

Wild swans at coole essay sample



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Yeats presents the theme of change in ' Wild Swans at Coole' as he (as the persona in the poem) watches the swans and contrasts that while everything in his life has changed, the swans remain the same as they always have been. Yeats writes " the nineteenth autumn has come upon me Since I first made my count", to show the reader that nineteen years have passed since Yeats first came to the water and watched the swans. Coole was owned by Yeats' friend Lady Gregory, so was a place Yeats went to reflect. The lake allows the persona to ponder and dwell on his loneliness, as he is still without a partner.

The ' autumn' gives the reader the idea of seasons, and autumn being a particular time in the year important to Yeats. Being a season, it also introduces the idea of cycles of the year: Yeats has shown in other poems like The Second Coming that the passing of time and cycles were significant to him. Nineteen years is a long amount of time, and the poem being published in 1917 shows that in the nineteen years of his life prior to the poem, a lot had happened- the first world war, the civil war and (perhaps the main focus of this poem) many rejected marriage proposals to Maud Gonne. ' Since I first' gives a reminiscent tone as Yeats shows he's looking back on his life.

Yeats making ' his count' shows that he always feels the need to come back to the place and count again. This could be Yeats presenting that while everything changes, Coole is his place that remains constant. By writing ' upon me' and making himself not the subject, but the object pronoun, he perhaps conveys that he feels like he is out of control of this inevitable

change, as it's being done to him and he is passive to the power change has on his life. Form is also used to convey an idea of change.

It's a very regular stanza form, with 5 stanzas of 6 lines. It also has an uneven rhyme scheme that alternates in and out of control. This allows Yeats to show the different stages of life; perhaps the 5 stanzas could be childhood, teenage years, young, middle aged and then old age.

Alternatively, it could be him showing the stages of a relationship (maybe his and Maud Gonne's) and how they progress over time. This could be ironic as while the poem clearly looks at relationships, Yeats is still without a partner and is not actually in a relationship himself to develop.

By it being steady, Yeats suggests that change is not so much a drastic thing, but an inevitable thing that gradually takes over you over time.

Imagery is used within the first stanza of nature and the seasons again.

Autumn is mentioned within the first line (again maybe highlighting importance of that time of the year; Yeats last proposal to Maud Gonne was in the summer of 1916.) ' Autumn beauty' presents the image of the colours gold and brown and green, all mirroring nature. Autumn is a transition season from warmth of summer to coldness of winter.

Yeats could be implying that after the rejection of his marriage proposal, his life is turning cold. By being a season of decay and trees shedding leaves, it allows Yeats to immediately show the idea of change in the poem to be important. However it doesn't necessarily show this to be a bad thing to start with, as ' beauty' would imply Yeats likes the season. ' October twilight'

presents the idea of things at a beginning or an end, as it could either be seen as the time after sunset, or before dawn.

' Mirrors a still sky' presents the idea of clarity and tranquillity, as does ' brimming water. By ending the stanza with ' nine-and-fifty swans', it emphasises that the odd number means one swan must be without a mate. Swans are used as a symbol of purity and love within this poem. Yeats had a particular interest in swans, as he's also used them in other poems like Leda and the Swan. The swans are important in this poem as Yeats uses them as the constant thing within the poem. Yeats could have been drawing parallels to him being the odd swan, as he feels lonely without a partner; at the time of writing this poem his last hopes of marrying Maud Gonne had just been shattered by her rejection.

Yeats writes ' my heart is sore' showing this. The swans taking flight is shown to be a striking occurrence, one that's clearly stayed with Yeats over the years. By describing it as ' clamorous', Yeats makes it sound as if its clumsy, noisy and a struggle, yet he still sees the beauty in it. The swans ' suddenly mount' before the personas finished counting them, which could also be to represent Maud Gonne leaving his life and showing her freedom to leave him. This could be compared to ' The Cat and the Moon', where again Yeats personifies characters in his life and while the Cat has freedom, he (as the moon) does not.

By referring to them as ' wild' swans in the title, again connotes to freedom and highlights swans freedom of flight. Flying away shows ability to move away from ones current situation or surroundings, so by the swans taking

flight Yeats is once again presenting the reader with the recurring idea of change. The tone throughout is also created by use of punctuation. Yeats uses many caesuras and stops to lines to cause the reader to read slower. This enables him to successfully create a mournful tone, representing change. He uses techniques such as alliteration to convey this tone as well.

In the third stanza, ' the bell beat' is harsh alliteration, allowing Yeats to create a sense of bitterness. The third stanza is the first one that Yeats really reflects deeply. ' and now' simply tells the reader that the present, now, is very different to how it was. Yeats shows that he is looking back now in hindsight. Yeats even writes ' All's changed', and repeats the word ' twilight', repeating the idea of beginnings and ends in a cycle of change. Yeats also shows that he's reminiscing as he writes ' trod with a lighter tread. This shows the reader that the swans remind him of his own youth. ' Lighter tread' makes it sound dejected in a way.

Yeats is perhaps in admiration of the swans and their ability to ' paddle in the cold. ' This could be Yeats presenting his reader with the thoughts of the struggle and hardships of a relationship as they change. Yeats creates the idea that he almost envies the swans for being ' unwearied still, lover by lover', and that their ' hearts have not grown cold. ' Yeats shows jealousy towards the ' beautiful creatures' as being animals that mate for life, he wishes to be like them. Hearts have not grown cold' also forms a strong contrast with ' and now my heart is sore', showing the differences between the swans and Yeats.

The last stanza Yeats shows a depressed kind of acceptance. He takes the tone back to the serenity of the first stanza, presenting his readers with 'still water', connoting to be calm. Yeats shows to accept the changes in his life and accepts that the swans will not be there forever, even if they are his symbol of something constant within a constantly changing life. By writing 'when I awake some day To find they have flown away?' , Yeats is admitting to himself that one day he will awake and the swans will be gone.

Posing it as a question to his audience also engages the reader to think, and perhaps is Yeats wishing to create a sympathy for himself as he ends on a note of sadness. In conclusion, Yeats presents the idea of change in his poem through many different ways. He uses the setting and a memory to show his awareness that he is getting old, and that things have changed. He uses imagery of seasons to show this, as well as an in and out of control rhyme scheme. Yeats creates a dejected tone throughout and uses a regular form to allow him to show constant change.