yeats and Charents had privileged capacity to stay in the present while thinking globally inside of national and universal history.

## Section 2

### Myth In-Between Art – Life – Dream

Within the construction of the legends, Yeats and Charents commented and continuously fought with the conception of myth. Both of them have very much alike characteristic of thought that enriches literary and intellectual horizon but bifurcates the individual; this similarity is held in thinking by opposites.

The understanding of the myths is also squeezed between the contradictions. The multiple edges of fluctuating viewpoints sometimes identify legends with the stories that are keys for understanding the reality. But sometimes the created aspect of the myths forced these poets, to see them as an enemy against what is real.

In the first stages of Yeats' writing, the romantic mode of thinking is incorporated in the way of stressed separation between dream and life. "For everything that's lovely is / But a brief, dreamy, kind delight" (Yeats, 1951, p.77). In most of the cases, the world of dreams is mixed with legends. While in a pleasing depiction the "dreams gather" (p.63), the poet harmonious to the surrounding has "dream-awakened eyes" (p. 63), a sudden change in "real" life - the clash of armies, spoils the dream-world. In the earlier writings of Yeats, the dream seems to be more desirable than his current time, as it represented Irish identity more than can be found in everyday life.

In *The Rose*, though it is Yeats' second collection, corresponding to the period when his belief was abundant towards the authenticity of the dreams, he deals with the concepts of time and truth that makes to conclude desperately, "In truth's consuming ecstasy, / No place for love and dream at all" (p. 50). The contemplations continue by taking the author to the point where he already discusses the mythologies he reconstructed. *A Coat* is Yeats' self – reflection and questioning as he expresses his

attitude towards the earlier writings. Yeats' states that he made his song a coat "out of old mythologies" (p.125). The myth is the raw material out of which Yeats cloths the Irish identity and history. However, the unusual lines follow saying, "...there's more enterprise / In walking naked" (p. 125). The nakedness is the direct, immediate relationship to the world where the naked one does not recognize the division between the surroundings and his/her Self. In this poem, the denial of cloth made of mythologies, might refer to the inclination to establish a connection with the present without any interpretative or more acutely fictional subject.

The progression of thought showing the transition between Yeatsian perceptions of dream and art as a "solution" to the reality is reflected in *Lapis Lazuli*. In this poem "...art rather than dream provides the alternative possibility" (Bell, 1997, p. 52). If a dream is a contradiction to actual life, the art seems to be presented as part of life. The irreconcilability to the violence and irrationality of history ("Old civilizations put to sword" (Yeats, 1951, p. 292)) is suggested to overcome by accepting the aesthetic worldview.

The degree of the poets' sensitiveness to the truth modified their perceptions of boundaries between the art, life, and dream - in this context, myths. Yeats' admiration of Nietzschean philosophy reinforced his initial treatment to the ambiguous lines between life and fiction. For him "an experiment in living" was equal to "an experiment in writing" (Boym, 1991, p.11). Thus, Yeats' mode of perceiving reality is mostly emotional or, as he suggested, aesthetic. His linkage between the dream and the mythical world let the poet use legends without identifying the "real" Irish identity with "mythical," as the ambiguity of the boundaries does not require the distinctions. However, there are times Yeats' mind is full of doubt. In this stages, he utilizes sources of creativity more from

factual events without losing his emotional approach, thus preserving the layers of mythical thinking (mythologizing).

Charents' understanding of dream, myth, and life is not very different from the Yeatsian model. The poetry shows that he also had a dual attitude towards myths. Dvovyan differentiates Charents's understanding of negative and positive senses of legends. In the positive point of view, myths and legends appear as fiction - stories that are composed. In this case also having the notion of dream it tremendously confronts the reality, considered bright and blissful.

The negative aspect is expressed in presenting it as a falsehood that “transformed the truth and conquered its place” (Grigoryan, 2017, p. 290). Compared to Yeats, Charents not only is suspicious towards myth as a phenomenon but projects this to certain legends. The example from his early poetry is *Vahagn* where Charents calling the pagan God of fire, courage, and victory, asks him if he was a myth sang by the old troubadours (1986, p. 317).

Charents and Yeats not only use national myths, but they likewise make their homeland mythologized. During the earlier period of writing, both poets viewed the country as a woman. The most vivid example in Charents' erotic mythologization is *Blue-Eyed Homeland*, where Armenia is referred to as a lover (Voskanayan, 2017, p. 20). The desire for their unity by marriage is proposed in the poem. Moreover, Charents in the role of husband imagines the ceremony, predicting the whispers about experienced and ancient legends (1986, p. 295). Yeats has numerous and not fully explainable collections on portraying Ireland as a woman figure. The first reason is rooted in the Irish tradition. The special poetic genre, Aisling, developed to distinguish the depiction of Ireland as a woman. *The Ballad of Moll Magee* is the projection of the story where Ireland is presented as an old woman. In *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* it plays the role of mother. When it

comes to younger and romantic depiction, there is a fusion with Yeats' lover who he never reached – Maud Gonne. *The Rose*, for instance, has various layers of traditional and subjective mythologization. First of all, its Yeats awareness about rose's function as a mandala and symbol for Ireland (Meihuizen, 1992). The second aspect is a mix of his personal feelings towards Gonne. Like Charents, the poems influenced by the romantic feelings projected to the homeland are subject for erotic mythologization.

Returning to Charentsian attitude to life, myth, and art, the phase when he dealt with identicalness of his biography and poetry was during the first years of Sovietization of Armenia. As Boym characterized, there was "...almost an interchangeability of the words "poetic" and "revolutionary" (p. 187). The closeness of daily life and fiction, made Charents to refashion his approaches to the function of poetry and demand lively speech in literature. The role of the art is "putting this or that classes' emotional attitude to the world in some literary forms" (Charents, 1967, p. 20). Charents' Soviet reality rejected the mentality of the (previous) fictional constructions. He became one of the initiators of creating new literature corresponding to proletariat ideology, a decade later criticized the government for blending and masking the quality of literature under the social and political issues.

Leaving behind his romantic stage, Charents formed groups (*Declaration of the Tree* (1922), *Standard* (1924)) turning to futurism. The refusal from the programs later resulted in debates between the two Armenian intellectuals (Marc Nichanian and Ashot Voskanyan) whether this act was self-overcoming or self-repudiation. Irrespective of what is an accurate interpretation, the fact is that Charents in this phase does not have direct usages of the mythologies. When everyday routine stands too near to the literary work, the traditional understanding of mythical stories is gone, but the poet applies mythologization. In *The Big Routine*, the spatial mythologization of Leningrad is applied

(Voskanyan, 2017). Besides, the universalization of the city, the presentation of the state program of social construction and the people that are quite distant from initiating the changes indicates the big gap. In that gap, the mythical characteristics between the daily life and rational model of the Soviet state are revealed.

## Past and Present

### (Myth Inside the History)

Besides, the combination of myth, dream, art, and life at the account for the ambiguity of borders, the synthesis of past in the present through the mythological thinking is typical to these poets. As already discussed, the view of the myths at the period of Modernism mostly has historical perspectives and is unable to comprehend its essence without decoding through known formulas.

After the loss of the mythopoeic thinking, the ideology considers to replace it. Though the initial ideologies and understandings of Charents and Yeats lead them to the exploration of legends, the path of incorporation myths to the literature does not merely end in belief or doubt, acceptance or denial of the stories.

The painful discovery for the Charents that is recorded in *The Book of Path* is the deprivation of Armenians of the past. Having the ancient history that Charents also used in his literary path what lead him to exclude that very heritage? Voskanyan finds the base of the phrase "unpast past," in the absence of the social aspect (2017, p. 100). Though there is history in the sense of past time and events, there is no concept of historical for Armenians. The void of social organization is responsible for the halt of history as the historicalness is related to the ability of making decisions.

The new definition of the past gives an opportunity to get rid of the past for the sake of present more easily. The recognition of unhistoricalness of history, directs the vector to the future. In comparison to Charents, Yeats wants to build a future heavily relying on the past. This is expressed most of all in the environment the poems present. Charents, after becoming Soviet Republic citizen, locates everything in the city. The new approach of life - speed and agitation are revealed in the unusual title – *RadioPoems*.

While the modernization was the dawn for Charents of the new life, Yeats saw the culture of the cities as the feature of the colonizer that destructed the nature, the attractiveness, and magical character of Ireland. That is why, in the scope of portraying Irish identity, the most common location is wood.

The different directions of the vectors are not constant. Charents' inclination to forward preserved for years but he faced to a Stalinist regime that demanded the refusal from national elements and the self-reflection of the nation's path that Charents passionately defended. The poet himself was a prey of repression of Stalin (though had a very indescribable attitude towards the ruler), and witnessed the annihilation of the figures he admired. But the death of the Aghasi Khanjian (First Secretary of the Communist Party of Armenia) made Charents look back to the myth of *Ara the Beautiful and Shamiram* that accompanied him through the whole literary biography. The ballad series, written in 1920, discusses the model of moral victories that in its essence is a loss. The return of the scheme is what Charents was afraid even in the first years of Soviet Armenia. But in the *Dauphin of Nairi*, the sameness Charents observes between the myth and the death of Khnajian, who is likely to be murdered, is unprecedented.

Charents sees Ara as a prototype of the Khanjian. Both "heroes" are split between the foreign and native. The hidden meaning *Ara the Beautiful* carries, is an attempt to free the captured relative through the foreign (Grigoryan, 2017). The lines directed to Ara repeatedly ask "How many times" he can die. The question shows that the most sorrowful thing for Charents was not the degree of pain but the lasting repetition in history. This recurrence, on the one hand, simulates to the fate, on the other hand, contradicts to the modernist mentality and Charents' character as a "builder of a new reality."

Yeats also had a myth that used in several poems and plays. It is Cuchulain. Even though this is a major theme in his literature, for understanding his presentation of

historical event and how he participates in historicizing, *Easter 1916* can serve as an exceptional example. This is unique to Yeats writing, as interacts without any mediator with the real event (excluding the literature as a tool of communicating with outside life). The poem is Yeats' infringement of himself; the commentary on the present without any ready-made myths, allusions working inside the text.

Yeats was in England during the Easter Rising and was not a witness of the events. The resistance awakens the thought and responsibility of returning to the homeland. Yeats "buys a ruined cottage under an old tower at Ballylee" (Feys, 2010, p. 9). After the physical violence in Dublin, the poet feels the need to be physically present in his land.

The distance from the event, the loss of friends, contributed to the Yeats' tendency of adding details that deceive the temporal aspects. "... grey / Eighteenth century houses," (Yeats, 1951, p. 178) moves to the world where the contemporary and the past exist in the same plane. The four names, "MacDonagh and MacBride/And Connolly and Pearse" (p. 179) are somehow mythologized, being recognized as the "heroes" of the uprising.

Yeats' nationalism integrated the mythical heroes of Ireland in his poetry, seeing the death as an act of refusing something that is unrefusable for the sake of country's freedom. While the fight in Easter rising is qualified as "needless death" quite similar to Charents'"unpast past." Did the deaths of the acquainted people show Yeats that the political questions are not worth to human beings psychological and physical devastations? Standing close to the event and people, of course, decreases the heroism. This very modernist statement about needlessness might be the result of Yeats' viewing of the repeated bereavements and its little success. In this context, it is similar to Charents' fear from uninterrupted repetitions of events. Both writers' angst regarding the

predictable future while it is in the past, is related to their nations' mentality. Without seeing the linkage between fate and mindset, none of them would write pursuing the wish to have not even pure poetic, or emotional, but practical impact.

## Conclusion

Poets innumerable times appear in between the pressing sides; one of it claims the functionality of the art, the opposite admits arts inaction. The missing statehood transmits the role of maintenance and contribution of the sense of unity and nation to the writers, as the absence sharpens the demand for identification by storytelling.

Yeats' and Charents' poetic mind, thus, was automatically loaded with function. The most important and typical feature of the two authors is their persistent movement. They defined boundaries such as strictly cultural, then passed (overcame) the line entering to the political sphere. From mysticism to everyday life, from revolutionary routine to classic period were different self-created boundaries the poets passed surmounting themselves.

To second function the early twentieth - century attached to the poets is preservations of the myths and mythopoeic thinking (that was thought to be the prototype of poetic mind). Yeats and Charents combined the two, also figuring out the nations' definition by myths and their current condition.

The self-conscious usage of myths and legends calls into question the notion of truth. The movement is viable for the application of mythologies. The writings of the poets used as past experience to decipher the present. Sometimes myths were considered the opposite pole of the truth. And sometimes the opposition was seen as an advantage using myths to cut the relations with life.

In the majority of cases, myths were not used in a pure form. The deconstruction of myths was expressed in spatial and temporal dislocation. Although heavily reliance on the past or merge of the earlier and later, Charents and Yeats aimed to stay in their present.

This research initially had the intention of finding out if Charnets' and Yeats' attitude towards mythology to what degree has corresponds to the modernist scope. The view was that both poets had differences in conditions but were in the same temporal unit (this condition was the same). Therefore, the research was interested in ascertaining the poet's role in the period of Modernism, observe Yeats and Charents in this context. Following the (subjective) history of these two figures, the outcome is a broad picture. The further research can concentrate on the comparison of the myths, Charents and Yeats applied most frequently (*Ara the Beauty and Shamiram, Cuchulain*). In addition, the temporal and spatial deconstruction of myths and legends can be narrowed down.

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