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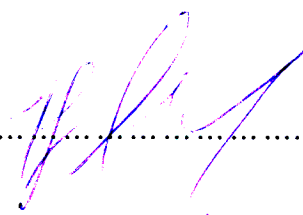
**Student number: 204520323**

**Dissertation title: Yeats and National Identity**

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**Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Discipline of English, Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.**

**I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All references have been acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.**

Signed:  .....

Date: 10/10/07 .....

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**I acknowledge funding from the National Research Foundation of South Africa towards the completion of this degree.**

*To Michael Murphy, Moira Murphy, Jethro Murphy and Julie Murphy, with special thanks to Peter Upfold.*

## ABSTRACT

In this thesis I set out WB Yeats's conception of Irish national identity as a non-essentialist, inclusive, and imaginative construct. I do so against the backdrop of Edward Said's construction of Yeats, within the field of postcolonial theory, as a poet of decolonization who stops short of imagining Ireland's full political liberation from colonial rule. I propound that, on the contrary, Yeats does imagine full liberation in proposing his Doctrine of the Mask as a method for the creation of what, I argue, is an emphatically 'postcolonial' national identity. What this identity entails is elucidated by an examination of key issues of 'nation-ness' explored by various theorists, particularly Benedict Anderson; the historical contextualization of Yeats in the Ireland of his times; and a close reading of particularly Yeats's two major 'occult' works: *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*.

Overall, I make several important contributions to 'postcolonial' Yeats scholarship – a far from exhausted field of study. Firstly, I demonstrate that the incorporation of the modernist Yeats's 'occult' dimension – a dimension disparaged and dismissed by Said – into Said's construction of Yeats as a 'postcolonial' figure serves to bolster rather than undermine this construction. Secondly, I demonstrate that, while Said claims Frantz Fanon goes further than Yeats in imagining full liberation in the colonial context, there are in fact striking parallels between Fanon's narrative of liberation in particularly *The Wretched of the Earth* and Yeats's 'occult' works, particularly *A Vision*. The comparison with Fanon, I show, underlines that Yeats does indeed imagine full liberation, especially at the level of Irish national identity. Thirdly, I demonstrate the link, heretofore unnoted by Yeats critics, between Matthew Arnold's defining of the Irish as racially inferior and Yeats's liberationist discourse in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*. I show that Yeats subversively mobilises Arnold's terms to debunk Arnold and buttress a distinctly Yeatsian conception of Irish national identity.

Lastly, I highlight the 'Yeatsian' complexion of the contemporary South African context, arguing that the consideration of Yeats's conception of Irish national identity may assist South Africans in forging a non-essentialist, inclusive national identity and national unity.

## **CONTENTS**

<b>Chapter One: Yeats and Key Issues of ‘Nation-ness’ and ‘National Identity’ .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter Two: A Tale of Two Yeatses .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Chapter Three: Yeats’s Conception of Irish National Identity .....</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>Chapter Four: Mediations and Implications of Yeats for South Africa .....</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>197</b>

## **Chapter One: Yeats and Key Issues of ‘Nation-ness’ and ‘National Identity’**

Roy Foster has described WB Yeats “as ‘a poet, playwright, political agitator, journalist, theatre-manager, lover, committee-man, who was capable of writing magnificent letters” (*The Economist* 2006:82). Of course, as Foster’s two-volume biography on Yeats attests to in considerable depth, the Nobel Prize-winning Irish writer was a number of other ‘Yeatses’ as well, not least an exponent of the occult. And very much at the heart of all these roles and activities was Yeats’s preoccupation with the Ireland of his lifetime (1865-1939): a country long colonized, and which emerged as what Lloyd calls “one of the earliest postcolonial nations” (1993:7) with the founding of the Irish Free State in 1922. It is the central concern of this thesis that to the list of roles and activities generally associated with Yeats, should be added the largely unrecognized and unexplored notion that he was a ‘postcolonial visionary’. I shall demonstrate that, as Ireland’s (controversially so) national poet, Yeats was a great deal more than a “political agitator” – that he in fact devised and proposed a method for the creation and espousal of a postcolonial national identity in Ireland in the face and wake of colonial oppression; and he speculated that his method might be adopted by other postcolonial nations.

Indeed, Yeats’s ‘postcolonial’ credentials have been largely overlooked by literary critics in the decades since his death; in fact, these were barely even considered until the 1990s, by which time the term ‘postcolonial’ was widely in use in academic discourse. Where these credentials have been somewhat belatedly recognized, they have been only partially explored and explained. In the next chapter, I will seek to contextualize my argument that Yeats should be granted full recognition as a ‘postcolonial’ figure despite aspects of his biography and thinking which on the surface appear to suggest otherwise. In order to bring the fully ‘postcolonial’ Yeats to light, an understanding of how Yeats has been constructed as two seemingly different Yeatses by the theoretical fields of ‘modernism’ (long the dominant critical perspective) and more recently ‘postcolonialism’, must be established. Taking a cue from Yeats’s character Michael Robartes – famed for his ‘double vision’ – I will demonstrate in the next chapter that something of a doubleness of scholarly vision, embracing rather than rigidly dividing several critical perspectives within modernism

and postcolonialism, is required to clear away certain limiting arguments masking the emphatically ‘postcolonial’ Yeats.

Immediately, however, a number of key questions and issues regarding ‘nation-ness’ and ‘national identity’ require foregrounding in order to bring this fully ‘postcolonial’ Yeats to light. Chief among these questions is: What does a ‘postcolonial national identity’ entail? In considering this question, a basic working definition of ‘identity’ is necessary. While ‘identity’ has a wider range of possible meanings and explanations, it will be taken to refer, according to Renault’s definition, to who or “what we are individually, as well as what we aspire to be, what determines or specifies us, as well as how we present our particularities to ourselves, how we refer to ourselves individually, and how we identify ourselves with groups and with the general norm” (Tazi 2004:101). Identity therefore encompasses both individual and collective dimensions, involving what Renault calls “the self-presentation of an individual or a group’s specificity, and the presentation of its personal worth” (2004:103). A ‘national identity’, then, would by definition span both individual and collective facets of self-representation. However, a ‘national identity’ clearly requires a ‘nation’ to which ‘identity’ attaches – and in this respect the inquiry becomes altogether more problematic.

What, exactly, is a ‘nation’? Given the proliferation of the term in contemporary media and political discourse, informing and informed by the obvious importance of nations in “human affairs” (Hobsbawm 1990:viii), what constitutes a ‘nation’ would appear to be self-evident to users of the term, whether in reference to their own nation or other nations. As Anderson puts it, the “nation” is globally a “taken-for-granted” (1991:12) frame of reference, and “nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time” (1991:3). This self-evidence seems to be unequivocally and reassuringly confirmed by official endorsement, bestowed from on high by the state apparatus, in the form of the identity document or card and passport. But, as Hobsbawm explains, the question of what a nation is presents a “mystery” and “is a notoriously controversial subject” (1990:viii). Describing what a nation actually is, he points out, is fraught with difficulty, encapsulated in Bagehot’s remark that “We

know what it (the 'nation') is when you do not ask us, but we cannot very quickly explain or define it" (1990:1).

Certainly, as Hobsbawm argues, the "chief characteristic" of "classifying groups of human beings" as nations is that "no satisfactory criterion can be discovered for deciding which of the many human collectivities should be labelled in this way" (1990:5). This is despite "the claims of those who belong" to a nation that it is "in some ways primary and fundamental for the social existence, or even the individual identification, of its members" (1990:5). Efforts "to establish objective criteria for nationhood," Hobsbawm explains, have been based on a "single" criterion "such as language or ethnicity" or a "combination of criteria such as language, common territory, cultural traits, or whatever else" (1990:5). Rather than replicate Hobsbawm's in-depth analysis of the shortcomings of essentialist criteria such as ethnicity and language, it suffices to state that such criteria "are themselves fuzzy, shifting and ambiguous" (1990:6) and that, ultimately, all "such objective definitions" of what a nation is "have failed" (1990:5). This failure stems largely from the fact that "since only some members of the large class of entities which fit such definitions can at any time be described as 'nations', exceptions can always be found" (1990:5).

The notion of an objective definition of 'nation' is also undermined by the fact that an individual may change or choose his or her nationality. As Anderson points out, "even the most insular nations accept the principle of naturalization (wonderful word!) no matter how difficult they make it" (1991:145). However, while this suggests that a 'nation' may be defined in subjective rather than objective terms, subjective definitions of 'nation', too, have failed. Hobsbawm argues that "defining a nation by its members' consciousness of belonging to it is tautological and provides only an a posteriori guide to what a nation is" (1990:8). This presents a slippery slope that may "lead the incautious into extremes of voluntarism" (1990:8). The idea of voluntarism defining a 'nation' is, in Hobsbawm's estimation, overly simplistic. To claim "consciousness or choice as the criterion of nationhood" is, he argues, "insensibly to subordinate the complex and multiple ways in which human beings define and redefine themselves as members of groups, to a single option: the choice of belonging to a 'nation' or 'nationality'" (1990:8).



Thus, Hobsbawm concludes, there is “no way of telling the observer how to distinguish a nation from other entities a priori” (1990:5), for both objective and subjective criteria or definitions of ‘nation’ are in themselves inadequate and “misleading” (1990:8). As Seton-Watson puts it, there is “no ‘scientific definition’ of the nation that can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists” (Anderson 1991:3). It emerges from this, then, that nations are to be defined in a manner that is case-specific rather than general, and defined through various combinations of objective and subjective criteria, rather than one or the other. Hobsbawm suggests that, owing to this lack of a clear-cut definition of what a ‘nation’ is, the “best initial posture” towards the existence of nations is “agnosticism” (1990:8). It is “more profitable”, he argues, “to begin with the concept of ‘the nation’ (i.e. with ‘nationalism’) than with the reality it represents,” because the nation that is “conceived by nationalism, can be recognized prospectively” while “the real ‘nation’ can only be recognized a posteriori” (1990:9). This means that, in terms of “analysis”, nationalism “comes before nations”, for nations “do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round” (1990:10).

Defining ‘nationalism’ according to Gellner’s description that it is “‘primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent’” (1990:9), Hobsbawm argues that the ‘nation’ presented by nationalists as “a natural, God-given way of classifying men” and “as an inherent... political destiny” (1990:10) is a fallacy. Emphasizing, like Gellner, the “element of artefact, invention and social engineering which enters into the making of nations,” Hobsbawm holds that nationalism “sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures” (1990:10). This is also the basic position of Anderson, but Anderson’s approach is to align nationalism with “‘kinship’ and ‘religion’” (1991:5). He rejects Gellner’s assimilation of “‘invention’ to ‘fabrication’ and ‘falsity’, rather than to ‘imagining’ and ‘creation’” (1991:6), and highlights that the “cultural products of nationalism” such as “poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts” reflect nationalists’ “often profoundly self-sacrificing love” (1991:141) for their nation. Anderson therefore situates nationalism, as the ‘maker’ of nations, more positively in terms of imaginative construction, rather

than in the negative light often cast by theorists who “insist on the near pathological character of nationalism... and its affinities with racism” (1991:141). A key difference here, Anderson argues, is that nationalism “thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations” (1991:149).

This more positive perspective informs Anderson’s famous definition, which sidesteps the impasse of ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ criteria, of the ‘nation’ as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (1991:6). All communities “larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are,” Anderson argues, “imagined” (1991:6). The “nation” is “imagined”, Anderson explains, in that “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them,” and “yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (1991:6). It is “imagined as a community,” he adds, in that “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail” the nation “is always conceived of as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (1991:7). This “fraternity”, he argues, is what has made it “possible... for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die” (1991:7) for their nation.

Anderson also explains that the nation is “imagined as limited” (1991:7) owing to the existence of ‘national borders’ – both physical and intellectual. Even “the largest” of nations, he points out, has “finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (1991:7). And even the “most messianic nationalists,” he adds, “do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation” (1991:7). Lastly, the nation is “imagined as sovereign” because, with the concept of the ‘nation’ maturing “at a stage of human history” marked by “the allomorphism” between the “ontological claims” of religions and “the territorial stretch,” people dreamed “of being free and, if under God, directly so” (1991:7). The “gauge and emblem of this freedom,” Anderson argues, “is the sovereign state” (1991:7).

It is precisely by tracing the rise of “nation-ness” and “nationalism” as “particular cultural artefacts” that “command... profound emotional legitimacy” and arouse “deep attachments” (1991:4) that Anderson underlines the constructedness and

imaginative dimension of the ‘nation’. The case-specific combination of objective and subjective criteria in defining nations, Anderson indicates, is achieved through individuals imagining themselves to be part of collectivities. It is just such imagining – in Anderson’s positive sense of “creation” rather than “fabrication” – that, as I will elucidate in chapter three, the nationalist Yeats advocated and sought to encourage in Ireland. In this regard, Yeats is a particularly interesting ‘national poet’, for as I will explain in the next chapter, he himself fell foul of objective and subjective criteria taken by many of his countrymen to define ‘Ireland’ and ‘Irish-ness’. Debunking the “subjective antiquity” of the nation “in the eyes of nationalists” (1991:5), Anderson explains that the concept of the ‘nation’ emerged primarily during the eighteenth century, and he sets out an historical process whereby people’s capacity to imagine themselves as part of collectivities increased dramatically and, ultimately, resulted in the formation of modern nations as political and territorial states, referred to as nation-states. Again, Yeats presents a particularly absorbing case study, with his lifetime spanning the emergence of the modern Irish nation-state, and his biography intersecting with certain historical and specifically colonial conditions described by Anderson and Hobsbawm.

If nation-states are historically novel, Anderson notes, it remains that “the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future” (1991:11/12). Such creation of “nation-ness” and “nationalism” as socio-political realities, Anderson argues, was “the spontaneous distillation of a complex ‘crossing’ of discrete historical forces” that “once created” became “modular, capable of being transplanted with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations” (1991:4). Anderson identifies a range of conditions linked to this “spontaneous distillation,” including the secularisation of religion, the demise of the dynastic realm, and a change in the apprehension of time whereby the “idea of ‘homogeneous, empty time...measured by clock and calendar” supplanted the “mediaeval conception of simultaneity-along-time” (1991:24). In regard to the latter condition, Anderson stresses the novel and newspaper as “two forms of imagining” (1991:25) that enabled people to “‘think’ the nation” (1991:22). In the next chapter I will situate Yeats as

both heir to and role-player in Irish nationalism. The point I wish to emphasize here is that Yeats cannot be divorced from the historical process set out by Anderson, including these “forms of imagining”. Such factors both influenced and enabled Yeats, as a product of his increasingly ‘modern’ times, to “‘think’ the nation” and, anticipating Irish independence, to advocate that Irish individuals imagine themselves to be part of a postcolonial collectivity. Yeats’s proposed method for such imagining, and the distinctly Yeatsian dimensions of this imagining, will come into view in chapter three.

The novel and newspaper, Anderson argues, presented the “idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time,” and this was “the precise analogue of the idea of the nation... conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history” (1991:26). This apprehension of time, in which “simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time” and is “marked... by temporal coincidence,” displaced “Messianic time, a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present” (1991:24). History, then, could be envisaged “as an endless chain of cause and effect,” in terms of distinct time frames: past, present and future. This change contributed to “the birth of the imagined community of the nation” in that the novel and newspaper “provided the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the kind of imagined community that is a nation” (1991:25). As Anderson explains, the seeming temporal concordance of the “world outside” and the portrayed “world inside” (1991:30) the novel and newspaper created in readers’ minds a fictional or imaginary relation between themselves and writers, characters, places, and content.

In addition, because the newspaper, in particular, was read on a mass scale daily, its visible ubiquity not only rooted its portrayals of the “world of mankind” (1998:33) in “everyday life” but continually reinforced readers’ awareness of “simultaneous consumption” (1991:36). Thus there emerged a sense of a shared world experience within the “steady onward clocking of homogeneous, empty time” (1991:33), among individuals who would “never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful” (1991:26) of their thousands of fellow readers. This sense, exacerbated by the unbound seriality generated by “homogenized” (1998:33) news coverage and “exemplified” by “open-to-world plurals” like “nationalists, anarchists, bureaucrats,

and workers” (1998:29), instilled “that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations” (1991:36). Thus news of Yeats’s Nobel Prize in 1923, as being won by a specifically Irish writer, could be reported in *The Irish Times* and world press in the symbolic and historical context of the newly independent Irish nation; and Yeats could in late life request of his wife George that should he die abroad (he of course died in Roquebrune, France, on 28 January 1939), he be buried near his place of death and then “... in a year’s time when the newspapers have forgotten me” (Foster 2001:80), in Sligo.

Mass print-literacy “made possible the imagined community floating in homogeneous, empty time” (Anderson 1991:116), and this was compounded by print-capitalism in the form of mass book-publishing. Capitalism’s targeting of consumer markets, Anderson explains, created mass “reading publics” (1991:43). Readers became “connected through print” and “formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community” (1991:44). Print-capitalism, Anderson adds, “gave a new fixity to language” (1991:44) and in fact created fixed “print-languages” (1991:45), the existence of which marked a rupture of the ‘modern’ present from the past and helped “to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation” (1991:44). The “printed book” also “kept a permanent form, capable of virtually infinite reproduction, temporally and spatially,” and thus “the words of our seventeenth-century forebears” became “accessible to us in a way that to Villon his twelfth-century ancestors were not” (1991:45). ‘History’ therefore became possible, along with the notion of ‘traditions’, including in fields of study such as history, philosophy and poetry which came to assume ‘national’ dimensions.

This “explosive interaction between capitalism, technology and human linguistic diversity” (1991:45) and the dislocation of time through the fixity of print-languages resulted, as Anderson explains, in the “new nationalisms” of Europe imagining themselves as “awakening” from “an epochal sleep” (1991:195). This “awakening” took “into account the sense of parallelism out of which the American nationalisms had been born” and “which the success of the American nationalist revolutions had greatly reinforced in Europe” (1991:195). The “trope of sleep” also provided “a

crucial metaphorical link” between nationalisms and language, so that vernaculars began “to function politically” even though the “vanguard” of nationalist movements comprised mostly “literate people unaccustomed to using these vernaculars” (1991:195). The resultant delving by intelligentsias, who were “becoming conscious of themselves as Czechs, Hungarians or Finns,” into ‘native’ languages and folklore was equated with “rediscovering something deep-down always known” (1991:196) about their nation. Yeats’s role as Irish folklorist and literary critic, which will be examined in the next chapter and chapter three, and his access through print to Walt Whitman as a model of a ‘national poet’, which will be touched on in chapter four, can to a large extent be viewed in these terms. That Yeats, among the “vanguard” of Ireland’s anti-colonial cause, spoke only English and not Gaelic/Irish, can also be viewed in this context and will be examined in the next chapter.

The new imagined communities produced by print-capitalism could, as Anderson describes it, “regard themselves as somehow ancient” because “once one starts thinking about nationality in terms of continuity few things seem as historically deep-rooted as languages, for which no dated origins can ever be given” (1991:196). In addition, nationalist “lexicographers, philologists, grammarians, folklorists, publicists and composers” were also “producers for the print-market” and thus “linked, via that silent bazaar, to consuming publics” (1991:75) imagining themselves in terms of communities. Again, Yeats cannot be divorced from this historical process, being not only as a folklorist, but as a nationalist poet and playwright, a producer for the print-market. For such producers, Anderson explains, the idea of ‘their’ nation could through print-capitalism emerge as an “unproblematic, primordial given” (1991:89) always-already advancing through time: looming “out of an immemorial past” and gliding “into a limitless future” (1991:11).

Crucially, Anderson emphasizes that it is “essential to bear in mind the conditions of the colonial era” when looking “comparatively at the rise of nationalism” (1998:323). Certainly in Ireland, as I will outline in the next chapter, nationalism arose and intensified in the context of centuries of colonial oppression read by Irish nationalists in terms of History, and Yeats was by the 1880s heir to a well developed, anti-colonial nationalist discourse and tradition in Ireland. Counted among these

conditions are the “colonial school-systems,” which Anderson explains had a “unique role... in promoting colonial nationalisms” (1991:120). As Anderson points out, “the paradox of imperial official nationalism was that it inevitably brought what were increasingly thought of and written about as European ‘national histories’” into the “consciousness of the colonized” (1991:118). This was achieved largely “through reading-rooms and classrooms” (1991:118) which made it possible, Anderson argues, for the colonized to imagine themselves as communities.

Anderson explains that through schooling in the “European language-of-state,” the colonized intelligentsias gained access to “modern Western culture in the broadest sense” (1991:116). Certainly, in a range of ways, Yeats’s formal English(-language) schooling and less formal ‘home education’ via his artist-father JB Yeats facilitated and fuelled this lifelong access in his case, particularly to poetry, art, mythology, philosophy and the occult. Notably, being bullied at the Godolphin School in Hammersmith for being Irish also awakened him to ‘national’ issues. Inseparable from the wider context of print-literacy and ‘production’ for print-markets, Yeats’s ‘colonial-era schooling’ and probing intellect may in large part be credited for the fact that he proved an enduring autodidact, becoming “the polymath’s polymath” (*The Economist* 2006:82). Specifically, Anderson argues, the intelligentsias gained “access, inside the classroom and outside, to models of nation, nation-ness, and nationalism distilled from the turbulent, chaotic experiences of more than a century of American and European history” (1991:140). Again, the influence of English-language literature (including translated texts) on Yeats, through print-literacy in the colonial context, must be noted, reflected by his familiarity and engaging with the likes of Whitman, Blake, and Nietzsche, as well as Arnold and Irish nationalist writings (to list a very few). Anderson writes that, with groups “reading nationalism genealogically as the expression of an historical tradition of serial continuity” (1991:195), the models of “nationalism, nation-ness, and nation-state produced elsewhere in the course of the nineteenth century” (1991:116) became “a replicable ideal capable of being consciously aspired to from early on” (1991:67) by colonized peoples. The ‘nation’ therefore “proved an invention on which it was impossible to secure a patent” (1991:67). This “invention”, too, was aspired to in Ireland, including and especially by its national poet Yeats.

Indeed, as Hobsbawm points out, “debate on such questions as the theoretical criteria of nationhood became passionate” from the 1880s because “any particular answer was now believed to imply a particular form of political strategy, struggle or programme” (1990:44). This, he says, was “a matter of importance not only for governments confronted with various kinds of national agitation or demand” but “for political parties seeking to mobilize constituencies on the basis of national, non-national or alternative national appeals” (1990:44). The debating of ‘nationhood’, as Anderson underlines, also took root in the colonies. Yeats’s exposure to and participation in such debates in Ireland from the 1880s is well documented, and will be touched on in the next chapter. At this stage, it suffices to emphasize Anderson’s general argument that it was “the colonial experience” which “profoundly shaped nationalism” (1998:323) in “the colonized worlds” (1991:164), including Asia and Africa, where ‘colonial education’ effectively backfired in helping subjected peoples to imagine themselves as ‘national’ communities. As I have indicated, this was certainly the case in regard to Irish nationalism, and specifically in regard to the nationalist Yeats. Anderson explains that the “immediate genealogy” of “official nationalism” among the colonized “should be traced to the imaginings of the colonial state” (1991:164), which “dialectically engendered the grammar of the nationalisms that eventually rose to combat it” (1991:xiv). Colonialism was, he argues, “nightmare-haunted” in that “it dreamed of incipient nationalisms before nationalists came into historical existence” (1998:65).

Anderson’s in-depth analysis of some of these “imaginings of the colonial state” points to what a definition of ‘postcolonial national identity’ might entail, by foregrounding its predecessor – implicit in the (as shall become clear) problematic prefix “post”. Anderson’s analysis dovetails with Fanon’s in regard to ‘colonial identity’, and these will be considered together in this chapter. I will proceed to draw, in some detail, on the extensive portrayals of the colonial context and identity by Anderson and Fanon (which are complemented by those of Said and an array of other writers); against this general backdrop, I will demonstrate in chapters two and three that Yeats’s ‘postcolonial’ stance, and Yeats himself as a ‘postcolonial’ figure, emerge emphatically in specific regard to national identity in the Ireland of his



lifetime. Fanon's arguments regarding (post)colonial identity will be especially referred to in chapter three in relation to the 'postcolonial' Yeats. The colonial state's imaginings, Anderson indicates, had major ramifications for the colonized at the level of identity. He lists three "interlinked" institutions in particular that illuminate "the colonial state's style of thinking" (1991:184), namely the map, museum and census. These "institutions of power," he argues, "changed their form and function as the colonized zones entered the age of mechanical production," and "profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its domain" (1991:164). These institutions, as "imaginings of the colonial state," encompassed "the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry" (1991:164).

Anderson explains that the "warp" of the thinking informing these institutions "was a totalizing classificatory grid" that "could be applied with endless flexibility to anything under the state's real or contemplated control," including "peoples, regions, religions, languages, products, monuments, and so forth" (1991:184). This psychological or imagined "grid", enforced by technological and military might, enabled the colonizer to "always" be "able to say of anything that it was this, not that," and to assign anything under the state's power to 'its place' so that "it belonged here, not there" (1991:184). Everything within the domain was seen as "bounded, determinate, and... countable" (1991:184). The "weft" of the colonizer's thinking was "serialization", or "the assumption that the world was made up of replicable plurals" (1991:184). According to this view, the "particular always stood as a provisional representative of a series," and – to the detriment of the colonized in a range of material, physical and psychological ways – "was to be handled in this light" (1991:184).

The detailed charting of the colonized territory and landscape in the form of the map, Anderson argues, reflected the "total surveyability" (1991:184) assumed by the colonial mindset. The map was based on the notion of complete categorization, aligning "map and power" (1991:173). As Said describes it, the "alien and occupying" authority "dominates, classifies, and universally commodifies all space under the aegis of the metropolitan centre" (1993:272), and Said's delineation of the Irish

colonial context in these terms, in relation to Yeats's poetry 'of decolonization', will be examined in chapter two. Anderson explains that, entering into "an infinitely reproducible series," the map was utilised for state insignia and transferred "to posters, official seals, letterheads" and even incorporated into public spaces like "hotel walls" (1991:175). This "logo-map penetrated deep into the popular imagination," becoming "a powerful emblem for the anticolonial nationalisms being born" (1991:175). As Anderson notes, there is a striking "isomorphism" between each colonial nationalism's "territorial stretch" and that of the "imperial administrative unit" (1991:114).

In addition, the colonizer's museums and "archaeology, increasingly linked to tourism" enabled the state "to appear as the guardian of a generalized, but also local, Tradition" (1991:181). Its "museumizing imagination" (1991:178) ensured that "old sacred sites" were "incorporated into the map of the colony," and their "ancient prestige" vaunted as "regalia for a secular colonial state" (1991:182). Again, items and places of archaeological interest entered the replicating series, through "mechanical reproduction" (1991:183) such as photography and printing. Anderson argues that this museumizing "was political at such a deep level that almost everyone, including the personnel of the colonial state... was unconscious of the fact" (1991:183). This 'state of affairs' had "all become normal and everyday," such that it was "precisely the infinite quotidian reproducibility of its regalia that revealed the real power of the state" (1991:183). Anderson also notes that the archaeological series "created a historical depth of field which was easily inherited by the state's postcolonial successor," which could also view the series "up historical time" as a photo "album of its ancestors" (1991:184).

In such exercising of power, the colonial state imagined the individual and collective 'identity' of the colonized, and imposed it in various ways – a number of which, in the Irish colonial context, will be covered in chapters two and three. A key tool of this imagining, and an indicator of the enforced representation of the colonized by the colonizer, was the census – the application of which, in Ireland, will come into focus in chapter two. This pencilled in politically the inhabitants of the mapped territory, applying the same classifying mindset. In this way, the map and census "shaped the

grammar” of colonial nationalisms, making it possible, for instance, for “Indonesia” and “Indonesians” (1991:184) to exist. Anderson adds elsewhere that “as the old republican-American model had originally implied, mapped Mali would have to find its Malians” (1998:65). Anderson notes that such labels or “concretizations” have “a powerful life today, long after the colonial state has disappeared” (1991:184), thanks largely to the historical “album” inherited by the postcolonial state. Highlighting its relevance at the level of identity, Anderson argues that this “life” is exemplified by “the classificatory ID card” which is “isomorphic with the census” (1991:185).

Like the map and museum, the census was the product of a categorizing “style of imagining” shaped by “the technologies of navigation, astronomy, horology, surveying, photography and print, to say nothing of the deep driving power of capitalism” (1991:184). It was part of the colonial state’s drive “to create, under its control, a human landscape of perfect visibility,” with “the condition of this ‘visibility’” being that “everyone, everything, had (as it were) a serial number” (1991:184). Anderson stresses the “passion” of those who devised the census, “for completeness and unambiguity” (1991:166). The bound seriality of the census meant “the impermissibility of fractions,” which created “a mirage-like integrity of the body” (1998:36). Each countee was represented as “an indivisible whole” (1998:37), so that the “fiction of the census” was not only that “everyone” was “in it” but also that “everyone” had “one – and only one – extremely clear place” (1991:166). Categories and subcategories were created so that any “mixedness, or fractionality” could “resume integral status” (1998:36), with “complex fractionality” in effect “inscribed in invisible ink” and the countee all but erased as the “site of a maze of intersecting series” (1998:37).

As the census so clearly illustrates, the colonized were denied self-representation, and were constructed as a ‘fixed’ entity whose representation “concealed all real-life anomalies” (1991:184). This “passion” for “completeness and unambiguity,” and the “one... extremely clear place” to which the colonized countee was consigned, bespeak the conception of stable, unified identity informing and informed by the colonial context itself. As Fanon describes it, the “colonial world is a Manichaeic world” (2001:31) of irreconcilable opposites: the colonizer and colonized. “It is not

enough” for the colonizer, he writes, “to delimit physically, that is to say with the help of the army and the police force, the place of the native” (2001:31/32). Rather, rigorous control is especially carried out at the level of identity. Fanon explains that, as if “to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation,” the colonizer “paints” the colonized as “a sort of quintessence of evil” (2001:32). The colonized are “declared insensible to ethics” and are seen to be deficient in “reason” (2001:33); they are deemed “the enemy of values, and in this sense... the absolute evil” (2001:32). The colonized are also seen to be “the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality” (2001:32). They are, individually and collectively, perceived as “the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces” (2001:32).

This Manichaeism, Fanon argues, “dehumanizes the native” and “to speak plainly it turns him into an animal” (2001:32). Said’s account of the reduction of the colonized, in the Irish context, to the level of a supposedly ‘bestial’ or ‘savage’ life form fit for extermination, will be outlined in chapter two. Fanon also argues that such colonial dehumanization serves to emphasize that the “governing race is first and foremost those who come from elsewhere,” those who are “unlike the original inhabitants, ‘the others’” (2001:32). The colonizer affirms that “values have disappeared from, or still better never existed” (2001:32) among the colonized. The “customs of the colonized people, their traditions, their myths – above all, their myths” are seen to be “the very sign of that poverty of spirit and of their constitutional depravity” (2001:32). Fanon adds that, in the eyes of the colonizer, railway lines “across the bush, the draining of swamps and a native population... are in fact one and the same thing”: a hostile “nature, obstinate and fundamentally rebellious” (2001:201). Colonization “is a success,” Fanon argues, when “indocile nature has finally been tamed” (2001:201). The colonized are therefore constructed by the colonizer, at the level of identity, as having in essence or on “the unconscious plane” a ‘wild’ and “fundamentally perverse” (2001:169) nature, ‘justifying’ intensive domination by the colonizer.

Grossly reductive ‘colonial identity’, then, consists of the dual opposites of ‘superior’ and ‘good’ colonizer/‘inferior’ and ‘evil’ colonized. This binary comprises seemingly stable and unified identities established and promoted by the colonizer, wherein the

'inferior' term is seemingly negated by the 'superior' one. In accordance with "the rules of Aristotlean logic," Fanon writes, each pole follows "the principle of reciprocal exclusivity," with the negative term in fact "superfluous" (2001:30). This mutual exclusivity is of course based on Aristotlean essentialism, whereby "a person or object possesses an essence which determines its identity" but "identity, rather than operating as a substitute for essence, functions as its effect" (Fuss 1990:140). Such biological essentialism is what Moi calls the "belief in a given... nature" (Jefferson/Robey 1992:209). The dichotomy at the level of identity is therefore related to an underlying distinction between the 'superior' and 'good' essence supposedly embodied by the colonizer, and 'inferior' and 'evil' essence said to be embodied by the colonized. This is also, clearly, a reformulation of Aristotle's view, underlined in regard to the colonial context by Karskens, that "Everything in relation to every other thing is either 'the same' or 'other'" (Corbey/Leerssen 1991:82). With the particular standing in for the series, it can be seen that, from the colonizer's perspective, all colonized subjects are individually and collectively "other", and the colonizer(s) "the same".

Colonial discourse is therefore, as Voestermans argues, one of alterity in constructing and emphasizing "the otherness of people, particularly people outside one's domestic ken" (Corbey/Leerssen 1991:219). Simultaneously, it is one of identity in constructing and affirming "who we are by contrasting nearly every element of our way of life with that of others" (1991:219). In this light, the binary can be seen to operate as a self-other, Hegelian dialectic in which the apparently negated 'inferior' pole (other) in fact shores up the 'superior' pole (self). Each pole invests "each other with meaning," Voestermans argues, and "one does not go without the other" (1991:219). The construction of the Other in terms of a basically deviant, evil and inferior 'essence', unconscious or 'nature' provides the Manichaeian foundation of colonial rule; and this informs and is informed by the logocentric discourse of that rule. In addition, while the colonized are constructed in terms of "the colonizer's own self-image," as "the self-consolidating other," the colonial centre also simultaneously consolidates itself "as sovereign" by defining its colonies as "'Others'" (Young 1990:17). The assigning of the Irish, and of the Irish colony, in this way to "one – and only one – extremely clear place" (1991:166) of inferiority at the level of identity will be outlined in the

next chapter, in bringing Yeats into view as a postcolonial figure who actively sought to destabilize the very notion of stable, fixed identities and implode this essentialist Othering.

In light of Anderson and Fanon's analyses, the key elements of "self-representation" and "personal worth", listed among the basic meanings of 'identity' submitted earlier in this chapter, do not apply in the case of the colonized – from the colonizer's perspective. Seemingly stable, unified identity, constructed and imposed by the colonizer, serves to present the colonized in a negative light, as essentially inferior. The colonized are therefore actively discouraged from constructing their own identity in positive terms, from deciding and declaring, in Renault's words, "what we are individually, as well as what we aspire to be, what determines or specifies us, as well as how we present our particularities to ourselves, how we refer to ourselves individually, and how we identify ourselves with groups and with the general norm" (Tazi 2004:101). Of course, the colonizer's efforts to devalue and even deny self-representation by the colonized often led not to passive victimhood, but to creative, positive and strident claims to national identity by the colonized, including in Ireland. As Fanon points out, the colonized individual "knows that he is not an animal; and it is precisely at the moment he realizes his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory" (2001:33). In this process of decolonizing, "it is a whole material and moral universe" of the colonizer "which is breaking up" (2001:34). Yeats's participation in this "breaking up", particularly by devising a method for and advocating the creation of a postcolonial Irish national identity, will be examined in this context in chapter three.

Against this broad backdrop, what a 'postcolonial national identity' entails can be extrapolated. A self-determined or 'postcolonial' national identity would, fundamentally, represent the fulfilment of these meanings of 'identity' as the expression of an imagined, and by implication, linked or united community to which its individual members 'belong'. Ideally, the 'post-' would signify a clean or positive break by the 'imagined community' from colonial essentialism and negation at the level of identity. The 'post-', clearly, would not necessarily indicate prior political liberation of the imagined community in the linear sense of a time-line, occurring only

‘after’ territorial and state withdrawal of the colonizer. Rather, as I will argue was the case in regard to Yeats’s conception of Irish national identity, the ‘postcolonial’ may in fact, at the level of identity, inform nationalism’s aim of achieving self-determination, and precede political liberation. This clean or positive break implies the espousal of an identity that is free of Othering and regulation in terms of the Manichaeic binary, recognizing and upholding “personal worth”. As During indicates, the “postcolonial identity” sought by formerly colonized “nations or groups” is one “uncontaminated” by denigrating “Eurocentric concepts and images” (Docherty 1993:449).

However, as I have been alluding to in outlining the historical process posited by Anderson, the question arises as to whether the achievement of such an “uncontaminated” identity is at all possible. Anderson demonstrates that the legacy of the map, museum and census has “a powerful life today, long after the colonial state has disappeared” (1991:184). This “powerful life” intersects with narratives of formerly colonized peoples, including ‘retrospective’ claims of pre-colonial nationhood, and manifests in a range of ways which militate against the espousal of a genuinely ‘postcolonial national identity’, i.e. the self-representation of the specificity and aspirations of an imagined community in a manner free of colonial conditioning and, in particular, exclusionary negation. Not least of these ways is the “degree to which census definitions of categories have hardened into essentialized political realities through their role in organizing the allocation of economic and other benefits and the expectations of such benefits” (Anderson 1998:43). Essentialism, which implies Othering, therefore underpins and perpetuates social divisions created by the ‘census-thinking’ of the colonial state, splintering idealistically imagined communities into, in reality, ‘colonially conditioned’ or categorised, in large part mutually exclusive sub-communities.

Indeed, a legacy of the census is the existence of “serial, aggregable, counterposed majorities and minorities” (1998:38). Anderson explains that these groupings, “starting as formal entities, were positioned in due course to assume political reality” (1998:38), with often disastrous implications for national ‘comradeship’ or unity. In addition, colonial imaginings of stable, fixed identity continue to shape ‘postcolonial’

imaginings of selfhood and collective belonging. Anderson argues that “searches” for “roots” and “identities”, while they “rhetorically move inward towards the site that once housed the soul” in fact “proceed towards real and imagined censuses, where, thanks to capitalism, state machineries, and mathematics, integral bodies become identical” and “thus serially aggregable as phantom communities” (1998:44). Of course, rather than passively yielding to colonial conditioning, there have been and continue to be creative, positive and strident responses among formerly colonized peoples to the divisive legacy of ‘census-thinking’. Yeats’s attempt to synthesize an inclusive and united ‘new’ Ireland, and his war as a minority Anglo-Irish Protestant on domination by the majority Irish Catholic establishment in the Free State, may be considered in this context and will be examined in the remaining three chapters in terms of his conception of a non-essentialist Irish national identity. Certainly, the problems of census-like, essentialist Othering and self-representation in the Manichaean colonial world of the Ireland of his times, are refracted through Yeats. As I will elucidate in the next chapter, being an Anglo-Irish and therefore ‘hyphenated’ figure meant Yeats was subjected to not only the colonizer’s denigrating construction of Irishness, but also to many of his countrymen’s census-like “passion” for “completeness and unambiguity” and insistence on “the impermissibility of fractions” at the level of Irish national identity.

Clearly, as the inheritances of map, museum and census indicate, the ‘post-’ in ‘postcolonial’ is misleading insofar as it implies a clean, or even necessarily positive, break from the colonial past. The deceptiveness of the ‘post-’, of course, extends beyond the issue of ‘identity’ to encompass such factors as the prevailing socio-economic conditions and exercise of political power within postcolonial nation-states. As Said points out, in reference to Fanon, “national bourgeoisies and their specialized elites... tended to replace the colonial force with a new class-based and ultimately exploitative one, which replicated the old colonial structures in new terms” (1993:269). There are, he adds, “states all across the formerly colonized world that have bred pathologies of power” (1993:269). Therefore, while ‘postcoloniality’ or ‘decolonization’ has been achieved globally in strictly political terms, this has not been accompanied by the realisation of its full promise of liberation from colonial thinking and material conditions in any sudden or sweeping sense.



Rather, 'postcoloniality' is, like "decolonization", "an awkward and inelegant word" and "therefore, in a way, appropriate to the subject it attempts to describe" (Betts 1998:1). Politically, socio-economically, and at the level of identity, the achievement of postcoloniality or decolonization is still, at best, a "work-a-day" (Betts 1998:1) goal for the foreseeable future. This is especially so considering that postcoloniality, or decolonization, is a "historically loose-ended" term and ideal. As Betts puts it, "there is no end to discussion of it" (1998:1). This open-endedness is of course not just discursive, but material too. Certainly, that the 'post-' in 'postcolonial' does not automatically mean a clean break with the colonial past is well known to South Africans in the work-a-day context of post-1994 nation-building, and the legacy of Othering as it pertains to national identity in contemporary South Africa will be examined – in relation to Yeats's conception of Irish national identity – in the concluding chapter. As Betts's "Political Chronology of Decolonization" (1998:98) indicates, 1961 marked the entrance of the "Republic of South Africa" (1998:99), officially, into 'postcoloniality'. However, at the level of identity alone, the legacy of colonialism – exacerbated by the apartheid regime – continues to undermine nation-building in the postcolonial, postapartheid, democratic South Africa. I will argue that the concerns of the 'postcolonial' Yeats resonate deeply with, and merit study in relation to, the project of forging an inclusive, non-essentialist national identity and national unity in South Africa.

As I have already set out, I will argue and elucidate in the next two chapters that Yeats, in being a 'postcolonial visionary' and Ireland's national poet, devised a method for the creation and espousal of an inclusive, non-essentialist and therefore emphatically postcolonial Irish national identity in the face and wake of colonial oppression. In doing so, he clearly sought to avoid replicating "the colonial state's style of thinking" (Anderson 1991:184) at the level of identity, directly addressing the potential 'postcolonial' pitfall of reinforcing the Manichaeic binary in his positivisation of Irishness. This meant finding an alternative to the negation inherent in the Self-Other dialectic – the very opposition that allows the colonial "constitution of the other as 'other'" to be set "alongside racism and sexism" (Young 1990:4). I will show that, in advocating psychological decolonization and liberation at the level of

identity, Yeats places the Irish “outside the sphere” of colonial “mastery” rather than in “a relation of negation” (Young 1990:17). Ultimately, I will demonstrate, Yeats envisions postcolonial Ireland as an imagined community.

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## **Chapter Two: A Tale of Two Yeatses**

In the first annual Yeats Lecture delivered to the Friends of the Irish Academy at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 1940, TS Eliot situates Yeats as “born into the end of a literary movement, and an English movement at that” (Unterecker 1963:61). Taking “account of historical conditions” (1963:61), Eliot writes, Yeats was born into a world “in which the doctrine of ‘Art for Art’s sake’ was generally accepted” and lived on “into one in which art has been asked to be instrumental to social purposes” (1963:62). Yeats, he argues, “held firmly to the right view which is between these, though not in any way a compromise between them,” and demonstrated “that an artist, by serving his art with entire integrity, is at the same time rendering the greatest service he can to his own nation and to the whole world” (1963:62/63). Eliot adds that Yeats’s poetry, though “giving equally experience and delight” in isolation, has “a larger historical importance,” for Yeats was “one of those few whose history is the history of their own time, who are part of the consciousness of an age which cannot be understood without them” (1963:63). “This is a very high position to assign to him,” Eliot states, “but I believe that it is one which is secure” (1963:63).

In demarcating “an age” and positing these conclusions, Eliot portrays Yeats as speaking “for man” in speaking as “a particular man” (1963:57), and argues that “in becoming more Irish, not in subject-matter but in expression” Yeats “became at the same time universal” (1963:58). Yeats’s presentation of myth in *At the Hawk’s Well* (1916) and *The Only Jealousy of Emer* (1919), for instance, is not for its own sake but “as a vehicle for a situation of universal meaning” (1963:61). In “later plays”, Eliot argues, the “legendary heroes and heroines” are “universal men and women” (1963:61). And as a lyric poet “even when dramatic”, Eliot declares, Yeats could “speak for every man, or for men very different from himself,” for the lyric poet has only to momentarily “identify himself with every man or other men” (1963:59) to achieve this status of representative. It is only Yeats’s “imaginative power of becoming this” ‘every man’ that “deceives some readers into thinking that he is speaking for and of himself alone” (1963:59).

Deeply informing Eliot's high praise and construction of Yeats as a 'universal artist' are two factors which must immediately be highlighted. Firstly, as the historical process outlined by Anderson indicates, a prerequisite of entering History is emergence into the national; and secondly, "the emergence of the 'nation state'" is top of Pippin's list of characteristics taken to identify "the modern social and intellectual tradition" (1991:4). Clearly, given Eliot's reference to "larger historical importance" in his construction of Yeats as artistic servant of "his own nation" and as poetical spokesman for "every man", the "age" to which Eliot refers is the 'modern' age. In short, Eliot as American (or rather, in light of his becoming a naturalized British subject in 1927, 'English') modern poet, albeit 23 years Yeats's junior, confirms and praises the modernist credentials of the recently deceased Irish national poet, whose wider historical significance or universality is achieved on a specifically national platform.

In making the case for 'Yeats as universal spokesman,' Eliot's lecture is a window on the conventional critical construction and general, decades-long reception of Yeats as a (high) modernist by literary critics and fellow poets. A number of Eliot's observations and arguments about Yeats, too, can be viewed in terms of the general construction of 'modernism' as a field of study by literary critics. Indeed, Eliot's assertion that in the modern world "art has been asked to be instrumental to social purposes" encapsulates Pippin's description of modernism as being, among the "many things denoted by the term," also "understood to propose (or to threaten) a great shift in European high culture" or "at least an implicit insistence on a shift in authority" to "art as the leading or 'legislating' force" in a "genuinely modern culture" (1991:29/30). This shift of authority, Pippin explains, was part of an attempt at an autonomy or "genuine self-determination" in society and daily life in a "sweeping historical and an individual sense" (1991:30). This demanded "a tremendously heightened role for the artist" as "the figure whose imagination supposedly creates or shapes the sensibilities of civilization" (1991:41). It is in this consciously "heightened role" that Yeats is cast, in their various ways, by Eliot and the constellation of Yeats critics, including Ellmann (whose "luminous works... still hold the critical field" – Foster 1998:xxvi), Jeffares, and Unterecker, and more recently Kiberd and Foster.

As Ellmann, acutely aware of the demarcation of the modern “age”, writes in 1960, Yeats has “since his death just before the recent war... come to be ranked by many critics as the dominant poet of our time” (1960:1). Echoing Eliot, he adds: “It is not easy to assign him a lower place” (1960:1). Ellmann argues that by “constant advance and change in subject-matter and style, by his devotion to his craft and his refusal to accept the placidity to which his years entitled him,” Yeats “lived several lifetimes in one and made his development inseparable from that of modern verse and, to some extent, of modern man” (1960:1). Ellmann concludes that “The man who emerges from his (Yeats’s) poetry is a modern man...” (1960:298). Ellmann later argues, in 1964, that “In modern poetry Yeats and TS Eliot stand at opposite poles”: Yeats presents a faith in “sense and spirit” with “such power and richness that Eliot’s religion, in spite of its honesty and loftiness, is pale and infertile in comparison” (1964:246). Yeats’s heightened role and reputation as a poet of immense imaginative power is such that Ellmann predicts it “seems likely his works will resist time” because “in all his shape-changing he remains at the centre tenacious, solid, a ‘marble triton among the streams’” (1964:247).

Pippin explains, in general terms, that the modern artist’s heightened role and what he calls the “modernist aesthetic” arose “to a large degree in reaction” to “a complex crisis mentality” or “experience of dissatisfaction and even revulsion” (1991:40) at the “commercialization and mass culture” (1991:32) of “bourgeois civilization” (1991:41). This dissatisfaction also arose from, and was directed at, the failure to inaugurate “a genuinely new, progressive, fundamentally better epoch” (1991:30). There arose, Pippin explains, “a sense that modernity’s official self-understanding – Enlightened, liberal, progressive, humanistic – had been a misunderstanding, a far too smug and unwarranted self-satisfaction” (1991:32). The modernist aesthetic thus comprised “a new sense of the nature and significance of art-making” (1991:40) in a bid to create “in a radical and unprecedented way a form of life, indeed a sensibility, finally consistent with the full implications of the modern revolution” (1991:29). In this sense, the poet or artist became “the ‘antennae of the race,’ especially the ‘unacknowledged legislator’ for mankind” (1991:30), a heightened modernist role which illuminates Eliot’s contention that Yeats “in becoming more Irish... became at

the same time universal” and could “speak for every man, or for men very different from himself.”

As Pippin also explains, the artistic imagination is “no longer viewed as a vehicle or medium” but is in modernism “*sui generis*, and by being *sui generis*, or difficult, opaque, strange, elitist, uncommercial, self-defining,” artistic activity “alone demonstrates a kind of integrity and autonomy foreclosed in bourgeois life” (1991:32). This demands, Pippin adds, “an intensely self-conscious, historical, even philosophical art, however purely ‘aesthetic’ its goals,” as well as “a finally modern ‘honesty,’ a recognition of the contingency and mutability of human ideals” (1991:32). This emphasis on integrity and honesty in modernist art illuminates Eliot’s assessment that Yeats “held firmly to the right view which is between” Art for Art’s sake (purely aesthetic) and art “asked to be instrumental to social purposes,” not compromising either and showing “that an artist, by serving his art with entire integrity, is at the same time rendering the greatest service he can to his own nation and to the whole world.” It is the “figure of the poet himself... the integrity of his passion for his art and his craft,” Eliot also argues, “which provided such an impulse” for Yeats’s “extraordinary development” (1963:55). Again, the modernist Eliot’s take on Yeats-as-modernist is underlined.

At the same time, Pippin points out, the “primacy” of the “artistic imagination” became “quite typical in modernism,” with the modernist poet or artist “obliged to find the ‘heroism’ and beauty of modern life” and the “intensity of passion” of that life (1991:33). As York highlights, pointing to “clear analogies” between the work of Blake and Yeats, modern poetry “can be seen as arising from the Romantic and post-Romantic cult of the imagination, of the visionary and the sensual” and “of a type of language which communicates through the suggestions of image and rhythm rather than through the presentation of ideas and emotions which allow themselves to be – at least approximately – paraphrased” (Bradford 1996:482). Eliot’s emphasis on Yeats’s “imaginative power” is indicative of this primacy of the imagination, a feature which informs Yeats’s reference to himself as “one of... ‘the last romantics’” (Ellmann 1964:3) and his bemoaning Romantic Ireland’s demise in the poem “September 1913”. As Ellmann puts it, Yeats like Blake “conceives of the imagination as the

shaping power which transforms the world; but coming a century later, he has a tough-minded appreciation of the world's intransigence" (1964:245). "More than Keats or Coleridge, more perhaps even than Blake," Ellmann argues, "he defends the imagination with the defiance of a man who sees himself as preventing the incursions of chaos" (1964:245). Eliot's foregrounding of Yeats's "imaginative power" in effect elevates Yeats to the status of imaginative, modernist hero-poet "serving art" and artistic tradition, and thereby "his own nation and the whole world."

Indeed, this overall sense of the heightened, authoritative, sensibility-shaping, avant-garde role of Yeats as 'representative of men' (that is, Yeats as modernist) motivates assertions like those of Heaney who, in his introduction to his selection of Yeats's poems, writes that Yeats "managed to create a heroic role for the poet in the modern world" – to the extent that Eliot's "evocation of 'the shade of some dead master' in 'Little Gidding' (1943) is commonly taken to be a tribute to the recently dead Irishman" (2000:xii). Whether thought of as "a national bard or a world poet," Heaney writes, Yeats "figures in the mind as a translated force, an energy released and a destiny fulfilled" (2000:xii). Again, it is Yeats's imaginative power – his integral "force" and "energy" as a poet – that is portrayed as the spearhead of his heroism. As Heaney puts it, Yeats sought to "launch upon the world a vision of reality that possessed no surer basis than the ground of his own imagining" (2000:xviii). Recalling Anderson's definition of a nation as an "imagined community" and anticipating my own arguments in the next chapter, I wish to stress the importance of Yeats's imaginative power and imagining which, as I shall demonstrate, are key to his conception of Irish national identity.

Yeats has, of course, been constructed as a modernist by virtue of not only these but other important aspects of his biography, theorising and works. Again following Eliot's cue, a sense of "historical conditions" or 'literary' contextualization must inevitably be invoked, in emphasizing that Yeats's lifetime (1865-1939) encompasses the "cultural phase called modernism" (Wheale 1995:15) in Europe. This phase, Wheale explains, is "usually thought to have taken place between 1880 and 1930" (1995:15). Certainly, this linear and "conventional timespan" (1995:16) taken to frame modernism presents "problems" regarding developments "obscured by the cut-

off date at 1930” and regarding “long-range continuities extending from late eighteenth century romanticism... effaced by the boundary at 1880” (1995:15). It also presents “profound contradictions in definitions that attempt to map a single modernist movement or cultural formation” (1995:23). However, an analysis of the assignation of “the time-scale” (1995:15) and the “reductive use of the term modernism” as the “monolithic” categorization of “a single phenomenon” (1995:27) is beyond the scope of this thesis. It suffices, rather, to view Yeats as being constructed by literary critics in terms of this “phenomenon”. Accordingly, it also suffices to view Yeats in historical terms as produced by and inhabiting his own times, and to be unsurprised that as a leading, increasingly famous artist and personality (a word that gains special significance in the context of Yeats’s work) he should be affected by and become part of this transformative cultural phase described by Wheale as the “modernist revolution in the arts” (1995:16).

York argues that Yeats was “much influenced” by “the new movement” (Bradford 1996:482). Echoing Eliot’s comments, he writes that Yeats started his career “in what some would consider a self-indulgently Romantic manner” but matured “to become one of the most powerful and imaginative writers of the (20<sup>th</sup>) century” (1996:482). While Hamburger argues that “at least after *The Green Helmet*” (1910) Yeats “was a modern poet in diction and in imagery” (1969:79), York pinpoints Yeats’s “discovery of a modernist style” after “his post-Romantic Celtic beginnings” (Bradford 1996:483) in *Responsibilities* (1914). York argues that this “new kind of verse” reached maturity “in several volumes of Yeats, especially perhaps *The Tower* (1928)” (1996:483). Indeed, it is this generally noted ‘change’ in Yeats’s work around this time that prompts Eliot to describe Yeats, without divorcing him entirely from the early “Yeats of the Celtic” or “Pre-Raphaelite” Twilight, as “pre-eminently the poet of middle age” (Unterecker 1963:58).

Pointing out that a poet’s development “in middle age” has “always something miraculous about it,” but not wanting “to give the impression” that he regards Yeats’s “earlier and his later work almost as if they had been written by two different men” (1963:56), Eliot nonetheless offers as “reason for the superiority of Yeats’s later work” what he calls “the greater expression of personality in it” (1963:57). Eliot urges



“poets-to-come” to “study with reverence” the “great and permanent example” of Yeats’s accomplishment – “what” Yeats “did in the middle and later years,” his “capacity of adaptation to the years” and “exceptional honesty and courage to face the change” (1963:58). Bolstering Yeats’s exemplary and heroic status, Eliot puts Yeats’s achievement down to what he calls the “Character of the Artist: a kind of moral, as well as intellectual, excellence” (1963:58). As I will explicate in the next chapter, Yeats would have preferred Eliot’s first reference to his “personality” rather than to “character,” for both words have specific meanings in Yeats’s conception of Irish national identity.

Eliot argues that Yeats “had to wait for a later maturity to find expression of early experience,” adding that “something” of Yeats “coming through” and “beginning” to speak “for man” as “a particular man” is evident in “the volume of 1904” (1963:57), namely *In the Seven Woods*, and “clearer still in the poem ‘Peace’ in the 1910 volume” (1963:57), namely *The Green Helmet and Other Poems*. However, Eliot argues, it is “not fully evinced until the volume of 1914, in the violent and terrible epistle dedicatory of *Responsibilities*,” in which Yeats’s “naming of his age” (“close on forty-nine” – *Collected Poems* 1971:113) is “significant” as a “triumphant” arrival at “freedom of speech” after “half a lifetime” (Unterecker 1963:57). On this basis, Eliot confides, his own “enthusiasm” was “won by the poetry of the older Yeats... from 1919 on,” and that he could “share the feelings of younger men who came to know and admire” Yeats “by that work from 1919 on” (1963:54). In this light, I wish to stress the ‘quantum leap’ around this time in the quality of Yeats’s verse, and his seeming ‘maturation’ as a modernist poet. I wish also to stress that the critical reception of Yeats as a modernist, as Eliot underlines, rests largely with the works produced by him from about 1914 and more emphatically from 1919. Certain of these works shall come into focus in this and particularly the next chapter in examining Yeats’s conception of Irish national identity.

Of course, the influence of Pound on ‘making’ Yeats more emphatically ‘modern’ cannot go unnoted, with Yeats significantly placing Pound in early versions of *A Vision* alongside Nietzsche in the heroic lunar Phase 12 (representing ‘the Forerunner’). As Wheale points out, many of the artistic developments and practices

“were initiated by relatively small coteries or groupings in the new European metropolises” (1995:15/16), by “modernizing artist-activists” (1995:16). It is well documented by critics that Yeats, himself involved in literary or occult “coteries” most of his adult life, including as a leading figure in the (Anglo-)Irish Literary Revival, was assisted in becoming ‘modern’ through Pound’s influence as “unofficial secretary, reader, amanuensis” (Foster 1998:475). Ellmann explains that Pound – “very much the man of the new movement” – felt Yeats’s “manner was out of date” and insisted “The poet must be a modern man... he must be clear and precise, he must eliminate all abstractions and all words which sense did not justify as well as sound” (1960:214). Indeed, as “a conveyor of ideas and information” to a range of famous modern writers, Pound rapidly became “a vehicle for the age’s most significant concerns” (Ackroyd 1980:33) and “set himself the task of converting Yeats to the modern movement” (Ellmann 1960:215).

Ellmann also explains that, during their winters at Stone Cottage in Sussex from 1913 to 1916, Pound stimulated Yeats’s interest in Japanese Noh drama as the basis for “the development of a new form of drama” that was “suited to European conventions” (1960:217) but ‘aristocratic’ in its ‘secret’ or occult, imaginative, ritualistic and symbolic aspects and emphases. As Ellmann notes, Yeats’s “first play in this new form” (1960:218) was “another in his series on Cuchulain” and “purely symbolic” (1960:218), namely *At the Hawk’s Well*. The “improvement” helped along by Pound “is readily noticeable,” Ellmann writes; the “new verse is more spare” and “the images are exactly delimited by the words, every shadow is removed” (1960:215). Its “terse, vivid diction,” Ellmann points out, “stamped him as a modern poet even in the mind of such a fastidious critic as TS Eliot, who attended its performance in a drawing-room” (1960:218).

Earlier than *At the Hawk’s Well* (1916), however, Pound’s ‘concretising’ influence on Yeats’s thought and writing can be seen as having contributed to what York identifies as Yeats’s “discovery of a modernist style, after his post-Romantic Celtic beginnings, with *Responsibilities* (1914)” (Bradford 1996:483). York argues that the “period after 1914” saw, amid a “general atmosphere among writers... of doubt and readiness for change,” what he calls “the establishment of a new kind of verse” reaching “maturity

with Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), Pound's *Mauberley* (1920) and several volumes of Yeats, especially perhaps *The Tower* (1928)" (1996:483). This 'newness' occurred not only in poetic content, with "the cultural complexities" emerging in a poem like Yeats's "Leda and the Swan" making it "unmistakenly modernist" (1996: 483), but also in style.

Foster points out that, for a while from 1912, Pound in fact "exercised a variable degree of influence on the final versions of WBY's poems" (1998:475/6). As Yeats attests in a letter to Lady Gregory in January 1913, Pound "helps me get back to the definite and the concrete away from modern abstractions. To talk over a poem with him is like getting you to put a sentence into dialect. All becomes clear and natural" (Foster 1998:476). It is the "definite and concrete" that Eliot notes in Yeats's later plays. Indeed, Eliot highlights a "cause" of this "improvement" to be "the gradual purging out of poetical ornament," and he argues, acutely conscious that he and Yeats belong to the modern age ("our age" – Unterecker 1963:54), that this purging "is the most painful part of the labour, so far as the versification goes, of the modern poet who tries to write a play in verse" (1963:61). The "course of improvement" for Yeats, Eliot argues, was "towards a greater and greater starkness" (1963:61), with his "purification" of verse "much more evident" in *Four Plays for Dancers*" (1921) and "in the two in the posthumous volume" in which "he had found his right and final dramatic form" (1963:61).

Pound's influence, of course, encompassed not only the "definite and concrete" in style but also in meaning. Foster highlights another major outcome, quoting the recollections of Mrs George Yeats (nee Hyde Lees) that Pound "went through the poems and W.B. accepted his suggestions," and that "certain words W.B. used no longer had the same meaning" (1998:475). Significantly, Foster points out, among "the key words whose sense changed under Pound's influence was 'reality'" and "from this point WBY began to use it to mean not only Platonic perfection but uncompromising actuality" (1998:475). This dual meaning illuminates the famous lines from "The Fisherman": "All day I'd looked in the face/What I had hoped 'twould be/ To write for my own race/And the reality" (*Collected Poems* 1971:166). I will demonstrate in the next chapter that this dual meaning of "reality" is particularly

significant in Yeats's conception of Irish national identity, articulated within the specifically colonial context of the Ireland of his times.

All of this is to suggest, then, that the construction of Yeats as a modernist by literary critics has been both thorough and widely accepted. In a sentence that encapsulates this conventional construction, York writes that Yeats “develops from a Romantic standpoint to a modernist one, bringing with him a cult of myth and of mystical vision which he tempers with a harsh awareness of the bleakness of the modern world, with an acute lucidity about his own feelings and a masterful sense of rhythm and construction” (Bradford 1996:483). This is, in short, the canonical Yeats that readers have come to know in the decades after his death in 1939. However, having made and expounded, so to speak, a little on the critical construction of Yeats as a modernist, and wishing to avoid over-examining the field of modernism and ‘Yeats as modernist’ (i.e. at the expense of bringing his ‘postcolonial’ credentials to the fore), I wish merely to highlight three major, interrelated features generally taken to be among those that distinguish modernist writers and writing. These are features which, to my mind, require foregrounding in examining Yeats's conception of Irish national identity. In highlighting these three features, I am in effect (re)constructing Yeats as a modernist in specifically ‘postcolonial’ terms for the purpose of enhancing his status as a ‘postcolonial’ figure. In doing so, I am underlining intersections of aspects of Yeats's biography, thinking and works with certain critics' often very general statements about modernism and modernists.

Firstly, as Wheale explains, modernist artists and writers “often rejected the socially-endorsed forms of religion, such as Christianity” and many “explored substitutive forms of belief, drawn eclectically from a wide range of sources – New Paganism, anthropological texts, religions of the Far East, world mythology, the classical religions of Greece and Rome” (1995:23/24). Informed by such sources and ideas, a “large number of major modernist texts,” Sheppard points out, “deal centrally with the irruption of a ‘meta-world’ into the ‘middle zone of experience,’” an irruption that overturns the “apparently secure, common-sense, bourgeois world by powers which are sub- or inhuman, cosmic, or, at the very least, non-commonsensical” (Giles 1993:16). The over-riding notion, according to Sheppard, is that conventional ‘reality’

or the “world of objects and relationships” in which modern people thought themselves “securely at home” is in fact “surrounded and permeated by a dynamic ‘meta-world’” and “subject to elemental powers over which they have no final control, but with which they have to come to terms or be destroyed” (1993:17).

Thus modernist writers have “a developed sense that reality is not reality as perceived and structured by the Western bourgeois consciousness” (1993:17), and this “modernist sense that reality is threatening to run out of control” produces texts which “through both content and form, aim to shock their audience” out of “conventionalized, 19<sup>th</sup> century modes of perception” and prompt the rethinking of “epistemological” and “ontological categories” (1993:18). Sheppard identifies a wide range of such texts, from Hesse’s *Der Steppenwolf* to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Lawrence’s *Women in Love*, Forster’s *A Passage to India* and Satre’s *La Nausee* (1993:16). To that list, of course, many of Yeats’s works could be added, including “To Ireland in the Coming Times” (“*For the elemental creatures go/About my table to and fro*” – *Collected Poems* 1971:57), “The Second Coming,” with its troubling, apocalyptic image emerging “out of Spiritus Mundi” (1971:211), as well as the two ‘occult’ works that come sharply into focus in the next chapter, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*, the latter with its Epilogue “All Soul’s Night” in which Yeats invokes his spirit-friends “up... from the grave” (1971:256/58).

As Foster explains, the “late 1880s saw a revival of interest in the supernatural and the occult, not paralleled until the 1920s or the 1960s” (1998:50). Key magical and occult texts returned “into circulation” and Madame Blavatsky’s Theosophy, which “related readily to esoteric links with the creative process,” settled “on the bohemian scene” (1998:50) in London. Theosophy, Foster writes, exposed its adherents to philosophy drawn from “Neo-Platonism, the symbolism of the Cabbala, the mysticism of Swedenborg, and, later, the insights of Indian religion” (1998:50). Around this time, Thomas Taylor’s translations of Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists were lent to “young aspirants” by Yeats’s Fenian mentor O’Leary, while seances and “spiritualist experiments” were “the rage in Dublin from 1886 to 1887” (1998:50). Thus the young Yeats, Foster shows, “acquired a ready-made agenda for esoteric study” (1998:50). By their early (and what proved to be lifelong) involvements in this esoteric milieu,

Yeats – “increasingly drawn to the hierarchies, experiments and secret knowledge of the magical tradition” – and his friend Russell – “set towards mysticism” (1998:49) – were, Foster says, “representative of their times” (1998:50).

Furthermore, Foster speculates that Yeats and Russell could “be located in a particular tradition of Irish Protestant interest in the occult” by writers (including Sheridan Le Fanu, Charles Maturin, Bram Stoker, and Elizabeth Bowen) who were “from the increasingly marginalized Irish Protestant middle class, from families with strong clerical connections, declining fortunes and a tenuous hold on landed authority” (1998:50). He points out that the Irish Protestant “sense of displacement, their loss of social and psychological integration towards the end of the nineteenth century, was particularly acute” for the Yeats family, and speculates that Irish Protestant interest in the occult could in general be “seen on one level as a strategy for coping with contemporary threats” like Catholicism “and on another as a search for psychic control” (1998:50). Foster also points out that Yeats was “prepared for belief” in the occult by Sligo family lore, which accepted “second sight and familiar ghosts” and was “rich in stories of hauntings” (1998:50).

Thus this admixture of the Irish Protestant decline, Yeats’s Sligo childhood, and his lifelong efforts to unify his nationalist, occult and literary pursuits illuminates Yeats’s concern with Irish mythology and folk tales (including his collaborations with Lady Gregory). It exposes a particular modernist, but also nationalist, aspect of Yeats’s thinking: the imaginative fusing of the ‘real’ and spiritual worlds, and concerning the latter a merging of the occult with Irish (“peasant”) folklore. As Yeats put it in a letter to his father in 1911, about his work with Gregory on “the big book on Fairy Belief that we have been doing for years”: “My part is to show that what we call Fairy Belief is exactly the same thing as English and American spiritism except that fairy belief is very much more charming” (Foster 1998:439).

Indeed, Larissy (with Foster his source) argues that since Yeats “clearly believed that the magic and esoteric lore he knew” were “substantially the same as those known to the Druids” he was “able to think of his Protestant inheritance as offering not only a system to vie with Catholicism” but one that “had truer access to a perennial wisdom

possessed by the ancient Celts” (1997:xxiv). This “synthesis of psychical research and fairy lore” that was for Yeats “firmly established” (Foster 1998:439/40) by 1911 can be seen as a motivating factor in Yeats’s earlier documenting of Irish “peasant” folk tales and his lifelong use of Irish mythology in his poems. Furthermore, as I will demonstrate particularly in the next chapter, this synthesis has profound implications for Yeats’s conception of national identity in terms of his project to help shape and define a new, independent and emphatically ‘postcolonial’ Irish nation.

Crucially, Foster also delineates Yeats’s scepticism in occult matters, and explains that because the “spiritual and real worlds, in WBY’s mind, interpenetrated each other,” this fusion allowed “for belief as a metaphorical rather than a literal truth” (1998:51). Foster explains that “Russell saw visions as actualizations; WBY interpreted them as symbols, to be analysed further,” an approach that “enabled him, usefully, to come down on two sides of the visionary question at once” (1998:51). As Larissy puts it, “while Yeats was talking about spirits he was, indeed, talking also about images, and he often did so in a way which left it open to the reader to remain agnostic about the spirits” (1997:xxv). Thus Yeats’s immersion in the occult cannot be taken to remove him from conventional ‘reality,’ a word which, as I’ve pointed out, Foster indicates came also to encompass “uncompromising actuality” (1998:475); it can rather be seen as part of his ambition to draw the reader into the power of the imagination in confronting very material concerns. At this stage, however, it suffices to again stress this modernist feature of Yeats: his mobilisation of eclectic occult ideas (including that of a ‘meta-world’ populated by elemental powers), giving rise to what Sheppard calls a “developed sense that reality is not reality as perceived and structured by the Western bourgeois consciousness” (Giles 1993:17) – a “consciousness,” it must be noted in anticipation of examining the ‘postcolonial’ Yeats, that informed and was informed by colonialism.

Inseparable from this destabilization of conventional ‘reality’ by recourse to a “meta-world” and “elemental powers,” the second major feature of modernist writers and writing that I wish to emphasize is their radical destabilization of the notion of stable, fixed identity. Sheppard writes that communicating “the strangeness” of the ‘meta-world’ meant modernist painters and writers giving up “the fixed point of perspective

inherited from the Renaissance” (1993:17). The effect of there being “more to reality and human nature than can be humanly determined, appropriated, named and explained,” Sheppard suggests, is not only to destabilize conventional ‘reality’ but also to simultaneously “destabilize” the conventional notion of “identity” as well as “the structures of genealogy and property with which this identity is bound up” (1993:24). Sheppard underlines that “it was above all Nietzsche’s philosophy” which, making “its major initial impact during the high modernist period,” comprised “the most damaging polemic” (1993:19) against nineteenth-century liberal humanist assumptions about identity.

The influence of Nietzsche on Yeats is well documented by critics, who point to Yeats’s reading of works by the German philosopher “in 1902 and 1903” (Hamburger 1969:81). Ellmann writes that Nietzsche “delighted” Yeats and “proved to be almost as enthralling for Yeats as unravelling Blake had been from 1889 to 1892,” with the German providing “European authority for many ideas which he had come upon either by himself or in strange places” (1964:91), i.e. the occult. He adds that Yeats “rightly perceived that there were few irreconcilable differences between the English poet and the German,” not least in their denunciation of dualistic or “conventional morality” (1964:92) based on simplistic categories of good and evil. While Yeats’s “views of man and human psychology were not identical with those of Blake and Nietzsche,” Ellmann argues, they “may instructively be juxtaposed” (1964:93). He highlights that while there are “limits of his debt to the German philosopher” and Yeats “kept his independence” (1964:96), particularly in that “he held himself back from an extremism that might subject his mind and verse” (1964:98), it remains that “Nietzsche, closer in time to Yeats than Blake, often presented formulations with which Yeats found himself astonishingly in sympathy” (1964:93).

The application of certain “views of man and human psychology” and extension of the denunciation of dualistic or “good and evil” morality by Yeats to the Irish colonial context in terms of his Doctrine of the Mask and System will be examined in the next chapter. However, it must immediately be registered that, in regard to Yeats’s concern with ‘identity’ and his formulation of his Doctrine of the Mask, Nietzsche exerted a degree of influence on Yeats’s thinking. Ellmann argues that Yeats, “whom the term



'mask' had already attracted," "followed Nietzsche" in "analysing the individual self" by way of a "relation between the self and its 'mask'" (1964:93). The "advantage" for Yeats "of the mask of Nietzsche over the 'pose' of Oscar Wilde was that the former was virile and unconnected with estheticism" (1964:93), and Ellmann indicates that some functions and effects of the Yeatsian mask match those of the Nietzschean one. However, Ellmann points out, "Nietzsche had not much systematized his reflections about the mask" although "his writings were full of suggestions" (1964:93). Yeats, he argues, is "more methodical in his organization" (1964:94) of the process of adopting a mask and becoming one's ideal self, with Nietzsche's "remarks on this process" using "other terms than mask" (1964:94).

While the particularities of Yeats's conception of the mask, specifically in terms of 'identity' in the Irish colonial context, will be dealt with in the next chapter, Nietzsche's influence on modernist thought in broader terms in regard to 'identity' must be registered in delineating the wider intellectual milieu in which Yeats was operating. Pippin indicates that Nietzsche's philosophy dismisses "pretensions of social independence" in characterizing "all the major institutions of modernity as functions of resentment, or 'herd society,' all expressions of 'failed independence'" (1991:39). This of course has negative implications for claims of individual and collective independence (and identity), with Nietzsche arguing that what "independence there is, the independence of the artistic imagination" is "often achieved at the price of a very costly social 'refusal'... loneliness and isolation" (1991:40). This is a position that illuminates Yeats's reference to himself as one of the last romantics (i.e. an isolated hero). As Sheppard suggests, most modernists "disliked what they espied from their advanced position" (Giles 1993:41) in this regard and, unsurprisingly, these "avant-garde artists" were "out to shock" (1993:26) their audiences out of slavish bourgeois conformity, including out of humanist-logocentric (single point of view) assumptions about identity. Such assumptions, as explicated in chapter one, also informed and were informed by colonialism, and as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, Yeats was also "out to shock" in this context.

This vaunted primacy of the "artistic imagination," Sheppard indicates, can be allied with the recurring "attacks" within modernist literature "on the supremacy of human

reason" (1993:26). Such attacks or efforts "to shock" emphasize "other faculties of human nature" such as "Dionysiac vitality" (Nietzsche's followers); "energy" (Futurists); "spontaneity, intuition and the imagination" (Dadaists); "ecstasy" (Expressionists); or dreams "and the unconscious" (Surrealists) (1993:26). Generally, as Sheppard describes it, modernists claim that the "fluctuations of reality" and "complexities of human nature" are "invisible to the eye of empirical reason" and can "be approached, visualized and grasped only by those faculties in human nature, which come from below or beyond rational faculties" (1993:26). Eliot's emphasis on Yeats's imaginative power, and Yeats's own emphasis on the imagination in his occult philosophy and work (including, as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, his conception of Irish national identity), must therefore not merely be viewed in terms of the Romantic legacy of the 'primacy of the imagination' but in terms of a vitally 'modern' opposition to the notions of "reason" and "rationality" which were subscribed to and upheld by Western culture (and, as I made clear in chapter one, colonial rule). As Ellmann puts it, Yeats "wanted to show that the current faith in reason and in logic ignored a far more important human faculty, the imagination" (1964:3). Yeats, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, was opposed to the fixed point of perspective, the 'supremacy' of human reason, and therefore the notion of stable, fixed identity as 'fact', emphasizing the power of the imagination in the construction of identity.

Linked to this opposition to the hegemony of Reason is what Sheppard calls the modernists' view that language is "equally limited" (Giles 1993:27). The sentiment of Nietzsche and De Saussure, for instance, was that "although language feels as though it has some absolute and immutable (i.e. divinely legitimized) status to those who live 'inside' it" language is in fact "a relative and continuously evolving system of arbitrary signs" and therefore "has no a priori connection with reality" (1993:27). For modernist language critics like Nietzsche, there "is no one-to-one correspondence between immutable material objects and a noun-based syntax which names and orders those objects," and furthermore "no substance exists to substantiate substantives (i.e. to cement together the world of language and the world of material objects)" (1993:27). In view of the colonial discourse of identity outlined in chapter one, a discourse reifying Reason and repudiated by Fanon, this modernist separation of

language from ‘reality’ in itself destabilizes any negative identity imposition through language as ‘fact’ by the colonizer, and opens the way for a challenge to such ‘fact’ by the colonized. As I will show in the next chapter, this separation illuminates Yeats’s disdain for imposed or passively received ‘fact’ ordained by the colonizer’s discourse of identity, and informs his emphasis on the imagination and images in identity-creation by the colonized.

Furthermore, as Sheppard also writes, Nietzsche’s philosophy accordingly contains “several penetrating remarks to the effect that the existence of the shifter ‘Ich’ (‘I’) should not mislead us into thinking that there exists a unified substance or organic cell which corresponds to it” (1993:19). Indeed, Sheppard states that Nietzsche held human nature to be “fundamentally Dionysiac, governed by the amoral god of unreason and drunkenness,” evoking a “... ‘sense of dark underground forces mysteriously stirring, from Freud’s Unconscious to Marx’s masses, from Lawrence’s Dark Gods to the sleeping giant of Finnegans Wake and Yeats’s gods and Sidhe”” (1993:41). Similar ideas, Sheppard adds, inform and mark the work of Freud, Jung, and Adler, “all of whom were more or less avowedly indebted to Nietzsche” (1993:41). It is well documented that Yeats was a voracious autodidact, and that by 1916 he was well “acquainted with the ideas of Freud and Jung” (Foster 2003:66). This pair’s emphasis on the unconscious or subconscious, as will become evident in this and the next chapter, also exerts a degree of influence on Yeats’s conception of Irish national identity.

I wish particularly to stress in regard to this move away from the ‘single point of view,’ and the destabilization of the conventional conception of identity as stable and fixed, the fundamental importance of the unconscious to modernist writers – Yeats in particular. Again, Yeats should be seen as representative of his times. Sheppard writes that it was during this “high modernist period, from the turn of the century onwards” (Giles 1993:19) that the notion “that human behaviour was impelled by unconscious powers” (1993:20) acquired “wide currency in intellectual circles, largely as a result of the psychoanalytical school around Freud” (1993:19/20). Sheppard adds that these powers “were said to be irrational and amoral; controllable only in a limited way by conscious reason and moral imperatives; knowable, like the sub-atomic world, only

indirectly, via dreams and neuroses” and “deeply offensive to and so ignored by conventional wisdom” (1993:20). Western Man, Sheppard explains, “was seen to be at the mercy of basic unconscious drives whose nature could be known only imperfectly” (1993:20). As he puts it: “Far from being rational, Man was seen to be innately irrational” and far “from being inherently moral, Man was seen to be fundamentally animal” (1993:20).

Freud’s theory, Sheppard also explains, was that the human ego is “a bundle of discrete structures without substantial unity” and that correspondingly “the structures of human culture had been built over and at the cost of the repressed Unconscious,” which Freud described as “analogous to... ‘an aboriginal population of the mind’” (1993:20). The result of this, Freud believed, was “the Great War in particular and a profound sense of unease in general” (1993:20). In the Irish colonial context, as will be reiterated later in this chapter (by reference to Fanon), the colonizer deemed exactly this perceived “aboriginal” (read primitive and inferior) mind of the colonized as in dire need of colonial control. And as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, Yeats exploits the revolutionary potential of Freud’s insight to show the so-called “aboriginal” or unconscious mind to be, in fact, ‘naturally’ modern in the positive sense (i.e. bent on liberation). In doing so, Yeats indicates that colonial (Western bourgeois) repression of the unconscious is fundamentally ‘unnatural’, always-already under threat, and in dire need of overthrowing psychologically (or psycho-spiritually in terms of a passionate internalized violence) at the level of Irish national identity.

Unsurprisingly, in light of Freud and Jung’s views regarding the ‘nature’ of the unconscious or subconscious, modernist writers produced a range of works in which, Sheppard explains, protagonists “have acquired what initially looks like a secure and stable identity by neglecting, repressing or doing violence to the shifting, spontaneous, natural, unconscious side of their beings” (1993:24). These protagonists “have become over-cerebral, over-confident and/or over-conventionalized” and are as a result “brought low and in some cases transformed by a series of encounters with mythological beings or elemental powers – i.e. with objective correlatives of unconscious drives” that are “more primitive and more powerful than what Lawrence... called the ‘old stable ego – of the character’” (1993:24). Sheppard

indicates that, given this “destabilized” and “highly confusing, irrational universe” in which “the self is at best out of control and at worst non-existent” (1993:25), there arises before the modernist sensibility what I would call a kind of ‘identity crisis’: a loss of a sense of selfhood and therefore of psychological security.

As Sheppard describes it: “... the individual consciousness, painfully aware of the relativity of its perspective and always on the point of being overwhelmed by the sub- and supra-human powers... is left either desperately asking what it is or emphatically insisting that it is” (1993:25). In the face of such circumstances and uncertainty, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, Yeats refuses passive ‘non-existence’ and in promoting the active claiming and fashioning of selfhood bears out Ellmann’s observation that he “defends the imagination with the defiance of a man who sees himself as preventing the incursions of chaos” (1964:245). In particular, in the colonial context, Yeats insists on the mobilization of the imagination and unconscious for the purpose of constructing and upholding Irish national identity, and in doing so envisions the Irish as an imagined community.

The modernist emphasis on an unconscious closely linked to and even inseparable from the imagination illuminates what Sheppard lists as the sixth of his “nine fairly well distinguished types of response” to the modern “crisis” of “Western humanist and/or idealist culture” (Giles 1993:33): namely primitivism. The feeling informing “much modernist writing and painting,” he explains, is that so-called “primitive” cultures, while “technologically less advanced than the modern West” (1993:31), enjoy “a freedom and balance” which the “modernizing West” lacks (1993:32). These cultures are seen as possibly “better equipped to deal with the totality of a universe in which Man is not at home, of which he is not the centrepiece, and in the face of which he inevitably experiences a profound sense of Angst” (1993:31). Many modernist intellectuals’ “attraction” to ““primitive” or “pseudo-primitive” art, “tribalistic communities” and folk or “peasant culture” (1993:31) is therefore indicative of their feeling, “rightly or wrongly”, that “pre-modern or non-Western cultures” have “not abstracted the logos from the rest of the personality and co-exist with rather than seek to dominate external Nature” (1993:32).

Thus non-European or pre-modern cultures “are used not just as sources of aesthetic inspiration, but as a cultural model for emulation” (1993:37). This, I contend, illuminates Yeats’s concern with Irish mythology, folk tales and representations of the Irish “peasant”, associating the pre-modern peasant and “peasant culture” (including Fairy Belief) with the unconscious (Nature) and occult spiritism. As Wheale suggests, for many modernists “irrationalism and unconscious experience as pre-modern resources in the psyche” are to be “called on as a form of resistance to the tyranny of bureaucratic renovation in modernity” (1995:24). As I will argue in the next chapter, these “pre-modern resources within the psyche” are also exactly what Yeats seeks to mobilise to overcome colonial oppression in the process of Irish national identity-creation.

What Sheppard calls an “esoteric hermeticism like that of Yeats” (Giles 1993:34), pointed to in terms of “mysticism” (third on his list of modernist responses), can therefore be seen to embrace the existence of “a firm spiritual substratum” (1993:35) – the unconscious. Indeed, as Sheppard points out, for the modernist “Angst betokens a very deep realization that the prevailing system which constructs what Lawrence called the ‘old stable ego’ is at odds with the profoundest stratum of the personality” (1993:42). This substratum, whether “psychological or metaphysical,” lies beyond “or within what looks like entropic chaos or unresolvable conflict” and “permits what Jung termed ‘integration’” (1993:35): an “interchange” in which both “conscious and unconscious contents” are “shaped into a coherent psychic totality” (Jacobi 1968:105). By ‘totality’, Jacobi notes, Jung “means more than unity or wholeness,” with the term implying “a creative synthesis, comprising an active force” (1968:10) and identified with the psyche as a “self-regulating system” (1968:53) in which there “is no balance, no system of self-regulation, without opposition” (1968:53/54).

Indeed, according to Jung, “opposition is a law inherent in human nature” and “psychic life is governed by” this “necessary opposition” (1968:53). As I will elucidate in the next chapter, the notion of a necessary psychic opposition is compatible with Yeats’s esoteric or occult views on human nature and ‘becoming’ at the level of identity, and is incorporated into his Doctrine of the Mask and System. It is incorporated in such a way that the unconscious, associated with Nature as a

creative force, is portrayed as not only underlying and threatening stable, fixed identity of the kind conventionally moulded and subscribed to by modern bourgeois society, but as a substratum to be productively harnessed in overthrowing the ‘prevailing system’ of colonialism whereby Irish identity has been constructed and imposed in negative terms. The aim of this harnessing, via a distinctly Yeatsian method of imagining, is to achieve a form of ‘integration’ – what Yeats calls ‘Unity of Being’ – at the level of Irish national identity.

Inseparable from the destabilization of stable, secure identity by recourse to the unconscious, the third major feature of modernist writers and writing that I wish to emphasize is their non-linear conception of time and history. For the nineteenth-century or “pre-modernist” thinker, Sheppard explains, time was “a progressive process moving ever upwards in a dialectical or linear manner as Man brought even more of the natural world under his rational, moral, economic or cultural control” (Giles 1993:29). Again, the colonial mastering of nature and the colonized in terms of these modes of control, underlined by Fanon’s arguments as outlined in chapter one, must be borne in mind and associated with both the notions of stable, fixed identity and linear, progressive time. However, Freud had written that “the processes of the Unconscious are timeless in the sense that they are not ordered temporally, not altered by the passage of time, and have no relation at all with time as that is normally understood” (1993:29). Likewise, for the modernist writer, time “ceases to be a regular and common-sense process in which a precise but fixed gap, the present, separates the past from the future”; rather, “modernist experiences of flux, decentering and apocalypse” challenge and “explode these ideas” (1993:29) of progressive, linear time.

Sheppard explains that time becomes “either elastic” (1993:29), with the present “expanding and contracting according to the situation of the observer”; or it becomes “incipiently apocalyptic”; or “a kind of simultaneity in which past, present and future merge into one” (1993:30). Likewise, history “ceases to be a progressive movement upwards” and becomes “something akin to an irregular series of surges in no particular direction” (1993:30). As he puts it: “Each surge may have its shape, but a gap will separate it from the next, differently shaped and differently extended surge –

which may well move in a different direction or, alternatively, prove to be a recurrence of the same” (1993:30). Significantly, he adds, from “such an elastic, decentred, multi-dimensional view of time and history, it was only a short step to a profound doubt in that assumed supremacy of Western civilization” – including, I would add, colonial rule – “which had sustained so much nineteenth-century thinking and political action” (1993:30).

Indeed, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, Yeats subscribes to the view of the unconscious as “timeless”. His esoteric System (in which the gyres represent, among other things, history as cyclical) is also a prime example of such decentring or exploding of conventional, linear time. Ellmann points out that, for Yeats, “Nietzsche was especially helpful on cyclical theory,” and he “discovered in Nietzsche an attitude towards the cycles which was akin to his own” (1964:92), that of ‘tragic joy’. “Instead of an eastern resignation towards ‘eternal recurrence,’” Ellmann writes, Nietzsche’s “Zarathustra is full of western exultation” (1964:92). Ellmann points out (although he does not quote from the poems in order) that in late life Yeats “wrote his two fine poems ‘The Gyres’ and ‘Lapis Lazuli’” and “framed the Nietzschean lines” (1964:93): “All things fall, and are built again,/And those that build them again are gay” (*Collected Poems* 1971:339) and “We that look on but laugh in tragic joy” (1971:337).

However, Ellmann points out elsewhere that Yeats did not simply set “himself up as the poet of eternal recurrence, as Nietzsche was its philosopher” (1960:268). Rather, he emphasized striving “towards the state of Unity of Being” (1960:268). As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, this state – akin to ‘integration’ – is for Yeats to be a ‘natural’ product of identity-creation by individuals, including and especially by the (ex)colonized Irish. Furthermore, Sheppard describes the fifth response on his list as “the decision to turn one’s back on the modern age,” and argues that after “the Great War, for instance, Rilke, Yeats and Ball expressed that decision in a ‘flight out of time’ – the emigration to a ‘still point’ or fixed centre of a ‘gyre’ which was geographically as far removed as possible from the confusions of the modern age... in Yeats’s case, the tower in Galway” (Giles 2003:36). However, Yeats’s ‘flight out of time’ to his tower cannot be seen only as an escape from “the confusions of the



modern age,” but has an emphatic and specific ‘national’ dimension. Yeats, as he himself reminds his readers, took refuge at Thoor Ballylee during the Irish Civil War, writing at the end of his esoteric treatise *A Vision*: “Finished at Thoor Ballylee, 1922, in a time of Civil War” (Jeffares 1990:200). As I will explain in the next chapter, the ‘timeless’ unconscious permits for Yeats such a ‘flight out of time’ for the purpose of ‘reorganising the personality’ (symbolised by the tower), a process fundamental to Yeats’s conception of Irish national identity.

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What I have so far attempted, then, is to examine in some depth the canonical construction of Yeats as a modernist, while along the way pointing to the existence, implicit in but ultimately obscured by this ‘modernist’ construction, of ‘another’ Yeats – that is, Yeats the anti-colonial, Irish national poet. The construction of Yeats, explicitly and unequivocally, as an Irish national “poet of decolonization” (Said 1993:278) occurs in Edward Said’s groundbreaking essay entitled “Yeats and Decolonization” in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), in which he firmly situates Yeats within the field of postcolonial theory and in doing so radically and irrevocably alters the established, canonical landscape of Yeats criticism.

The importance of Said’s contribution to Yeats criticism, revitalizing as it does an area of study that prior to his essay appeared well-worn and largely exhausted, should not be underestimated. Indeed, while Yeats’s ‘national’ dimension has by no means been overlooked by critics like Ellmann and Unterecker, and while Kiberd and Foster have in the last decade examined the national and political dimensions of Yeats’s life and works in considerable depth, it is Said’s essay that radically breaks from what could now be called ‘traditional’, even staid Yeats criticism by consciously foregrounding and presenting, for the first time, a Yeats who is more than just a greatly admired modernist with a strong ‘national’ leaning but a Yeats who is rather, more specifically, Ireland’s great decolonizing “national poet”. The immediate effect of Said’s construction of Yeats is to leave one literally (a bit like Yeats’s visionary character Robartes) seeing double. Indeed, whereas Eliot finds himself initially wondering, in momentary disbelief, whether Yeats’s earlier and later work “had been

written by two different men” (Unterecker 1963:56), one is similarly confronted by “two different” men among the number of Yeatses alluded to in chapter one: on the one hand, the ‘modernist’ Yeats, and on the other, the ‘postcolonial’ Yeats.

Such disjointedness is symptomatic of Yeats criticism in general. Ellmann observes as early as 1960, in a summation that remains largely apposite, that writings about Yeats “have tended to be either critical or factually biographical, with no bridge between” (1960:1). “The more that is written,” Ellmann points out, “the more elusive he has become, as critics, friends, and biographers build up a variety of unconnected pictures” (1960:1). Ellmann arrays a smorgasbord of sample Yeatses for the reader and scholar to “choose between” (1960:2): the “nervous romantic sighing through the reeds of the ’eighties and ’nineties and the worldly realist plain-speaking in the ’twenties” (1960:1/2); the “business man founding and directing the Abbey in broad day,” the “wan young Celt haunting the twilight” and the “occultist performing nocturnal incantations”; the “dignified Nobel Prize winner and Senator of the Irish Free State”; and the “libidinous old man and the translator of the Upanishads” (1960:2). “These portraits,” Ellmann adds, “are not easily reconcilable, and the tendency has been, instead of reconciling, to prove certain of them inessential” – i.e. particularly Yeats’s occult pursuits – “or to split up the poet’s life into dozens of unrelated episodes” (1960:2).

Said himself highlights at the outset, touching on aspects raised in his essay rather than on the facets of the modernist Yeats I have outlined above, that Yeats has been “almost completely assimilated into the canon as well as into the discourses of modern English literature and European high modernism” (1993:265). These, Said explains, “reckon with him as a great modern Irish poet, deeply affiliated and interacting with his native traditions, the historical and political context of his times, and the complex situation of being a poet writing in English in a turbulently nationalist Ireland” (1993:265). However, while Yeats has a “settled presence in Ireland, in British culture and literature, and in European modernism” (1993:265), Said argues, he presents “another fascinating aspect: that of the indisputably great national poet” who “during a period of anti-imperialist resistance articulates the experiences, the aspirations, and the restorative vision of a people suffering under the

dominion of an offshore power” (1993:265/256). Said is acutely conscious that this is “not a customary way of interpreting Yeats,” but nonetheless firmly situates Yeats as a poet who from “this perspective” also “belongs in a tradition not usually considered his, that of the colonial world ruled by European imperialism during a climactic insurrectionary stage” (1993:266). Yeats, Said adds, also “belongs naturally to the cultural domain” by virtue of “Ireland’s colonial status,” which “it shares with a host of non-European regions” where “cultural dependence and antagonism” exist “together” (1993:266).

While Said’s point about “cultural dependence and antagonism” in the colonies is insightful and certainly applies to Yeats, his grouping of colonies (including Ireland) into a seemingly homogeneous bloc is a highly contentious manoeuvre. Although “most of the time they are treated separately,” Said argues, the colonies – “India, North Africa, the Caribbean, Central and South America, many parts of Africa, China and Japan, the Pacific archipelago, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, North America and of course Ireland” – “belong in a group together” (1993:266). Said later justifies his position by arguing that, while “the physical” and “geographical connections” are “closer between England and Ireland than between England and India” or “between France and Algeria or Senegal,” the “imperial relationship is there in all cases” (1993:275). The Irish, Said argues, “can never be English any more than Cambodians or Algerians can be French,” and this is “always the case in every colonial relationship” because “the first principle” is that “a clear-cut and absolute hierarchical distinction should remain constant between ruler and ruled, whether or not the latter is white” (1993:275).

While a critique of postcolonial theory and Said’s “ethical and theoretical values” (Young 1990:132) are beyond the scope of this thesis, it must be highlighted that Said’s position invites criticism on grounds of a totalising “theoretical reduction” at the expense of the “mesh of nuance, complexity and contradiction involved when the stories of nations intersect with those of supposedly emblematic individuals” (Foster 2001:xvii) like Yeats. As McCracken points out, Irish “racial attitudes in the 1890s” were “not radically different from those held elsewhere in Europe at the time,” with it being seen “as an affront to be denied home rule, let alone nation statehood” because

the Irish saw themselves as "... 'white men'" (2003:xviii). Irish attitudes "to the subjugated black population" in South Africa, for instance, were "not as progressive as their descendants might desire" (2003:xviii). What Foster calls the Irish propensity to "therapeutic voluntary amnesia" (2001:58) or "elision of memory" (2001:77) might help to explain why, as McCracken argues, the subject of "Irish racism and racial attitudes" remains "a much neglected field of study" (2003:xix). Indeed, Irish solidarity around the turn of the century was not with the subjugated black population of South Africa but with their Afrikaner oppressors. As McCracken highlights, the "Irish pro-Boer movement and the Irish nationalist movement" were for a period "indistinguishable" (2003:xx).

Foster echoes McCracken's observation by highlighting the case of the emigrant Irish in Montserrat, who became the "colonizing elite" and who "treated their African slaves as badly as any other colonizers, anywhere, and worse than many" (2001:xiv). In this light, Foster points to the "blanket wishful thinking" informing "so many untested generalizations" and "assumptions" – including "behind comparative post-colonial studies" – about "the Platonic solidarity between struggling Irish nationalists and their supposedly analogous victims elsewhere" (2001:xiv). While Said's initial grouping does not overtly imply solidarity among the colonies, but rather a sameness in the hierarchical ruler-ruled mode of imperialist hegemony, he does state that Yeats "belongs naturally to the cultural domain" by "virtue of Ireland's colonial status," which Ireland "shares with a host of non-European regions: cultural dependence and antagonism together." He later proceeds to draw parallels between Yeats and poets like Césaire and Neruda.

Although "cultural dependence and antagonism" may be a common denominator in theory, it is, as Young highlights, "still an open question... whether an African pastoralist shares the same existential 'bestial floor' with an Irish poet and his readers" (1990:131). A "general feature" of "humanist common denominators," Young argues, is that they "are meaningless" because "they bypass the local cultural codes that make personal experience articulate" (1990:131). It follows, then, that while the Irish cannot be English any more than the Algerians can be French, it remains that the Irish cannot be Algerian any more than the Algerians can be Irish.

Nor can the imperialist “first principle” of ruler-ruled in practice mean an always-identical relationship across the grouping. The “question” Young raises could therefore be restated, whether an unspecified black, first-language native language-speaking, African pastoralist (or even ‘resistance’ intellectual) shares the same “cultural domain” as a specifically white, first-language English-speaking, modernist Anglo-Irish poet and magus schooled in the Western poetical, philosophical and magical traditions in Europe, namely Yeats, simply “by virtue of” their respective country’s “colonial status”.

That said, Said does treat Ireland separately in some detail, preserving the specificities of the Irish colonial context: the more than seven centuries of “domination” of “the land” by “an alien power,” with the “idea of murdering Gaels” having been “from the start” royally approved and considered “patriotic, heroic and just” (1993:268). By the eighteenth century, Said explains, the opposition to English rule had “under Wolfe Tone and Grattan” acquired an identity of its own” (1993:268/269), with patriotism high during the mid-century and “the extraordinary talents of Swift, Goldsmith, and Burke” giving the “Irish resistance a discourse entirely its own” (1993:269). It should be added that the young Yeats was, again, representative of his times in being influenced by the milieu of Irish nationalism in 1880s Dublin. By participating in debates at Contemporary Club and Young Ireland Society meetings and, through this exposure to the “world of the nationalist intelligentsia” (Foster 1998:45), becoming heir to this ready-made resistance identity and discourse, Yeats was able to (in Anderson’s phrase) “‘think’ the nation” (1991:22). The Irish colonial context therefore conforms to Hobsbawm’s general argument that “debate on such questions as the theoretical criteria of nationhood became passionate” from the 1880s, with “any particular answer... believed to imply a particular form of political strategy, struggle or programme” (1990:44). Indeed, the young Yeats was actively engaged and embroiled in such debate from early adulthood.

Furthermore, as Ellmann points out, Yeats was born “at a fortunate moment” because “from the early 1840s Celtic scholars were in a fever of translation,” with the Celtic Archaeological Society and the Ossianic Society “formed for the express purpose of making texts available in Irish and English” (1964:17). This made “it possible for

Yeats to read his national literature” (1964:17), and to thereby inherit and interrogate Ireland’s established resistance identity and discourse; to, again, ‘think the nation’. As Foster explains, under the influence of the “older Fenian journalist returned from exile” (1998:42) O’Leary, Yeats moved “tentatively” towards “more radical politics” (1998:44) far removed from his Sligo upbringing. Not only did Yeats support Parnell and Home Rule, but he approved of “the “extremist” (1998:43) and “separatist Fenian tradition that stretched back to the romantic nationalism of the early nineteenth century and the memory of the 1798 Rising” (1998:44). Fenian tradition “carried an indefinable aura of romance, nobility and selfless commitment – once it seemed safely dormant” (1998:42). Aligning himself with Fenianism, Yeats “could find a place among people whose interests he shared and whose achievements he admired” (1998:44). Importantly, with O’Leary’s help, he enjoyed a ready outlet for his nationalist poetry and reviews through Irish and Irish American publications. Thus the course of Yeats’s controversial and protean life, informed by an anti-colonial Irish nationalism brought to bear on many of his roles and activities, was set according to the historical, specifically colonial conditions of the Ireland of his times.

Putting Yeats’s biographical details aside for the moment, what must be emphasized is Said’s comprehensive delineation of the effect of colonial rule on the Irish not only in geographical and material terms but, crucially, at the level of identity. For instance, the Ordnance Survey of Ireland ordered in 1824 and “carried out almost entirely by English personnel,” Said explains, was “to Anglicize the names, redraw the land boundaries to permit valuation of property (and further expropriation of land in favour of English and ‘seignorial’ families) and permanently subjugate the population” (1993:273). This had, as Said argues (quoting Hamer), “the ‘immediate effect of defining the Irish as incompetent’” and “... ‘depressing their national achievement’” (1993:273). As Hamer puts it, in “such a process” the “colonized is typically (supposed to be) passive and spoken for, does not control its own representation but is represented in accordance with a hegemonic impulse by which it is constructed as a stable and unitary entity” (1993:273).

I wish to stress the correlation between this Irish context and Anderson’s explication of census-thinking, which I’ve argued in chapter one informs the imposition of

seemingly stable and fixed ‘colonial identity’ in terms of the Manichaeic binary. In light of the modern Western bourgeois conception of identity as stable and secure, as described earlier in this chapter, it must be added that this, too, informs and is informed by the attitude of colonial rule as outlined in chapter one. Given the modernist destabilization of stable, fixed identity described earlier in this chapter, it should already be clear that this imposed conception of negative Irish identity would be challenged by the ‘postcolonial’ Yeats. This destabilization is a feature of the ‘modernist’ Yeats that will be further examined in the next chapter, as a feature of the ‘postcolonial’ Yeats.

Furthermore, as Said argues, from the ceding of Ireland by the Pope to England’s Henry II in the 1150s, an “amazingly persistent cultural attitude existed toward Ireland as a place whose inhabitants were a barbarian and degenerate race” (1993:266). A “reductive” and “slandering encapsulation of Irish actualities” would be “the fate of the Irish at the hands of English writers for eight centuries,” in which the Irish would be defined and portrayed as “potato-eaters”, “bog-dwellers” or “shanty people” (1993:286). The “idea of English racial superiority” was so long “ingrained” that “so humane a poet and gentleman” as Edmund Spenser in 1596 proposed “that since the Irish were barbarian Scythians, most of them should be exterminated” (1993:268). The Irish identity henceforth imposed by “a whole tradition of British and European thought” (1993:284) was that “of a separate and inferior race, usually unregenerately barbarian, often delinquent and primitive” (1993:285). I wish to emphasize that this colonial view of the “primitive” as fit only for subjugation is diametrically opposed to the modernist (and the ‘modernist’ Yeats’s) view of the primitive as fit for emulation. It should therefore already be clear that the attitude of the ‘postcolonial’ Yeats towards the ‘primitive’ Irish embraces the latter, positive sense. This, as I will explain later in this chapter, has more to do with Yeats’s interest in the occult and the unconscious than the ‘primitive’ peasant as an embodiment of pre-modern unselfconsciousness and traditional ‘folkways’.

Said also underlines the “capacity” of colonialism – including in this Irish context – for “separating the individual from his or her own instinctual life, breaking the

generative lineaments of the national identity” (1993:286). Said quotes Fanon’s argument in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

“On the unconscious plane, colonialism therefore did not seek to be considered by the native as a gently loving mother who protects her child from a hostile environment, but rather as a mother who unceasingly restrains her fundamentally perverse offspring from managing to commit suicide and from giving free rein to its evil instincts. The colonial mother protects her child from itself, from its ego, and from its physiology, its biology, and its own unhappiness which is its very essence” (Fanon 2001:161).

In light of Said’s delineation of the comprehensive “banishing” of Irish identity “except as a lower order of being” (1993:267) from English culture, I wish to stress that the battlegrounds for resistance thus included the colonizer’s view of the Irish as primitive and racially inferior, as well as the accompanying view of the imperative for rigorous and ruthless control and subjugation of the colonized – especially on the apparently “delinquent”, instinctive, “evil”, fundamentally ‘unruly’ unconscious plane. Control of the “unconscious plane” is therefore vital to colonial rule and, I wish to underline, therefore necessarily vital to the programme of decolonization. In the Irish context, the “unconscious plane” was clearly a contested site: crucial to the conception of identity subscribed to by the colonizer and therefore, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, also crucial to Yeats’s revolutionary conception of an Irish national identity created seemingly outside of the colonizer’s Manichaean binary.

Overall, Said’s examination and construction of Yeats as a ‘postcolonial’ figure is organised in terms of what he calls the “two distinct political moments” within the nationalist revival “in Ireland as elsewhere” (1993:270). The first, he explains, is the “pronounced awareness of European and Western culture as imperialism” (1993:270). This is “a reflexive moment of consciousness” (1993:270) to which belongs the literature of “anti-imperialist resistance” (1993:271). Said argues that the “primacy of



the geographical element” is the foremost feature that “radically distinguishes the imagination of anti-imperialism,” owing to imperialism being “an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control (1993:271). The native’s “colonial servitude” begins with the “loss of locality to the outsider” (1993:271), with a resultant alienation of the colonized “from their authentic traditions, ways of life, and political organisations” (1993:272). Thus anti-imperialist resistance involves the searching for and restoration of “geographical identity” which, because of the daunting cultural and military presence of the “colonizing outsider,” can attach to a land “recoverable at first only through the imagination” (1993:271). Again, I wish to highlight the importance of the imagination to the ‘modernist’ Yeats as the “antennae of the race” and “unacknowledged legislator” for mankind, but at the same time foreground this primacy of the imagination for Yeats as a national “poet of decolonization” who sees himself as thereby shaping the sensibility of his “imagined community”.

Into this category of ‘geographical imagining’ Said places Yeats as an exemplary figure, citing in particular Yeats’s “cartographic” (1993:272) impulse to, as part of “the culture of resistance,” imaginatively “reclaim, rename and reinhabit the land” (1993:273). Yeats’s early collection of poems *The Rose* (1893), Said argues, is indicative of Yeats’s attempt, because the “space at home in the peripheries has been usurped and put to use by outsiders for their purpose,” to “seek out, to map, to invent, or to discover a third nature” (1993:272). This third nature is not “pristine and pre-historical (‘Romantic Ireland’s dead and gone’, says Yeats)” but one that derives “from the deprivations of the present” (1993:272). Thus Yeats’s “anti-imperialist imagination” (1993:272), Said argues, creates a “sense of the land reappropriated by its people” and makes possible the “search for authenticity, for a more congenial national origin than that provided by colonial history, for a new pantheon of heroes and (occasionally) heroines, myths, and religions” (1993:273).

Said explains that “dominating” the Irish nationalist “movement” for “at least the last two hundred years” was “the attempt to control the land” (1993:285). He argues that Yeats “cannot be severed” from the “quest” to fulfil “the words of the 1916 proclamation that founded the Irish Republic”: that the “right of the people of Ireland

to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies” is to be “sovereign and infeasible” (1993:285). Quoting Flanagan, Said argues that Yeats “contributed.... in Irish terms, and of course in a singularly powerful and compelling manner, that process of simultaneous abstraction and reification that, defiant of logic, is the heart of nationalism” (1993:285). Yeats’s influence on the “movement,” Said highlights, was marked, for “to this work several generations of lesser writers also contributed, articulating the expression of Irish identity as it attaches to the land, to its Celtic origins, to a growing body of nationalist experiences and leaders (Wolfe Tone, Connolly, Mitchell, Isaac Butt, O’Connell, the United Irishmen, the Home Rule movement, and so on), and to a specifically national literature” (1993:285).

Said is of course describing mostly, to use Eliot’s description, the “Yeats of the Celtic Twilight”: the young poet who not only dreams to “arise and go now” (*Collected Poems* 1971:44) to Innisfree and who sets about imaginatively mapping the Sligo and Irish landscape, complete with Irish place-names (as in “The Fiddler of Dooney”), but who, under O’ Leary’s Fenian influence, consciously draws “heavily on the myths and beliefs of ancient Ireland” (Foster 2001:10) in his poetry (as in “The Wanderings of Oisín”) and plays. This is also the poet who argues for an Irish national literature that “must not fall a prey to mere shibboleths, to... the Shamrock and the Pepperpot” (Ellmann 1960:107), and takes “seriously his role” as “a folklorist” (Castle 2001:53) in displacing colonial stereotyping of the Irish as “potato-eaters”, “bog-dwellers” or “shanty people”. Yeats’s folklorist role is, I have indicated, reflective of the modernists’ “primitivism” outlined earlier. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, these ‘modernist’ and ‘decolonizing’ concerns merge – and the emphasis moves from external landscape or Nature to internal, psychological Nature (the unconscious) – in driving Yeats’s conception of Irish national identity and the method of its (self)construction.

Suggesting the limitations of what he calls this “nativism” (i.e. the emphasis on geography and traditional culture) as a response to the “first moment” or “awareness of “Western culture as imperialism,” Said argues that nativism “alas, reinforces the distinction” between colonizer and colonized “even while reevaluating the weaker or subservient partner” (1993:275). It has led, he argues, to “compelling but demagogic

assertions about a native past, narrative or actuality” that “stands free from worldly time itself” (1993:275). Including at the level of identity, Said suggests, to “accept nativism is to accept the consequences of imperialism, the racial, religious and political divisions imposed by imperialism itself” (1993:276). In addition, to “leave the historical world,” Said warns, for “the metaphysics of essences like negritude, Irishness, Islam, or Catholicism is to abandon history for essentializations” that have “the power to turn human beings against each other” (1993:276). Therefore the progression (including, Said suggests, Yeats’s) from nationality to “nationalism” to “nativism” is “more and more constraining” (1993:277).

However, Said tempers his rejection of nativism, and his emphasis on the limitations of what he sees as Yeats’s nativism, by pointing out that “it is impossible to avoid the combative, assertive early stages in the nativist identity” and that these “always occur” (1993:277) in the colonies. Yeats’s early poetry, Said argues, “is not only about Ireland but about Irishness,” and in Said’s estimation Yeats shows “a good deal of promise in getting beyond” these stages, in “not remaining trapped in the emotional self-indulgence of celebrating one’s own identity” (1993:277). Specifically, Said identifies three positive aspects in regard to Yeats’s “promise” at the level of identity: firstly, “the possibility of discovering a world not constructed out of warring essences”; secondly, “the possibility of a universalism that is not limited or coercive, which believing that all people have only one single identity is – that all the Irish are only Irish, Indians Indians, Africans Africans, and so on ad nauseum”; and thirdly, and most importantly, the fact that “moving beyond nativism does not mean abandoning nationality” but that it “does mean thinking of local identity as not exhaustive, and therefore not being anxious to confine oneself to one’s own sphere, with its ceremonies of belonging, its built-in chauvinism, and its limiting sense of security” (1993:277). As I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, Yeats’s Doctrine of the Mask – as his method for consciously creating Irish national identity anew in a ‘free’ rather than ‘enforced’ manner – is in fact the fulfilment of this “promise” in each of these three aspects.

Of particular significance in Said’s delineation of nativism, in which he also pinpoints the “almost magically inspired, quasi-alchemical redevelopment of the native

language” (1993:273), is his comment that Yeats is an “especially interesting” exponent of nativism. Yeats, Said explains, expresses – in common with “Caribbean and some African writers” – the “predicament of sharing a language with the colonial overlord,” and “belongs in many important ways to the Protestant Ascendancy, whose Irish loyalties were confused, to put it mildly, if not in his case quite contradictory” (1993:274). As Foster argues, Yeats’s “relationship to Irish Protestantism is central to his life” (2001:121), and that Said chooses not to explore and interrogate this aspect of Yeats in any depth is perhaps symptomatic of the fact that, as Foster also points out, Yeats’s Protestantism is “oddly little looked at by scholars” (2001:121). However, it is a facet that cannot be ignored in examining Yeats’s conception of Irish national identity, complicating as it does (but, as I shall argue, not undoing) Said’s overall construction of the ‘postcolonial’ Yeats.

Said argues that “the overlapping” Yeats “knew existed of his Irish nationalism with the English cultural heritage,” which “both dominated and empowered him,” was “bound to cause tension” (1993:274). He speculates that “the pressure of this urgently political and secular tension” prompted Yeats “to try to resolve it on a ‘higher’, that is, non-political level” (1993:274). He therefore argues that there is “a fairly logical progression from Yeats’s early Gaelicism, with its Celtic preoccupations and themes, to his later systematic mythologies as set down in the programmatic poems like ‘Ego Dominus Tuus’ and in the treatise *A Vision*” (1993:274). He argues that the “deeply eccentric and aestheticized histories” that Yeats “produced in *A Vision* and the later quasi-religious poems elevate the tension to an extra-worldly level, as if Ireland were best taken over, so to speak, at a level above that of the ground” (1993:274).

By reference to Deane, Said adds that “Yeats’s return to mysticism and his recourse to fascism... underline the colonial predicament” of a “culture indebted to the mother country for its own self and for a sense of ‘Englishness’ and yet turning towards the colony” (1993:274/5). However, he adds (again by reference to Deane) that Yeats’s “wilful mysticism and incoherence” – far from “representing an outdated nationalism” – “embody a revolutionary potential” in that Yeats insists that Ireland should “retain its culture by keeping awake its consciousness of metaphysical questions” (1993:275). A partial melding of the ‘modernist’ and ‘decolonizing’ Yeatses occurs in Deane’s

argument: in “a world from which the harsh strains of capitalism have removed thought and reflection,” the poet who “can stimulate a sense of the eternal and of death into consciousness is the true rebel,” a “figure whose colonial diminishment spur him to a negative apprehension of his society and of ‘civilized’ modernity” (1993:275). Said, however, suggests that this “rather Adorno-esque” formulation of Yeats” renders “Yeats more heroic than a crudely political reading would have suggested,” and he states that Yeats’s “outright fascism, his fantasies of old homes and families, his incoherently occult divagations” (1993:275) should not be excused. As a “small corrective,” Said argues, “we might more accurately see Yeats as an exacerbated example of the nativist phenomenon” which “flourished elsewhere (e.g. negritude) as a result of the colonial encounter” (1993:275).

In light of Said’s claim that Yeats’s nativism is in itself inadequate as a response to colonial rule, it is necessary for me to address and state clearly my own position with regard to two major components crucial to the study of Yeats, in terms of my focus on Yeats’s conception of Irish national identity. These components are (1) Yeats’s Anglo-Irish, Protestant Ascendancy background, which illuminates what Said calls Yeats’s “unacceptable and indigestible reactionary politics,” his so-called “outright fascism” and “fantasies of old homes and families”; and in particular (2) Yeats’s “incoherently occult” or magical “divagations” which, deemed inexcusable by Said, are evidently relegated by him to an “otherworldly” realm of non-political strangeness. Said in effect dismisses Yeats’s occult preoccupations as a kind of what Larissy terms “hocus-pocus” (1997:xxiv); as bizarre writings encompassing “the eternal” and “death” and operating “at a level above that of the ground,” i.e. detached from everyday ‘reality’. Yeats’s concern with the occult and magic, Said suggests, is indicative of a nativist “abandonment of the secular world” and resultant degeneration into “small-scale private craziness... encouraged by imperialism” – “hardly what great resistance movements had imagined as their goals” (1993:276), he quips.

Firstly, while blow-by-blow historical, biographical, and literary analyses of Yeats’s specific relationship to Protestantism (both in terms of Christianity and Irish minority cultural identity) as well as to Catholicism over his long lifetime is the most likely means of doing this complex subject any justice, and while (as Kiberd points out)

there is “not a single full-length book yet written on the Protestant elements in the art” (1996:421) of writers like Shaw, O’Casey, Beckett, Synge and Yeats, a firm position on Yeats’s relationship to Protestantism can and must, nonetheless, with some confidence be taken insofar as it relates to his conception of Irish national identity. A firm and defensible position is, I submit, possible and highly plausible, particularly in light of the comprehensive biographical and historical details provided by literary historian Foster and a number of insightful essays by historico-literary critic Kiberd. As I will proceed to demonstrate, my position means reconceiving Said’s comments about Yeats in a way that effectively bolsters, rather than undermines, his overall construction of Yeats as a ‘postcolonial’ figure.

While Said largely sidesteps the issue, it must be registered that Yeats was from very “early” and with great “vehemence... assailed by literary and political enemies” who “were prepared to impeach him on the grounds of Protestant Ascendancy background” as well as “moral and political unsoundness” (Foster 2001:47). Said himself, as I shall continue to underline in this chapter, praises Yeats for being a “poet of decolonization” yet throughout his essay repeatedly takes Yeats to task for “moral and political unsoundness” and occult “craziness”. The general impeachment of Yeats by his enemies in the Irish colonial context of his times, as Foster points out, is usually linked to Yeats’s Senate speeches, and in particular Yeats’s 1925 “polemic against building Catholic moral teaching into the fabric of Irish law regarding divorce” (2001:47). Foster’s overview of the disparate and at times amusing stances taken on Yeats by his obituarists is especially enlightening in this regard.

Complicating assent to Said’s claim that Yeats as Ireland’s national poet “articulates the experiences, the aspirations, and the restorative vision of a people,” Foster shows that the “thorny question” dominating “many of the post-mortem evaluations” was “how Irish was Yeats?” (2001:81). Foster explains that the “validity of Yeats’s credentials as the voice of his fellow countrymen” had “for long been a matter of debate” (2001:86) before his death in 1939, with public expression of doubt and even negation of his ‘national poet’ credentials dating back at least 35 years before his death. In particular, the Catholic press “vituperatively disputed” Yeats’s “claims to Irishness” for at least “fifteen years before his death” as well as in articles after his

death, arguing that “the greatest Irish poet was not, in point of fact, Irish at all” and “had no right to speak for Ireland” (2001:87). For the Catholic press, Yeats’s death “declared open season on the enemy culture” (2001:86).

The reasons cited for disqualifying Yeats from “claims to nationality” (2001:86) intersect with, and show the insufficiency of, both objective and subjective criteria for belonging to a ‘nation’ examined in chapter one. These grounds for disqualification in Yeats’s case included: “the un-Irish sound of ‘Pollexfen’” (2001:87) on his mother’s side of the family, and his belonging “by birth to the Protestant Anglo-Irish” (blood, racial, religious, historical and cultural ties); his “‘aping an aristocratic attitude’” (2001:89); his campaign against divorce (religion); his “suspect” (2001:86) residential credentials owing to “frequent absences from Ireland” (2001:88) while he travelled or lived “outside Ireland” (2001:86) for much of the year (geographical residence within ‘national’ borders); his drawing of a British government Royal Literary Fund pension (state allegiance); the “non-Catholic nature” of Yeats’s “mystical beliefs” (2001:87); his English writing (language), including ‘immoral’ or ‘indecent’ poetry like “‘the foul Swan song’”, i.e. “Leda and the Swan” (2001:86); his being an “‘...essentially English writer’” (2001:88) and his status as “the supreme man of letters writing in English” of his time (2001:87); his “quarrel with the nation” (i.e. conventional Irish Catholic nationalism) and “his quarrel with Christianity” (2001:87); and his “long war on sacred things” (2001:87) as “‘the repudiator of the Gael’” (2001:89). To this long list could be added Yeats being “on dining terms with Asquith and Balfour” (2001:60), having been offered a knighthood in 1915 (though he declined it), and having been made (according to *The Irish Times*) a candidate for the English Poet laureateship in 1930 (2001:85).

Of course, an opposite (fittingly Yeatsian) counter-movement occurs among obituarists as well, with some hailing Yeats as “a champion of freedom” (2001:83) and celebrating him “as an Irishman” (2001:91) who was “passionately Irish” (2001:85). In some cases, as Foster shows, Yeats was portrayed (much to the chagrin of the Catholic Press) as being able to catch “the very mind of the simple Catholic people” (2001:91) in his early work, and as being – despite “the poet’s hieratic, snobbish, exotic affectations, not to mention his Protestant background and unionist

family” – ultimately “more Irish than the Irish themselves” (2001:93). However, this stressing of Yeats’s Irishness was also tantamount to reclaiming Yeats “from the ‘English’ identification” (2001:84) and annexing of Yeats “for their own” (2001:88) by English obituarists, and a Catholic Press “all too ready to cede ownership on Ireland’s behalf” (2001:88). Foster explains that Lord Dunsany likened Yeats’s “loss” to “that of Kipling, Barrie and Housman” (2001:85). Against this backdrop, the “Irish critics of the next generation” would contest “the claims of English obituarists to appropriate Yeats’s death as a loss to ‘English literature’” (2001:86).

All of this is to illustrate not only Yeats’s contested Irishness but also the deep “political and secular tension” that Said identifies, as something more than the “overlapping” of Yeats’s own “Irish nationalism with the English cultural heritage” (i.e. an internalised predicament). This tension was (implicit in Said’s analysis) a very real, external furnace of public or ‘national’ debate and vitriol about Yeats’s claims to Irish identity. This was a furnace felt and often stoked by Yeats during his lifetime, particularly given that the “Free State’s ethos was inevitably Catholic” (Foster 2001:103) and its increasing, what Yeats called “grossly oppressive” (Larrissy 1997:450) marginalization of the Protestant minority. As Larissy describes it, Yeats was “tempted to despair of the possibility of an independent Ireland and was repelled by what he saw as the narrow philistinism and materialism of the Catholic middle class” (1997:xxi) – and he did not hide his feelings from the Catholic establishment. Indeed, as Yeats quipped during his “Debate on Divorce” speech in the Senate (1925), after a comment by FitzGerald that “I think this is becoming very heated”: “I mean it to be heated... ” (Larrissy 1997:449).

In addition, as Larissy explains, “a profound irony attends any estimate of Yeats” that “sees him, with Edward Said, as a ‘poet of decolonization’” (1997:xx). For not only is Yeats “the author of the patriotic play *Cathleen ni Houlihan*” and member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, he is “also the boy whose first songs were Orange rhymes, and whose dream was ‘to die fighting the Fenians’; the poet who in the introductory poem to *Responsibilities* (1914) “proudly recalls his forebears” (1997:xxi) who, in the Williamite wars, “withstood... James and his Irish” (*Collected Poems* 1971:113). Such biographical details underline for Yeats’s detractors the ‘Anglo’ in Yeats’s



Anglo-Irish Protestant background. This background, it must be stressed, also complicates Said's description of Yeats as a nativist mobilising his geographical or "cartographic" impulse and imaginatively "reclaiming" the land from English domination. Kiberd argues that a "familiar strategy of the Irish Protestant imagination, estranged from the community, yet anxious to identify itself with the new national sentiment" (1996:107) was to identify with the land. To "Protestant artists" Irish history "could only be, as Lady Gregory insisted, a painful accusation against their own people" and "so they turned to geography in the attempt at patriotization" (1996:107). The emphasis on locality by Yeats, Synge and Gregory was, Kiberd argues, a deliberate "aligning" of themselves with "the Gaelic bardic tradition of *dinn-sheanchas* (knowledge of the lore of places)," but "there was undeniably something strained about their manoeuvre" (1996:107) precisely because of their Anglo-Irish background.

One could cite other examples taken by Yeats's detractors to underline the 'Anglo' aspect of his background, but the point I wish to convey is the deep (Irish Catholic) suspicion and paranoia that attaches to Yeats's Anglo-Irish Protestant background and which has fuelled debate surrounding his sincerity and legitimacy as Ireland's national poet. In doing so, I hope to have illustrated that as an Anglo-Irish Protestant Yeats was "born astride many of the borders which separate Irish people" (Foster 2001:99) and that, given this historical context, his claims to Irishness and the right to shape an Irish national identity that accommodated him were from the start severely compromised. Against this backdrop, it therefore comes as no surprise that in the "long-running debate about the un-Irishness of Yeats" the *Catholic Bulletin* interpreted Yeats's famous 'we' remark in his lecture "The Child and the State" (1925), that "Ireland has been put into our hands that we may shape it," as a "Protestant claim on behalf of a 'New Ascendancy'" to "... control Irish interests" (2001:87). The Catholic will within Ireland to exclude Yeats from Irishness, I contend, must be duly registered in the consideration of his conception of Irish national identity.

It is Yeats's Anglo-Irish Protestant roots, then, that illuminate Said's analysis of his internal conflict comprising "cultural dependence and antagonism together," and in

particular Said's identification of an "urgently political and secular tension" informing and informed by Yeats's predicament of "sharing a language with the colonial overlord." While the majority of Ireland's inhabitants, like Yeats, could not speak Gaelic or the later curricularised Irish, and spoke only English, it is the 'Anglo' element in Yeats's background that (under pressure from his detractors) problematizes his 'Irishness' as well as his use and love of the English language and literature as an 'Irish' poet. This tension, indicative of "the colonial predicament" of "a culture indebted to the mother country for its own self and for a sense of 'Englishness' and yet turning towards the colony," is best expressed by Yeats himself (with a note of sexism) in "A General Introduction for my Work", significantly "left behind" for "posthumous publication" (Foster 2001:94):

"... no people hate as we do in whom [the] past is always alive. There are moments when hatred poisons my life and I accuse myself of effeminacy because I have not given it adequate expression... Then I remind myself that though mine is the first English marriage I know of in the direct line, all my family names are English; that I owe my soul to Shakespeare, to Spenser, to Blake, perhaps to William Morris, and to the English language in which I think, speak and write; that everything I love has come to me through English. My hatred tortures me with love, my love with hate." (Foster 2001:94)

Foster explains that "the Celtic Revival became the Gaelic Revival" which was "rapidly politicized" (2001:99) along with the revival of the Gaelic language, increasingly aligned with Catholicism in defining 'Irishness'. In 1908, Father Peadar O Laoghaire, "a great influence in the Gaelic League," argued that "speaking English was incompatible with faith and patriotism" and use of English "sapped 'the very fibres of mental and moral nature'" (2001:99). It meant "only a more complete obliteration of the historic faith and patriotism of Ireland" (2001:99). Writing in English, he argued, "could not be patriotic" (2001:100). This complemented Corkery's suspicion that a "colonial ethos" marked Irish writers "writing to be read in

England, ‘with the insolence of Ascendancy-minded literature,’ instead of ‘belonging’ to the Irish world” (2001:101). The Irish colonial context, then, provides an example of an aspect of the nativism criticised by Said: the “almost magically inspired, quasi-alchemical redevelopment of the native language” (1993:273).

However, it was “exactly” this pro-Irish Catholic, anti-English ‘nativist’ conception of national identity – wherein use of the Gaelic and/or curricularised Irish language, and its prioritisation over the English language, were deemed objective criteria of national belonging – that “the nationalist Yeats wanted to prove untrue” (Foster 2001:99). As Foster argues, Yeats decided “that the borders of acceptable nationalist expression needed to be redrawn” (2001:100). However, while Yeats, in his Senate speech on the Irish language (1923), protests against “the histrionics which have crept into the Gaelic movement,” and especially against those people who “pretend to know a thing that they do not know and which they have not the smallest intention of ever learning,” he nonetheless states that “I wish to see the country Irish speaking” (Larissy 1997:448). From the ‘love-hate’ quote above, we can ascertain the deep and torturing conflict or “tension” within Yeats around this issue that lasted till the end of his life.

Yeats’s Anglo-Irish Protestant background also illuminates the continuing controversy over his “primitivism”, and to that degree what Said calls his “nativism”, particularly regarding Yeats’s treatment of the Irish ‘peasant’ in his work. Of course, as my earlier outlining of the construction of the ‘modernist’ Yeats shows, Yeats is “not the only modernist to draw on a primitivist discourse” (Castle 2001:46). TS Eliot, several decades after Yeats, and with his emphasis on the *verbum infans*, is a case in point. Furthermore, the “fashionable”, “modish” popularity of the “Irish peasant” trope during Yeats’s lifetime is reflected, for instance, in Kavanagh’s being “welcomed and patronized” at the outset of his career in the 1930s “as a peasant poet” (Quinn 2004:xiv). However, Yeats’s emphasis on the local and ‘primitive’ underlines for contemporary critics (and his detractors) his own “historical ‘placing’” (Foster 2001:121) as an Anglo-Irishman writing in the English language “with one eye cocked on the English audience” (Kiberd 1996:115). As Castle puts it, Yeats’s “ambivalent social status as an Anglo-Irishman in colonial Ireland” and his

“involvement in the cultural nationalism of the Revival” meant that “his relationship to the primitive was far more complicated than it was for a metropolitan modernist like Eliot” (2001:46). Again, Yeats’s Anglo-Irish Protestant background problematizes his status as Ireland’s national poet and his claims to Irish identity, raising questions about his ‘right to represent’ his countrymen and right to contribute to defining ‘Irishness’.

While Yeats’s literary treatment of the Irish peasant is largely beyond the scope of this thesis, in considering Said’s portrayal of Yeats as a nativist and construction of Yeats as Ireland’s national “poet of decolonization” the controversy – circling always back to Yeats’s Anglo-Irish Protestant background – must be registered. In short, there is a sentiment, expressed in various ways by critics like Kiberd, Howes and Castle, that Yeats “may be said to harmonize with colonial thought” in his “construction of an idealized peasant” (Castle 2001:52). However, rather than rebutting in depth the various arguments of these and other critics as to Yeats’s (unwitting or not) ‘collusion’ with imperialist and/or Ascendancy logic in his treatment of the native culture, I wish rather to argue simply that these claims – in considering Yeats in relation to Irish national identity – have not been adequately weighed against his Doctrine of the Mask. Yeats’s doctrine, upon the kind of close examination undertaken in the next chapter, effectively consigns such arguments to a limiting concentration on the “early” Celtic Twilight Yeats whom the “middle-age” Yeats (to use Eliot’s qualified distinction) in many ways – as a modernist, advanced nationalist and occultist – subsumes and supersedes. Hence my constant emphasis in this chapter on the “middle age” Yeats and therefore on dates from 1914, but more particularly from “1919 on,” in order to foreground the modernist Yeats but also, as I shall explain later in this chapter, the importance of this period in terms of Yeats’s nationalist and occult views as they relate to his conception of Irish national identity.

In short, two broad points must be emphasized in regard to Yeats’s treatment of the Irish peasant, relating as they do to the concerns of this thesis. Firstly, Yeats’s rejection in the 1890s of the “editorial misrepresentations” (Castle 2001:55), “rationalizations and stereotyping” of the Irish by the English and in the work of Anglo-Irish compilers like T Crofton Croker and Samuel Lover who “created the

stage Irishman” (2001:53) is well documented. However, more than this, as Foster argues, Yeats “was very conscious of the need for Ireland to be modern in a fulfilling, independent sense” (2001:34). Yeats repeatedly warned against “the perils of nostalgia” and stressed “the need to bring Ireland to the cutting edge of the European and international experience” (2001:35). In essays and speeches in and after 1910, notably the year that Yeats “first” uses the term ‘mask’ “prominently in verse” (Ellmann 1960:174), Yeats “attacked the idea of sanitized and idealized history, and the creation of pious and backward-looking stereotypes of Irishness which created ‘images for the affections’” (Foster 2001:34/35). In “JM Synge and the Ireland of his Time” (1910), for instance, Yeats denies that Irish history is “a parade of pasteboard heroes” (Foster 1998:420) and suggests “the Soldier, the Orator, the Patriot, the Poet, the Chieftain and above all the Peasant” are only images “for the affections” (1998:419). In this “‘grand refusal’” of “the ‘theme-park’ approach to Irish history,” Foster argues, Yeats effectively repudiates “the Young Ireland canon of literature which he had imbibed in the O’Leary circle” (2001:123).

Yeats is therefore acutely aware of the inadequacy of the ‘peasant’ as a representation of Irishness – including those representations of the peasant by himself. Castle speculates that the “controversy over Synge’s *Playboy of the Western World*” may have been “the point at which Yeats realized that he had failed to capture the ‘essence’ of Irish folk culture” (2001:88). Foster states that it was clear to Yeats by the time of Synge’s death in 1907 that “a culturally nationalist movement could not be above politics in the way he had initially conceived – nor above sectarian politics, when they reared their head” (2001:122). Yeats, Castle argues, thereafter “redefined the goals of a Revivalist project of cultural redemption” in terms of the modernist’s “reclamation of the artist’s right to represent, which was, for Yeats, the right of possession” (2001:88). By 1910, Foster explains, Yeats had “formally set up an alternative set of artistic standards” and, in his essay on Synge, “formally posits the writer’s individual mission against the pressures of nationalist political conformity – what Heaney (who has walked this ground) has called ‘the quarrel between free creative imagination and the constraints of religious, political and domestic obligation’” (2001:122). What Foster calls Yeats’s announcement of “the primacy of the creative imagination – wherever it leads” (2001:123) is therefore more than just a

modernist stance as outlined earlier in this chapter, but an overtly nationalist one as well that informs his “commitment to free speech and liberty of conscience” (2001:123) as Protestant values in opposing Catholic censorship and divorce legislation in the Free State. Castle cites “The Fisherman” – dated 1919 – as a “quietly programmatic instance of this right to represent, one that underscores the inauthenticity of the representations that proceed from it” (2001:88).

Yeats, Castle argues, “frankly admits the imaginary status of the peasant he had celebrated in the 1890s” (2001:88): he is “A man who does not exist/ A man who is but a dream,” merely an emblem of “cold/And passionate” (*Collected Poems* 1971:167) poetry. In this “repudiating” of “the Arnoldean rustic of redemptive Celticism” (2001:88), Castle argues, Yeats ratifies “the poet’s artistic autonomy” (2001:89). This underscores not only “Yeats’s awareness of his own role in creating phantasmic constructions” (2001:89) of a “wise and simple man” in “grey Connemara cloth” (*Collected Poems* 1971:167) but also celebrates “the heroism of his attempt to use such constructions in order to confront those who would oppose his desire” (Castle 2001:89) “To write for my own race/And the reality” – particularly that “audience” he scorns: “The clever man who cries/The catch-cries of the clown/The beating down of the wise/And great Art beaten down” (*Collected Poems* 1971:166/7). Clearly, in “The Fisherman”, the modernist and Anglo-Irish Protestant Yeats stakes his claim to both Irishness and the status of Irish national poet. Later in his essay, Said claims Yeats’s national “poetic calling”, as presented in “The Fisherman”, “develops” like Neruda’s “out of a pact made between people and poet” (1993:282). However, it should be clear that it in fact arises in great measure from what Yeats sees as an heroic defiance of those (Catholic Irish) who opposed his “right to represent” and claim Irishness.

Foster furthermore points out that Yeats’s memoirs about the 1890s (which he began in 1916) repeatedly return to the theme of “the conflict between nationalist propagandist politics and the imperatives of the creative artist,” emphasizing that “the artist’s influence, while remaining independent, will play its own political part” by “radicalizing the new Ireland” (2001:67). This is an argument Yeats “would reiterate again and again,” including in his Nobel Prize speech in 1923 (“the year after Ireland

achieved some kind of independence”) in which he “cannily” related “the honour bestowed upon himself” (2001:67) to this fledgling national independence. Again, I wish to stress that this time frame (after 1914 and particularly after 1919) coincides with Yeats’s emphatic emergence as a modernist outlined earlier in this chapter and, as I shall proceed to explain, his emphatic (re-)emergence as an advanced nationalist energized by a major resurgence in his occult activities.

Indeed, and secondly, coupled with this shift away from primitivism and nativism to a modernist autonomy of the imagination is Yeats’s deep and, from 1914, reinvigorated preoccupation with the occult. Ellmann argues that Yeats sought through folklore “to capture from the peasantry first, an insouciant spontaneity and second, a multitude of images sanctioned by tradition” (1964:89). In doing so, Yeats’s “pastoral impulse” was “not naïve”: he “did not think of folk art as the talented creation of an untalented group of country bumpkins” but “as mainly the work of individual artists who had escaped the infection of current intellectual and literary movements and of an excessive self-consciousness like his own” (1964:89). Yeats therefore ‘fits’ Sheppard’s description of modernist intellectuals being attracted to “primitive” art and “peasant culture” (Giles 1993:31), feeling “rightly or wrongly” that “pre-modern or non-Western cultures” have “not abstracted the logos from the rest of the personality and co-exist with rather than seek to dominate external Nature” (1993:32). However, Castle notes, there is after about 1897 “a shift” in Yeats’s view of Irish folklore which, I contend, ultimately renders somewhat redundant critics’ claims of Yeats ‘harmonizing’ with colonial or Ascendancy logic in his representations of the peasant. Indeed, he argues that Yeats’s shift is to “a greater interest in the nature of mystical consciousness itself, rather than the folkways of those who possess it” (2001:76).

Castle explains that “fairy-faith”, for Yeats, depends “not so much upon ancient traditions, oral and recorded, as upon recent and contemporary psychical experiences, vouched for by many ‘seers’” (2001:41). There arises in Yeats’s thinking a “growing conviction... that a native Irish literature need not rest on anthropological assumptions of racial or cultural difference” (2001:41), assumptions indicative of the ‘objective’ criteria for ‘nation’ status discussed in chapter one. Castle adds that there also arises in Yeats’s thinking a “growing conviction” that “the lessons he had learned

combating these assumptions would permit him to create something newly original, something ‘wildly Irish’, in competition with other notions of Irishness” (2001:78). This “making new” or creation of “new originals” is, of course, not only the forte of the modernist avant-garde but also in line with Irish bardic tradition in which the bard “similarly fashioned and refashioned traditional materials in the creation of new traditional texts” (2001:68).

Feelings “of social and political displacement” which “Yeats once thought he could overcome in a unity with the peasant mediated by a redemptive ethnographic imagination” therefore give way “to an emancipatory self-fashioning” (2001:83). In “Swedenborg, Mediums and the Desolate Places” (1914), Yeats explicitly “reconciles his folkloric work with Lady Gregory with his burgeoning interest in occultism,” and portrays the “Swedenborgian vision of heaven” as “identical to the peasant vision of fairyland” (2001:86). Yeats is therefore by this time clearly “no longer the Revivalist ethnographer seeking to evoke and thereby redeem the tangible folkways of the peasantry” (2001:86). His emphasis is, rather, on ‘emancipatory self-fashioning’, informed by his preoccupation with the imagination and the unconscious as means to invoking “the occult power of artistic inspiration” (Foster 1998:30). This new emphasis on self-fashioning in terms of “personality”, I contend, culminates in Yeats’s Doctrine of the Mask and its incorporation into the System of *A Vision*. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, Yeats’s doctrine and System represent a conscious attempt by Yeats “to bypass the political dimensions” (Castle 2001:84) of Catholic and Protestant investments in their seemingly irreconcilable cultural identities within Ireland in order to allow for the creation of an inclusive, unified, non-essentialist Irish national identity free of colonial Othering and therefore ‘postcolonial’.

In light of these two factors, Said’s claim that “political and secular tension” arising from the “overlapping” of Yeats’s “Irish nationalism with the English cultural heritage” prompted Yeats to “try to resolve it on a ‘higher’... non-political level” (1993:274) requires reconceiving. I have so far attempted to illustrate the extent not only of English Othering of the Irish (individually and collectively) as a stable, unified and ‘inferior’ entity at the level of identity, but that the ‘Irish identity’



problem for Yeats was furthermore two-fold. Firstly, as Said highlights, a personal, inner conflict as to how to ‘resolve’ or circumvent the externally imposed, what Larissy calls “hyphenated condition of being Anglo-Irish” (1997:xxi), with the “tension” of that inherited identity brought on by all the negative historical associations of the Anglo (read England and Protestant Ascendancy) side in the eyes of the Catholic majority, in order to claim Irishness. And secondly, to address the external correlative of that inner tension, to find a way for the minority Protestant (Anglo-Irish) and majority Catholic (Gaelic Irish) cultures within Ireland to “resolve” or bypass their conflicting, divisive investments in rigidly separate cultural identities in favour of an over-arching, inclusive Irish national identity that did not require the relinquishing of those separate identities. In all three cases, the “tension” rests on the problem or challenge of how to circumvent externally imposed, inherited or passively received, seemingly stable and fixed identities – i.e. ‘Irish’ Othered by ‘English’; and ‘Catholic Irish’ and ‘Protestant Anglo-Irish’ as Othered by each other – and formulate Irish identity anew in an inclusive rather than exclusionary manner.

Each case, it should be clear, owes its historical existence to the colonial encounter in the first instance, relies on being perceived as a stable, fixed entity, and presents in itself and collectively an obstacle to the creation of a ‘postcolonial’ Irish identity and forging of Irish national unity. Length constraints prevent my citing the many instances of Yeats’s “war” or vociferous “quarrels” (whether as poet, nationalist-literary committee-man or through his work in the Abbey Theatre) with his countrymen and women (including his Muse, Maud Gonne) in his attempts to widen what he saw as a narrow, exclusionary and therefore limiting Catholic, bourgeois conception of national identity. However, as Foster states, a development in Yeats’s “protean life” that remained “constant” throughout these quarrels was “his distancing from the conventional nationalist pieties of the day” and “his belief that these political beliefs were too closely interwoven with the Catholic establishment to accommodate either artistic or political freedom” (Foster 2001:47).

It must, however, quickly be added that there are also a number of instances in which similarly narrow Protestant pieties and bigotry (also stemming from the notion of identity as stable and fixed) were targeted by Yeats. As Foster puts it, Yeats’s

memoirs, written in 1921, about the 1890s return “to the idea that extreme-nationalist abstractions were like the fixed ideas of hysterical people, turning the mind to stone” while Protestant or “unionist prejudices” were “their mirror image” (2001:77). It is Yeats’s sustained excoriation of both Catholic and Protestant pieties at various stages throughout his lifetime that accounts for Castle’s admission, in his analysis of *On the Boiler*, that “discussing Yeats’s cultural politics” often forces one to “conclude with the rhetorical equivalent of an exasperated shrug” (2001:95). It also accounts for Castle’s conclusion that Yeats’s primitivism, which informed Yeats’s interest in eugenics in the 1930s, “not only remained a powerful determinate of his work, but in the end frustrated any clear message that we might take from it” (2001:97).

With these instances of excoriation well documented by critics, it suffices to state my position thus: that while Said speculates that Yeats, in *A Vision*, attempts to resolve the “urgently political and secular tension” of his Anglo-Irishness on a “higher”, “non-political” level, Yeats is by no means divorcing himself from “uncompromising” political “actuality” (Foster 1998:476) but is in fact confronting it at the level of national identity. Indeed, while Said suggests that the “deeply eccentric and aestheticized histories” Yeats produced in *A Vision* “elevate the tension to an extra-worldly level, as if Ireland were best taken over... at a level above that of the ground,” I contend that Yeats’s *A Vision* (informed by *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*) is in fact very much this-worldly and political in nature. I hold that what Said considers “incoherently occult divagations” in works like *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision* in fact directly address this “tension”, demonstrating Yeats’s conviction that Ireland is best “taken over” on the ground by first taking it over “at a level above that of the ground” in a way not fully appreciated by Said, i.e. in the mind, at the psychological or psycho-pathological level of identity. As Kiberd puts it, for Yeats the “project of inventing a unitary Ireland is the attempt at achieving at a political level a reconciliation of opposed qualities which must first be fused in the self” (1996:124). Put another way, for Yeats “personal liberation must precede national recovery” or political independence, “being in fact its very condition” (1996:124).

Kiberd points out that there was “nothing triumphalist about the cultural Protestantism” (1996:423) of writers like Yeats, who not only wanted Irish self-rule in

Ireland but who “wished for a fusion of two traditions, not just Gaelic with Anglo-Irish, but Catholic with Protestant as well” (1996:424) in order “to ‘bring the two halves together’” (1996:425) within Ireland. Yeats’s nationalist project was therefore, in short, “to Catholicize the all-too-Protestant Ireland of his youth, and then to Protestantize the all-too-Catholic Ireland of his age” (1996:451). In this process or long “war”, Yeats consistently “sided with the underdog” throughout his lifetime, first with “the Catholic peasantry in an English-occupied Ireland” and later “with the minority in a new state already enacting legislation to outlaw” Protestant “liberties of the individual conscience” (1996:450/51).

Kiberd argues that the “thesis of the Catholicized Protestant and the Protestantized Catholic had been implicit in the Irish Revival from the onset” (1996:425). Yeats’s father, Kiberd explains, had taught impartially “that the Catholic Church was ‘good for the heart but bad for the brain,’ adding that ‘had the Irish been Protestants they would long ago have thrown off the English tyranny’” (1996:425). This, Kiberd adds, “fully anticipated Shaw’s statement that a true Protestant was ipso facto an Irish Republican” and his argument “that without strong doses of Protestant self-reliance, the Irish Catholic mind would never free itself of imperial occupation” (1996:425). For Shaw, “the unquestioning obedience given by Catholics to a priest whom they called ‘father’ (rather than ‘brother’) merely fostered in them a submissiveness which had proved invaluable to the English too” (1996:426). This, Kiberd explains, “did not mean that John Butler Yeats or George Bernard Shaw despised Catholicism: they simply felt that a fusion of both traditions would produce a new Ireland greater than the sum of its parts” (1996:425). In this way, Kiberd argues, “Every honest Catholic could henceforth become his or her own priest; and, equally, all Protestants should be able to confess their sins, once in a while, not just to their God but to someone else” (1996:425).

The link, generally, between colonial rule and “the Christian religion” (2001:32) is identified by Fanon, whose insights illuminate this conciliatory ‘Protestant’ perspective. What he describes as “the inevitable religion”, he argues, helps in “calming down the natives” (2001:52) in the colony. As he puts it, all “those saints who have turned the other cheek, who have forgiven trespasses against them, and who

have been spat on and insulted without shrinking are studied and held up as examples” (2001:52). At the same time, the Church calls the colonized not “to God’s ways” but to “the ways of... the master, of the oppressor,” condemning the colonized’s “embryonic heresies and instincts” and its “evil as yet unborn” (2001:32). The colonized’s “traditions and myths” become “the very sign of that poverty of spirit and of their constitutional depravity” (2001:32). These insights also illuminate Kiberd’s observation of how “hugely ironical” it was “that while Protestants like Hyde, Lady Gregory and Yeats went about collecting legends of healing wells and peasant miracles, the Catholic clergy was resolutely attempting to extirpate these beliefs, or at least, to subordinate them to a more rationalized theology” (1996:425).

In regard to Yeats specifically, as Foster explains, in the 1880s and early 1890s he was in his Fenian youth “in the process of repudiating his background and discovering an Ireland outside unionist Sligo or Ascendancy-clerical Dublin,” and wrote “as searingly about Irish Catholic sensibilities” as he would “about Protestant pieties” (2001:116). While in later life Yeats’s attitude to Trinity representatives was “moderated”, Foster explains, the “Protestant world in toto remained under his anathema” (2001:116). However, the idea that “echt-Irishness necessitated cradle-Catholicism” was “in line” with Yeats’s “own thinking in the 1880s and 1890s” – “all the more striking”, Foster notes, because “in later life he repudiated this belief so completely” (2001:118). Foster remarks that “as the years went by” Yeats discovered that “your background, what has made you, survives repudiation and can return to claim you in strange ways in the end” (2001:116). He is of course referring to Yeats’s Senate speech on divorce, in which Yeats consciously “elected to place himself in the tradition of very different Irish writers in English: Berkeley, Swift, Burke, exactly those Anglo-Irish sages whose claims to Irishness he had dismissed in his youth” (2001:125).

However, I submit that while Foster argues that Yeats’s background returned “to claim” him, it is equally justifiable to suggest that Yeats in fact with conscious and dramatic intention claimed his background in order to forcefully argue for a more inclusive version of Irish national identity. Importantly, as Gregory points out, Yeats “did not consider himself any less of an Irishman for his Protestant background”

(2000:12). And as Foster himself points out, in Yeats's speeches during the Home Rule crisis (1912-14) he repeatedly "attacked the intolerance apparently inseparable from Irish life" and "compared Catholic and Protestant bigotry to 'two old boots' bobbing around the stagnant pond of Irish politics" (2001:125). Foster cites one particular instance, at a debate in 1914 to commemorate Davis's centenary, where Yeats, in "a masterly exhibition of balance-holding," also "gently chided Provost Mahaffy for failing to follow Davis's example of tolerance towards his antagonists" and "condemned Davis's ally John Mitchell for preaching hatred of England instead of love of Ireland" (2001:123).

This was the kind of hatred Yeats associated with the "ascendant" Catholic nationalism "pioneered by Griffith" (2001:123) within Ireland. As Yeats put it: "Hatred of England soon became hatred of their own countrymen as when they had learned to hate one man, perhaps for a good reason, they hated probably twenty men for bad reasons" (Foster 1998:524). I contend that Yeats, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision* advocates the creation of Irish national identity in a manner free of hatred for England, thereby avoiding the replication of the colonizer's Manichaean opposition at the level of identity. He also attempts to defuse Catholic and Protestant intolerance and bigotry through the bypassing of these seemingly stable and fixed identities by subscription to an overarching and inclusive Irish national identity. He also consciously and deliberately constructs himself as 'Anglo-Irish' not by passively received heritage but anew by active choice – indicating that one need not give up one's cultural identity in assuming an inclusive national identity. Yeats demonstrates that Irish national identity "need not rest on... assumptions of racial or cultural difference" (Castle 2001:78). His choosing and construction of himself as (Anglo-)Irish in *A Vision*, which informs his poetry, writings, and Senate speeches, may instructively suggest his adoption of a public, specifically Protestant 'Mask' in staking the minority Protestant claim to Irish identity against the majority Catholic will to marginalize and exclude the Protestant minority from a narrowly Catholic definition of 'Irishness'.

I wish also to stress that, far from pursuing ulterior Ascendancy, anti-Catholic interests, Yeats's adoption of his cultural identity and "mission to Protestantize Irish

culture” came at a time when “Catholic triumphalists were seeking to make the independent Irish state an instrument of their theology” (Kiberd 1996:439). This theology resulted in what Yeats in his Debate on Divorce speech in the Senate (1925) called intolerant and “exceedingly oppressive legislation” imposed on the Protestant minority “to deprive it of rights which it has held since the 17<sup>th</sup> century” (Larrisy 1997:449). More specifically, as Kiberd argues, the general Protestant “mission” was “only achieved to a significant degree after its sponsors had effectively conceded defeat in the political sphere” (1996:439) – a point that emphasizes Yeats’s assumption of a pugnacious oppositional role in politics as a counterbalancing measure against the limitation of ‘intellectual freedom’ by the Catholic establishment. It also emphasizes the extent to which Catholic paranoia about Yeats’s ‘Ascendancy ambitions’ exaggerated his ‘Anglo’ dimension and overshadowed the fact that Yeats was in fact as an Irishman “deeply committed” to the “new national state” (Foster 2001:103).

As Foster points out, Yeats’s “youth spanned the exact period of crisis which inaugurated the decline of the Irish Protestant Ascendancy” (1998:xxix) and, as Butler argues, Yeats was in the Senate “an isolated figure” and “even in Ireland the range of his influence was very small” (Foster 2001:195). What Said calls Yeats’s “unacceptable and indigestible reactionary politics” must therefore be reconceived in terms of the role (however detested by Yeats’s detractors) of “the opposition” in a democracy, and Yeats more correctly seen as a contrarian or minority “opposition” figure whose marginalization contributed to what Orwell, in his essay “WB Yeats”, refers to as Yeats’s famed “hatred of democracy” (Orwell 1943). Said claims Yeats’s “later reactionary politics” not only “belied” but “even cancelled out” his “adumbrating the liberationist and Utopian revolutionism in his poetry” (1993:283). However, I have shown that Yeats’s liberationist impulse in fact persisted in the very form of his reactionary politics. As one obituarist put it, Yeats was “a champion of freedom – but, above all, against the tyrannies of democracy,” and “the democracy which he never spared to resist or rebuke” marched “to its credit, behind his coffin” (Foster 2001:83).

The increasing marginalization of the Anglo-Irish Protestant minority and puritanical limitation of artistic freedom, through such measures as the Irish literary censorship bill drafted and passed in 1928-29, illuminates what Foster calls Yeats's "losing battle" (2001:107) to promote Irishness as synonymous with artistic independence. This "losing battle" was, of course, allied to his efforts to 'Protestantize' Catholic Ireland and therefore to 'non-essentialize' Irish national identity. Yeats's battle included, for instance, defending free speech and therefore works like Joyce's *Ulysses*; fighting censorship in arguing for "The Need for Audacity of Thought"; and injecting the irreligious and erotic into his poetry, as in the Crazy Jane series, in attempting to define modern Irish literature against "un-Irish limitations" (2001:108). This "losing battle" therefore illuminates what Said calls Yeats's "unacceptable" and "not to be excused" attitudes, including "his rejection of politics" (1993:278).

Said is of course referring to Yeats's "passionate anti-statism" (Paulin 1992:2) in "A General Introduction for my Work". Yeats denies that he is a nationalist "except in Ireland for passing reasons" and dismisses "'State and Nation' as merely 'the work of the intellect... not worth the blade of grass God gives for the nest of the linnet'" (1992:2). However, as Paulin argues, such comments were "disingenuous" for Yeats was in fact "a dedicated nation-builder, the shadow of the gunmen who founded the Irish Free State" (1992:2). Rather, the words "passing reasons" amplify both Yeats's rejection of the Irish Catholic nation-state and awareness that a genuinely independent (artistically free), 'postcolonial' Ireland was no longer possible given its entrenched Catholic ethos.

Yeats's "losing battle" also illuminates what Said calls his "outright fascism". Yeats's, it must be stressed, short-lived flirtation with the Blueshirts in 1933 could to an extent be explained (as Pound's far more severe subscription to political extremism and mental control might be) in terms of the tendency "within the paradigm which is offered as modernism" towards "a rationalist, modernizing ambition which endorses technological progress and the renovation of society through aggressive administration and directed change" (Wheale 1995:24). However, it was more, I submit, a result of what Butler calls Yeats's "disillusionment" with the "drab unheroic Ireland" of the "parochial" new nation-state which ensured "that 'men of letters' lived

like outlaws in their own country” (Foster 2001:195). This “disillusionment”, compounded by his rapid disillusionment with the Blueshirts, finds expression in his dismissal of “State and Nation” in “A General Introduction for my Work”. As Butler argues, when Yeats “saw that Irish fascism promised to be as drab and demagogic as Irish democracy” he “rapidly back-pedalled and rewrote the song he had composed for the Blueshirts, making it so fantastic that no political party could sing it” (Foster 2001:195).

Foster points out that whether the Blueshirts could be defined “as Fascist is debatable,” for while the movement “could have become so” it was “not objectively Fascist” (2003:472). Yeats was rather, Butler argues, the leader of the “campaign” against censorship and “in everything he did and said” was “a champion of intellectual and moral and social freedom,” which in Butler’s opinion contributed to “a real obstruction on the road to Auschwitz” (Foster 2001:195) as opposed to conventional, ineffectual political rhetoric. This much Said, contradicting himself in his essay, alludes to in pointing out that Neruda accepted Yeats “as a national poet representing the Irish nation in its war against tyranny” and that Yeats “responded positively” to the “unmistakably anti-fascist call” in defence of the Spanish Republic in 1937 – despite Yeats’s “frequently cited dispositions towards European fascism” (1993:281).

I wish to stress, along with Foster, that “for all his interest in Mussolini,” doubts “about liberalism” (2001:106), and so-called anti-democratic views, Yeats “defended free speech as part of his ideal Irish cultural project” (Foster 2001:106). This emphasis on freedom extends to Yeats’s conception of Irish national identity. Orwell’s claim (based on Menon’s analysis) that *A Vision* has “sinister implications” and that Yeats’s tendency in “political terms... is Fascist” (Orwell 1943) must be dismissed simply on the basis that, by Orwell’s own admission, he had personally never read *A Vision*. In addition, to my mind, Yeats’s prioritisation of the child over state interests, in his Senate speech on “The State of School Education: School Attendance Bill”, is far from a fascist position. Yeats writes: “... the child itself must be the end in education, and in anything you want to do with the child... In the modern world the tendency is to think of the nation; that it is more important than the



child... There is a tendency to subordinate the child to the idea of the nation. I suggest that whether we teach either Irish history, Anglo-Irish literature or Gaelic, we should always see that the child is the object and not any of our special perquisites" (Larrissy 1997:452). As I will show in the next chapter, this policy of non-coercion – emphasizing individual liberty and self-actualisation in a manner devoid of any fascist overtones – is a hallmark of Yeats's conception of Irish national identity.

For Yeats, then, the "ideal of self-election" is "intimately linked to the crusade for Irish self-determination" (Kiberd 1996:450), with his envisaged fusion of the two traditions within Ireland "consistent with the principle that both sides could 'glory in our difference' at a personal level" (1996:451). The Irish, he envisions, "could and should pay full respect to their inherited traditions, while offering tender care also to rival codes" (1996:451). Kiberd explains that Yeats hoped that Irish "intellectual leaders" would demonstrate "in their writing and their lives" this "fusion of values" which "should be enshrined in the state's eventual constitution" (1996:451). My position on Yeats is therefore that he was, as Kiberd argues, "forever crossing and recrossing the sectarian divide" (1996:452) which, of course, meant there were "those on both sides of the religious divide who knew what Yeats's project implied and did not like it one bit" (1996:452). It is this "crossing and recrossing the sectarian divide" that ultimately frustrates attempts by detractors and some critics to 'prove' Yeats's harmonization with Ascendancy or colonial logic in his works.

As I have indicated in this chapter, no sooner are the construed 'Anglo' and Protestant aspects of Yeats emphasized than the modernist and 'Irish' nationalist aspects mitigate against and resist their assertion. Yeats's proposition in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* that "every movement, in feeling or in thought, prepares in the dark by its own increasing clarity and confidence its own executioner" (Jeffares 1990:46) appears to apply in the case of such critics. Yeats's "crossing and recrossing," coupled with his deep involvement in the occult, also undermines a tendency among critics to 'over-explain' his thinking and works strictly in terms of his Anglo-Irish 'Protestant-ness'. For instance, Kiberd's argument that Yeats attaches to the land in accordance with a general Anglo-Irish strategy to join the national sentiment, while compelling, seems to me to sideline the actual, individual lived experience of Yeats's childhood and

genuine love for the Sligo landscape; and to subtly undermine Yeats's full claim to native Irishness.

In addition, Foster's explanation of Yeats's interest in the occult (a not strictly 'Protestant' domain, it must be said) in terms of a tradition of 'Protestant magic' seems to me, while also compelling, to 'box' Yeats into his Anglo-Irish background rather than allow more for his individual lived experience in the diverse "cultural milieu within which Yeats was operating, the occult establishment of England and Paris from 1885 until the 1930s" (Graf 2000:xvi). Certainly, Foster's speculation that such a tradition could be "seen on one level as a strategy for coping with contemporary threats" like Catholicism "and on another as a search for psychic control" (1998:50) does not adequately 'explain' specifically Yeats's attraction to the occult, which incidentally drew and continues to draw adherents from diverse backgrounds and walks of life who, like many of the modernist artists and writers, often reject "the socially-endorsed forms of religion, such as Christianity" (Wheale 1995:23/24). Foster's argument neglects Ellmann's point, for example, that "in his endeavour to construct a symbolism" Yeats "went where symbols had always been the usual mode of expression" (1964:3), i.e. the occult.

There are other instances of questionable emphasis on Yeats's 'Protestant-ness', but these two – and a third I am about to raise – suffice in indicating my own querying of much of the Yeats criticism that has emerged since Said's essay. Despite Yeats having attempted to circumvent his Anglo-Irish identity (in a conciliatory claiming of Irish identity) as well as claim this cultural identity (in claiming his heritage), recent criticism emphasizes his background by birth with a subtle sense of determinism. This seems indicative of a propensity to, finally, keep Yeats in the 'Anglo-Irish' mould more than the 'Irish' fold. Significantly in this regard, Kiberd claims that Yeats's "version of identity" is "a cornerstone of Protestantism" whereby "the individual must justify God's love by perfecting its object" and be reborn daily as the "incorruptible self" as described in "the Protestant service for the Burial of the Dead" (1996:122). However, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, this encapsulation of 'striving, daily rebirth and incorruption' is more a convenient and useful metaphor for aspects of Yeats's "version of identity", which is in fact of such Nietzschean and occult

proportions that any suggestion that it reflects conventional Protestant religious conviction or identity must be summarily dismissed.

Indeed, the ideas informing Yeats's "version of identity" would hardly be endorsed by Protestant ministers – or Catholic priests, for that matter. (It might be added that ministers and priests would also not be enamoured by the fact that "Yeats for the most part accepted the Nietzschean position" that "Christ was a weak, impotent, and illusory god" (Ellmann 1964:92), and that Yeats refers to God in *A Vision* by so "absurdly mechanical" (1960:286) a title and "unprepossessing a term" as The Thirteenth Cone or Cycle "to ensure that He would be discussed only as 'it', never as a personal deity, least of all as a Christian one" (1964:159). This is a God that, Ellmann indicates, brought Yeats "to no Church" (1960:286).) Yeats's version of Irish national identity, it must be stressed, owes far more to his culling and synthesis of occult sources, and to his modernist and nationalist inclinations, than the Protestant service highlighted by Kiberd. The equation of what is in fact Yeats's modernist, nationalist and specifically occult emphasis on achieving full, independent selfhood and self-determination with a generic Protestantism does not, to my mind, constitute in itself an adequate 'explanation' or encapsulation of Yeats's "version of identity". While the Yeatsian attitude of 'striving, daily rebirth and incorruption' at the level of identity is portrayed by Kiberd as harmonizing with Protestant thought, I contend it cannot by any means be categorized simply as a Protestant notion tied to Yeats's Anglo-Irish Protestant background. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, it in fact comprises a striking parallel with Fanon's notion of endless self-creation by the decolonized.

On the basis of my arguments above, then, I wish to posit my central thesis: that while Said, in constructing Yeats as a 'postcolonial' figure, throughout his essay repeatedly dismisses Yeats's occult or magical preoccupations and works as "incoherently occult divagations," the examination of Yeats's occult dimension in fact bolsters rather than undermines or detracts from Said's construction. Far from being in themselves non-political, detached from the 'real' world, and on the whole not only relatively unimportant in Yeats's oeuvre but also "indigestible" and "unacceptable" in political terms, works like *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*, informing a wide range of

Yeats's poetry and works after 1916, are in fact political in focusing on national identity in the Irish colonial context. *A Vision* is written, as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, as what Kiberd calls "a kind of constitution for the infant state" (1996:451). One of the main arguments behind the "poetic thinking" of *A Vision* is, Kiberd argues, the reconciliation of "disparate, once warring, factions" within Ireland through the formulation of a "Third or Middle Way" and dissolving of these "antinomies" (1996:451), and it must be underlined that this operates at the level of identity. Reconciliation, as Kiberd points out, was the "major task" of Yeats's "newly-independent nation," and "the underlying desire" of *A Vision* is "to render those labels" (Protestant and Catholic) "meaningless" (1996:451) or no longer divisive in terms of Irish national identity and Irish national unity.

National reconciliation and national unity are therefore key themes of *A Vision*, for as Foster emphasizes (quoting Lyons), the Irish were deeply and intensely "divided rather than united" (2001:40) during Yeats's lifetime. *A Vision*, I contend, argues and demonstrates that "people can reconcile more than one cultural identity within themselves," and that a strategic and conciliatory "abandonment of the old, prescribed positions may be a liberation for both sides" (2001:54). *A Vision* therefore reflects the fact that Yeats crossed not only national but secular and intellectual "borders all his life," and in doing so was, as Foster argues, "always transgressive, always bent on breaking out of genre, always bent on liberation" (2001:100). *A Vision* is, I submit, far from "extra-worldly" and "non-political", but a direct confrontation of the uncompromising, (post)colonial actuality of the Ireland of Yeats's "age".

I have so far demonstrated that it is precisely because of Yeats's "hyphenated condition of being Anglo-Irish" (Larissy 1997:xxi) that Yeats cannot be confined to the "first" political moment delineated by Said. In this moment, nativism – thereby accepting the racial, religious, and political divisions imposed by imperialism itself" (Said 1993:276) and "believing all people have only one single identity" (1993:277) – comprises the only response via "anti-imperialist resistance" literature to "the pronounced awareness of European and Western culture as imperialism" (1993:270). That Yeats had, according to AE, by 1884 "already developed a theory of the divided consciousness" (Ellmann 1960:55) or "bifurcated self" (1960:77) only

serves to drive home the point that identity for Yeats could not be unreflectively “single” – even in this nativist phase. Yeats’s long-held “notion of the divided self” (Foster 2003:108), as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, underpins his conception of identity as not single, but in fact constructed and multiple.

Crucially, however, Said argues that Yeats also belongs to the “second, more openly liberationist” political moment: that is, to the “idea of liberation” born when “conventional nationalism” is revealed as “both insufficient and crucial, but only as a first step” (1993:271). Out of this “paradox”, Said argues, comes a “strong new post-nationalist theme” (1993:271) within the nationalist revival. In this liberationist phase, Said later explains, one doesn’t “give in to the rigidity and interdictions of self-imposed limitations that come with race, moment, or milieu; instead you move through them to an animated and expanded sense... which necessarily involves more than your Ireland, your Martinique, your Pakistan” (1993:279). Said holds that, as reflected in Yeats’s “sustained anti-British sentiment” and “the anger and gaiety of his anarchically disturbing last poetry,” Yeats “partially belonged to this second moment” (1993:278). In this “phase”, Said argues, liberation “and not nationalist independence” is “the new alternative,” with liberation “by its very nature” (1993:278) involving what Fanon calls in *The Wretched of the Earth* “a transformation of social consciousness beyond national consciousness” (2001:203).

On this basis, Said argues, “the unacceptable attitudes of Yeats” – namely “Yeats’s slide into incoherence and mysticism during the 1920s, his rejection of politics, and his arrogant if charming espousal of fascism (or authoritarianism of an Italian or South American kind)” – are “not to be excused” but can be “easily” situated and criticized “without changing one’s view of Yeats as a poet of decolonization” (1993:278). I wish to underline that, no sooner does Said associate Yeats “more fully” with the “poetry of decolonization and resistance” and “the historical alternatives to the nativist impasse” (1993:279) than he, again, dismisses Yeats’s occult dimension as inexcusable and unacceptable – a crazy “slide” into extra-worldly “incoherence and mysticism” detached from political reality. Yeats’s ‘occult’ works, including *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*, are therefore, by implication, portrayed as an inexcusable but ultimately inconsequential aberration of the ‘postcolonial’ Yeats; an

aberration that Said argues should not detract from Yeats's status as a poet of decolonization. On the contrary, as I have argued above, Yeats's occult dimension and his *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision* are in fact thisworldly and political at the level of Irish national identity, and rather than being seen as an unpalatable aberration should more productively be seen as an important facet of Yeats as a poet of decolonization. Indeed, I contend that whereas Said dismisses Yeats's magical preoccupations in constructing him as a 'postcolonial' figure, the incorporation of this facet of Yeats would in fact aid and bolster this construction immensely, rather than detract from or undermine it.

Of course, Yeats's occult dimension, as I have outlined in this chapter, is a feature of modernism and the 'modernist' Yeats. It is therefore somewhat surprising that Said dismisses this aspect of the 'modernist' Yeats and yet foregrounds "the instability of time" as a feature of work by poets of decolonization. Without mentioning that this is an acknowledged feature in the work of many modernist artists, Said proceeds to argue that the "shifts in Yeats's accounts of his great cycles invokes this instability," as does Yeats's "easy commerce in his poetry between popular and formal speech, folktale and learned writing" (1993:280/1). This after having in effect dismissed *A Vision* in particular as incoherent craziness, a work in which Yeats's gyres and great cycles, as I have indicated earlier in this chapter, are linked with an attitude of Nietzschean 'tragic joy'. Said argues that this destabilization of time through "wrong turns, the overlap, the senseless repetition, the occasionally glorious moment" provides Yeats, "as it does all the poets and men of letters of decolonization" like Tagore, Senghor, and Césaire, with "stern martial accents, heroism, and the grinding persistence of 'the uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor'" (1993:281). In this way, Said argues, Yeats "rises out of his national environment and gains universal significance" (1993:280). While I do not wish to challenge Said's argument in this regard, I do wish to underline that it is Yeats's occult, modernist dimension that is central to this decolonizing feature of his work.

Said also proceeds to construct Yeats as a poet of decolonization who "partially" belongs to the second or liberationist phase, by reference to a range of Yeats's poetry which is, significantly, post-1916. I have already described Yeats's emphatic

emergence as a modernist after 1914 and particularly (in Eliot's words) "from 1919 on", and have throughout this chapter stressed dates around this time in anticipation of highlighting that this coincides with the emphatic emergence of Yeats as an advanced nationalist in the period 1916 to 1922. As Foster explains, Yeats was by 1914 "very far from being a revolutionary" (2001:59) and "far estranged from extreme nationalism" (2001:60). He was, rather, as "a convinced Home Ruler" (2001:59) an "'establishment' nationalist" (2001:60), positing the "quintessentially Yeatsian" and "impartially offensive" argument that Home Rule "would 'educate Catholics mentally and Protestants emotionally'" (2001:59/60). However, after 1916, Yeats "adapted his public persona in order to emerge as a founding father of the new nation in 1922" (2001:59), and it is therefore chiefly on this period that Yeats's reputation as Ireland's national poet rests.

The years from 1916 to 1920 are, as Foster describes it, "remarkable" in that "a good deal" of Yeats's nationalist writing "was withheld from publication" owing to political sensitivities surrounding World War One, when in "many people's eyes" pro-rebel "equalled pro-German" (2001:66). For instance, as Foster explains, although Yeats's ambivalent and ambiguous "poem of apparent atonement about the rebels" (2001:63), "Easter 1916", would "be read as republicanism pure and simple" and "absorbed into the canon of inspirational revolutionary literature" (2001:64), this was "still far from being Yeats's position" (2001:65) at the time. It was only, strategically, first published in 1920 – three days before MacSwiney's (by then assured) death on hunger strike in prison. Yeats was also careful in writing "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death", given that "even moderate nationalist opinion" was "against the war effort," to "reverse the message" of Robert Gregory's death "for king and country" (2001:68) by portraying "the warrior-airman as an exponent of Nietzschean tragic joy" and as lacking "sympathy" for the "imperialist cause" – which was "the exact opposite of what Gregory apparently actually felt" (2001:69). This, too, was first published only after the war, in 1919.

Foster argues that as events built to "revolution all around him" (2001:79), Yeats self-consciously "knew what he was doing" (2001:74) in laying "claim" (2001:79) to these events and constructing himself publicly as Ireland's national poet: revising his *The*

*King's Threshold*; staging MacSwiney's *The Revolutionist* at the Abbey Theatre; denouncing the English government's policy in Ireland, which bred the atrocities of the Black and Tans near Gort, in his famous Oxford Union speech in 1921; and releasing his collection *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* in 1921. This collection, emphatically confirming his "sincerity as an Irish nationalist," has "in deliberate sequence" (2001:75) "Easter 1916", "Sixteen Dead Men" and "The Rose Tree". This "rewriting of his political position" also resulted in Yeats turning his poem "about the dislocations of the world after the Great War" into "a poem about the Irish War instead" (200:177), namely "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen". Written in 1921, the line "We, who seven years ago..." would have directed the reader to 1914 and World War One, but the title of the poem instead directs the reader to "the Home Rule Bill, with all its brave hopes" (2001:76) and, of course, to 1919: "when the Anglo-Irish War began" (2001:77).

Foster writes that by the time of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921 Yeats had "written himself back into Irish history" (p2001:77). As "three-quarters of Ireland emerged into quasi-independence in 1922," Foster argues, Yeats "emerged alongside as the poet of the revolution" (2001:62) – a position that had seemed "unlikely" (2001:79) given his political stance in 1914. In this, "and in so many ways," Foster concludes, Yeats's "biography is the history of his country" (2001:59). It is therefore not surprising that Said focuses on this period in his construction of Yeats as a poet of decolonization. Said lists "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen", "Easter 1916" and "September 1913" as among the "great poems of that climactic period after the Easter Uprising of 1916" which impart the sense of "a terrible new beauty that changes the old political and moral landscape" (1993:280). One must, of course, overlook Said's erroneous inclusion of "September 1913", published in *Responsibilities* (1914), in this post-1916 list. This aside, Said argues that Yeats, like "all poets of decolonization," "struggles to announce the contours of an imagined or ideal community, crystallized by its own sense not only of itself, but of its enemy" (1993:280). That, like Neruda, Yeats does so "under the shadow of domination," Said argues, connects Yeats's "protocols of exhortation and expansiveness" in a poem like "The Fisherman" with "the narrative of liberation" depicted by Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*.



Significantly, Said also argues that Yeats's "greatest decolonizing works" centre on "the birth of violence, or the violent birth of change, as in 'Leda and the Swan'" (1993:284). He adds that the "greatest theme" in the poetry "that culminates in *The Tower* (1928)" is "how to reconcile the inevitable violence of the colonial conflict with the everyday politics of an ongoing national struggle," and "also how to square the power of the various parties in the conflict with the discourse of reason, persuasion, organization, and the requirements of poetry" (1993:284). Said argues that Yeats is exemplary in perceiving, almost a half-century before Fanon's assertion, that "liberation cannot be accomplished simply by seizing power" (1993:284). Said declares that Yeats's "prophetic perception" that "violence cannot be enough" and that "the strategies of politics and reason must come into play" is "the first important announcement in the context of decolonization of the need to balance violent force" with "an exigent political and organizational process" (1993:284). That "neither Yeats nor Fanon offers a prescription for making a transition after decolonization to a period when a new political order achieves moral hegemony," Said argues, is "symptomatic of the difficulty that millions live with today" (1993:284).

Said's emphasis on Yeats's advocacy of a pragmatic politics, and of the notion that "seizing" political power does not automatically translate into liberation, brings me back to my earlier arguments in this chapter about Yeats's "tension" resting on the problem of how to circumvent externally imposed, inherited or passively received, seemingly stable and fixed, "single" identities. These were 'Irish' Othered by 'English'; and 'Catholic Irish' and 'Protestant Anglo-Irish' Othered by each other. As I've argued, *A Vision* not only advocates the creation of Irish national identity and Irish national unity in a manner free of reciprocal hatred for England (thereby avoiding replication of the colonizer's Manichaeian opposition at the level of identity), but also the reconciliation of the "disparate, once warring, factions" within Ireland through the formulation of a "Third or Middle Way" and dissolving of these "antinomies" (Kiberd 1996:451) at the level of identity, including the Anglo versus Irish "tension" within himself. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, Yeats is, clearly, imagining a community: an inclusive new Irish nation.

In doing so, he is not giving in “to the rigidity and interdictions of self-imposed limitations that come with race, moment, or milieu” at the level of identity. As Yeats wrote on one of his “poetic manuscripts”: “Talent perceives Difference/Genius unity” (Foster 1998:58), and at the level of identity the former (talent) may be seen in terms of the exclusionary, divided Ireland of his time and the latter (genius) in terms of his inclusive imagined community. I’ve earlier argued that Yeats was “forever crossing and recrossing the sectarian divide” (Kiberd 1996:452) and that there were “those on both sides of the religious divide who knew what Yeats’s project implied and did not like it one bit” (1996:452). As Kiberd puts it, an “art that deliberately opposes its own age” is “reflected in a notion of genius” – which can be seen to equate with Unity – as “never like that country’s” immediate “idea of itself” (1996:302) – which can be seen to equate with Difference. However, out of “the contest with current codes” (Catholic and Protestant) a “symbolic projection of the future community emerges” (1996:302) – and this is the projection, I submit, of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*: a united Irish nation.

Forming part of the “magical poetics” (Graf 2000:99) of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, and of his “philosophical framework” (Unterecker 1969:29) as expressed in *A Vision*, these ideas inform the collections containing the nationalist poems Said highlights. As Ellmann remarks, “No one would suppose, on reading the extra-national *Vision*, that Ireland would occur so prominently in the poetry written contemporaneously with it” (1964:165). While *A Vision* is “not... a full background for his verse,” Ellmann explains, “it is drawn upon when it is needed, sometimes running counter to the verse, sometimes parallel, sometimes compounding with it” (1964:165). Unterecker notes that although “almost everything Yeats wrote after 1922 and a good deal that he wrote before that date is linked to *A Vision*, one can read the poems without knowing the system” (1969:29). Knowing the System does, however, illuminate and extend the connotations of many of his poems, in various ways. This is confirmed by Jeffares’s long list of “Poems Associated With or Included in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*” (1990:321/22), which includes poems in *The Tower* (1928) like “Leda and the Swan” (1924), “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen” (1921) and “Meditations in Time of Civil War” (1923). The notion of balancing violent force with political pragmatism

that Said notes, I suggest, cannot be divorced from the “esoteric subtext” (Graf 2000:xvi) of these collections.

Indeed, it must be registered that Yeats’s emphatic emergence as a modernist and advanced nationalist in the public eye coincides with a resurgence in his occult activities and the concretisation of his ‘occult’ thoughts into his Doctrine of the Mask. *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1917), as Graf argues, “serves as the fulcrum of Yeats’s career” because in it Yeats articulates his doctrine or magical poetics “definitively”, thereafter crafting “the poetry that has led critics to name him a great modern poet” (2000:xiii). Written to explain what Yeats calls his “convictions” and “metaphysical beliefs” (Graf 2000:xiv) to Iseult Gonne, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* is Yeats’s self-proclaimed “‘spiritual history’” (Jeffares 1990:76) and its ideas of mask and anti-self are condensed into verse in its didactic introductory poem, “Ego Dominus Tuus”. The importance of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* in Yeats’s thinking is evident in his Introduction to *A Vision*. As Yeats puts it, *A Vision* builds “up an elaborate classification of men according to their more or less complete expression of one type or another,” upon the “simple distinction” in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* “between the perfection that is from a man’s combat with himself and that which is from a combat with circumstance” (Jeffares 1990:75). The “combat” with one’s self and with circumstance that Yeats refers to, I wish to suggest, can be related directly to the “tension” stemming from Yeats’s three-fold ‘identity’ problem delineated in this chapter.

While *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* is “a distillation of the ideas” (Foster 2003:76) in “Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolate Places” and Yeats’s earlier ‘dialogue’ with his so-called ‘spirit guide’ Leo Africanus, and thus may appear non-political and extra-worldly, it also has a strong emphasis on this-worldly psychology and, as I will show in the next chapter, an implicit and explicit political or colonial dimension. As Foster points out, in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*’s “original form” Yeats “confronted the ideas of Freud and Jung more than he had done before (though their names were excised for the published versions)” (2003:76). This modernist concern with “human psychology” (Ellmann 1964:93) extends to *A Vision*, which also has its “roots in personal psychology” (Foster 2003:606). Moreover, as Ellmann argues, Yeats’s

Doctrine of the Mask focuses on “the problem of identity” (1960:177), and is “so complex and so central in Yeats that we can hardly attend to it too closely” (1960:175). *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, although an ‘occult’ work, constitutes a key text in understanding Yeats’s conception of Irish national identity.

Furthermore, Foster explains that while Yeats “watched as Irish opinion settled in a new direction over 1917-18” he “emerged with a new wife, a rejuvenated interest in occult and psychical research, and a new home – the Norman tower which he bought in 1916 and had begun to renovate” (2001:67). Yeats was also, Graf points out, a member of the Amon Temple of Stella Matutina for eight years, “from 1914 until 1922 when it was dissolved” (2000:35). From 1917, Yeats would for years be preoccupied with working on the hundreds of pages of his mediumistic wife George’s automatic script or “spirit communication” (2000:158). The result was the first version of *A Vision* (finished and published in 1925), which he revised and re-published in its final form in 1937. Undoubtedly, the System gave Yeats “prophetic authority” (Ellmann 1960:236) and “‘metaphors for poetry’” (Jeffares 1990:75), and is what Yeats in the Introduction to *A Vision* credits for his poetry gaining “in self-possession and power” (1990:75) in *The Tower* and *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933).

However, it is also deeply concerned with the inner conflict “between who we are and what we dream of becoming” (Ellmann 1964:160), and with the uniting of a person or collectivity “to their images of themselves” (1964:108). This is because *A Vision* is prefigured by *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, and extends its concern with “the problem of identity” in the colonial context. Ellmann writes that as early as the end of November 1917 the first part of *A Vision*, the classification into 28 types of what Ellmann calls “human personality” but which I view rather in terms of ‘identity’, had already “been outlined” (1960:226). This “astrological pattern-making,” Foster indicates, was prefigured in the examination of the archetypes of saint, hero and artist in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*. The Doctrine of the Mask articulated in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* is incorporated into and reimagined in the symbolism of *A Vision*, rendering *A Vision* the work “of a mind that tries to see people” – and, I would add, nations – “as constructs” (Foster 2003:284). While it can be read “on one level as a commentary on

the process and achievement of artistic inspiration” (2003:606), it also represents, I contend, an exploration of Irish national identity as a construct.

That there is a ‘national’ dimension to *A Vision* is undeniable. Following the atrocities of the Black and Tans, which drove “once unlikely people to join Sinn Fein” (Foster 2001:71), Yeats in 1920 busied himself in Oxford with “his philosophical system” (2001:73), *A Vision*, and his autobiographical “Four Years: 1887-1891”. The latter, Foster explains, is “preoccupied with how ‘a nation or an individual’ might achieve, through emotional intensity... a symbological, a mythological coherence,” with Yeats self-consciously relating his youth to “what he actually calls ‘the future birth of my country’” (Foster 2001:73). This is also a preoccupation in *A Vision*, with both works in large measure products of Yeats’s interrogation of the problems and strategic opportunities of ‘identity itself’ in the colonial context, in terms of the impending “birth” of the ‘new’ Irish nation-state. As Ellmann points out, Yeats rewrote his *Autobiographies* between 1919 and 1922 “with *A Vision* in mind,” and “suffused it with the serenity of the man” (1960:241) of Phase 17.

Yeats, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, constructs and defines himself in *A Vision* as the ideal Irish national poet, assigning himself to Phase 17 along with other ‘Daimonic’ poets like Dante, Shelley and Landor in a System “constructed around archetypal artistic personalities”(Foster 2003:108). The ideas of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* are “related to his own mentality, balanced between intuitive artistic genius and everyday pragmatist: ‘antithetical’ and ‘primary’ selves” (2003:108). In doing so, Yeats ‘remakes’ himself by choosing, adopting and “cultivating” the ‘identity’ or “Poetic Personality” (Ellmann 1960:239) of Phase 17. As a result, his *Autobiographies* became “no longer a mere autobiography” but, as Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory in 1920, a “political and literary testament...intended to give a philosophy to the movement” (1960:242). “Every analysis of character, of Wilde, Henley, Shaw & so on,” Yeats writes, “builds up my philosophic nationalism – it is nationalism against internationalism, the rooted against the rootless people” (1960:242).

In constructing Yeats as a postcolonial figure, Said argues that through the “great poems of summation and vision” like “Among School Children” (1928), “The Tower” (1928), “A Prayer for My Daughter” (1921), “Under Ben Bulbin” (1939) and “The Circus Animals’ Desertion” (1939), Yeats “reconstructs his own life poetically as the epitome of the national life” (1993:286) and “rises from the level of personal and folk experience” to that of “national archetype” without forfeiting “the immediacy of the former or the stature of the latter” (1993:286). However, in light of the ‘occult’ backdrop I have outlined, it is exactly Yeats’s exploration of ‘identity itself’ and construction of himself in *A Vision* as the archetypal Irish national poet of Phase 17, who is at the same time Anglo-Irish, which informs his “reconstruction of his own life poetically” through these poems. In Yeats’s occult works, as in the poetry Said highlights, “the artist’s integrated life provides the platonic parallel for the creation of a national myth” (Foster 2001:73). As Foster argues, Yeats’s “role in the Irish Story” involved “mastering the past through visionary narration,” in so doing “shaping the present and future consciousness of ‘the nation’ – whoever they were” (2001:xix/x). And this “constructing” of a nation, Foster argues, “revolves around” the “tension created when the affirmation of personal identity intersects with the invention of epic” (2001:xx).

However, Yeats’s rooting in the national must also be situated in his Blakean approach to nationality, i.e. his tendency to, in Blake’s words in “Auguries of Innocence,” see “a World in a Grain of Sand/And a Heaven in a Wild Flower” (Butter 2003:114); in Yeats’s case, to see the universe through the ‘nation’. This approach is compatible with Yeats’s poetic notion that “symbolism holds the cosmos together” by its “interconnecting correspondences,” and his occult principle that “Everything is related to everything else” (Ellmann 1964:25). As Ellmann argues, the “ultimate purpose of Yeats’s use of nationality” in his verse is “paradoxically, to enable him to transcend it” (1964:15). As the young Yeats wrote:

“To the greater poets everything they see has its relation  
to the national life, and through that to the universal and  
divine life: nothing is an isolated artistic achievement; there  
is a unity everywhere; everything fulfils a purpose that is not

its own; the hailstone is a journeyman of God; the grass blade carries the universe upon its point. But to this universalism, this seeing of unity everywhere, you can only attain through what is near you, your nation, or, if you be no traveller, your village and the cobwebs on your walls. You can no more have the greatest poetry without a nation than religion without symbols. One can only reach out to the universe with a gloved hand – that glove is one's nation, the only thing one knows even a little of" (Ellmann 1964:15/16).

With this liberationist rather than nativist attitude, then, Yeats moves through "self-imposed limitations that come with race, moment, or milieu" and moves to "an animated and expanded sense... which necessarily involves more than your Ireland, your Martinique, your Pakistan" (1993:279). Although Yeats would later "worry the glove, as all do when it ceases to fit" (Kiberd 1996:301), a liberationist stance and paradoxical transcendence of nationality in the awareness of the constructedness of national identity are, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, key features of the 'postcolonial' Yeats's Doctrine of the Mask. Tightening glove, I contend, is discarded in favour of unifying Mask. And *A Vision*, continuing *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*'s reification of the (collective) unconscious, becomes in part a representation of what Unterecker calls "Yeats's effort to construct a metaphor for the correlation of all things" (1969:24).

Again, the modernist, occult dimension – informing this 'universal' outlook – is at work in Yeats's thinking. Indeed, for Yeats, the unity of "everything" extends to the mind, encompassing the imagination and (collective) unconscious. As early as 1901, in his essay "Magic", he posits "three doctrines": firstly, that "the borders of our mind (sic) are ever shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy"; secondly, that "the borders of our memories are shifting, and that our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself"; and thirdly, that "this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols" (Graf 2000:34). Again, by recourse to an occult, modernist

preoccupation with the unconscious, seen as underlying identity-as-construct, Yeats moves through “self-imposed limitations that come with race, moment, or milieu” and moves to “an animated and expanded sense” (1993:279) of selfhood. I will demonstrate in the next chapter that Yeats associates the unconscious with “genius” or artistic inspiration as a key element in identity-creation. As I’ve explained earlier in this chapter, Yeats holds that “Talent perceives Difference/Genius Unity”. His association of the unconscious with “genius” (what he calls an individual or nation’s Daimon) therefore informs his conception of an inclusive Irish national identity, and his vision of Irish national unity.

In this vein, it must be noted that while Yeats constructs himself in *A Vision* as an Irish national archetype, in writing *A Vision* he necessarily also “forgot he was an Irishman” (Ellmann 1964:xiv) owing to his awareness and exploration of ‘identity-as-construct’. That Yeats had in 1924 “still hoped to introduce *A Vision* directly into the political scene” (Ellmann 1960:249), written as what Kiberd calls “a kind of constitution for the infant state” (1996:451) and with the intention of providing what Foster calls “a spiritual foundation for the new nation-state” (2003:316), must also be viewed in these “extra-national” (Ellmann 1964:165) terms. In this, Yeats’s emphasis extends beyond national independence to a paradoxically wider sense of personal or psychological liberation at the level of identity in the first instance, involving through the application of his Doctrine of the Mask what Said associates with the second liberationist moment of decolonization: a “transformation” of personal and “social consciousness beyond national consciousness” (Said 1993:278).

In all, Said concludes, Yeats “stopped short of imagining full political liberation, but he gave us a major international achievement in cultural decolonization none the less” (1993:287/88). This is the basic difference, Said argues, between Yeats and Fanon: Fanon’s “theoretical and perhaps even metaphysical narrative of anti-imperialist decolonization” is “a discourse of that anticipated triumph, liberation, that marks the second moment of decolonization”; Yeats, on the other hand, “sounds the nationalist note and stands at a threshold” he “cannot cross,” although “he sets a trajectory in common with that of other poets of decolonization” (1993:283). Yeats, Said offers, “might at least” be given “credit” for “adumbrating the liberationist and Utopian



revolutionism in his poetry” that, in Said’s estimation, is “belied and even cancelled out by his later reactionary politics” (1993:283).

However, it is my contention that Yeats does, in fact, imagine full political liberation – to be achieved first at the level of identity – and that he therefore fully, not partially, belongs to this second moment. As I’ve argued, Yeats’s “project of inventing a unitary Ireland is the attempt at achieving at a political level a reconciliation of opposed qualities which must first be fused in the self” (Kiberd 1996:124). Put another way, for Yeats “personal liberation must precede national recovery” or political independence, “being in fact its very condition” (1996:124). The Doctrine of the Mask, articulated in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and incorporated into *A Vision*, is therefore exactly Yeats’s prescription at the level of identity for what Said describes as “making a transition after decolonization” to a ‘postcolonial’ period “when a new political order achieves moral hegemony”. A genuinely ‘postcolonial’ political order would, in Yeats’s scheme, necessarily be preceded by psychological decolonization, to be achieved through the conscious fashioning and adoption of an inclusive national identity that inspires national unity. His doctrine, informing his poetry, is therefore indicative of what Said calls his “prophetic perception” that “violence cannot be enough,” that “the strategies of politics and reason must come into play” and that “violent force” must be balanced with “an exigent political and organizational process” (1993:284).

This explains why it may seem that Yeats “stopped short”: full ‘postcolonial’ political liberation was for Yeats an unknown not to be imposed, something ‘new’ necessarily arising only once full psychological decolonization at the level of identity had occurred – a poetic creation. As I have indicated, Foster argues that Yeats sought to shape “the present and future consciousness of ‘the nation’ – whoever they were” (2001:xix/x). This suggests that Yeats expected an inclusive, imagined Irish community, which had never before existed, would in effect create itself, with a new political order arising as the expression of this creation. However, such national ‘newness’ did not occur in Ireland as Yeats had hoped, with the Catholic ethos of the Free State preserving the cultural divisions, resting on the notion of stable, fixed identities, inherited from colonial rule. As I have argued in this chapter, his

reactionary politics can therefore be seen as a response to the failure in Ireland to achieve the ‘postcolonial’ liberation he had hoped for, and does not by any means ‘cancel out’ his liberationist commitment.

Rather, the failure to achieve psychological decolonization at the level of identity in the first instance must be seen as a reason for what Said calls “the difficulty that millions” of ex-colonized people “live with today” (1993:284), namely essentialist, exclusionary division (including at a political level) rather than non-essentialist, inclusive unity. This failure to achieve full postcolonial liberation in Ireland is anticipated, and warned against, in *A Vision*. That Yeats constructs himself as a poet of Phase 17 born into the age of Phase 22, and therefore “doomed to belong to ‘a tragic minority’” (Ellmann 1960:241), suggests that Yeats anticipated political liberation in Ireland and ‘Irish-ness’ would not be ‘full’ enough to include the Anglo-Irish Protestant minority. Tragically in Yeats’s reckoning, colonial “differences” at the level of identity would after political liberation be retained and ‘enforced’ at the expense of full national inclusivity and unity. Furthermore, as Said argues earlier in his essay, in the liberationist phase one realises that “nativism is not the only alternative,” and embraces the “possibility of a more generous and pluralistic vision of the world, in which imperialism courses on, as it were, belatedly in different forms... and the relationship of domination continues, but the opportunities for liberation are open” (1993:277/8). One could, perhaps, hardly find a better summation of Yeats’s phases of the moon and their intricacies, in which the “opportunities” for liberation remain open but liberation is itself never to be taken for granted or guaranteed.

In Yeats’s scheme, should liberation be achieved its longevity is, after all, always threatened by the cyclical nature of existence. The opportunities for liberation are even at times temporarily foreclosed by the challenges of the Four Faculties and the gyres of history. Yeats, then, anticipates colonial oppression coursing on “in different forms” and the “relationship of domination” continuing. Certainly, and importantly, liberation is for Yeats not an inevitable “destination” to be finally achieved on a linear trajectory but – invoking a Nietzschean attitude of ‘tragic joy’, and drawing on an ‘occult’ reification of the unconscious and imagination – a state of mind and being

constantly renewed by choice and requiring daily protection lest it pass away. Liberation, Yeats holds, may be fatally limited by the certainty of change and people's temporality/mortality, but this does not devalue the ever-recurring, heroic pursuit and attainment of it. Rather, this spurs it on. As it is put in "Vacillation": "What's the meaning of all song?/'Let all things pass away'" (*Collected Poems* 1971:285). As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, there are in fact striking parallels between the mage-poet Yeats's Doctrine of the Mask/System and psychotherapist Fanon's narrative in *The Wretched of the Earth*, with both deeply concerned with psychology and identity in the colonial context and "marked throughout with the accents and inflections of liberation" (1993:283).

Said, as I have shown, reaches his conclusion that Yeats "stopped short of imagining full political liberation" by consistently dismissing Yeats's occult, 'modernist' dimension throughout his essay. In his final dismissal of this dimension, Said states simply that "Yeats's full system of cycles, pernes, and gyres seems important only as it symbolizes his efforts to lay hold of a distant and yet orderly reality as a refuge from the turbulence of his immediate experience" (1993:287). Again, Said drastically – and finally – reduces the importance of *A Vision* to the 'postcolonial' Yeats, characterizing it as an ineffectual escape from immediate colonial experience to a "distant" and "extra-worldly" reality far removed from it. However, as Larissy warns, the "magic and occult sciences" that remained "interwoven with Yeats's profoundest thoughts throughout his life" should "never be treated as an eccentricity to be discounted in a consideration of his poetry and criticism" (1997:xxiii) – and this is particularly true, I contend, of Yeats's Doctrine of the Mask and liberationist conception of Irish national identity.

As I have repeatedly underlined in this chapter, Yeats's occult symbolism can also be seen as metaphorical and profoundly thisworldly, for while Yeats was "talking about spirits he was, indeed, talking also about images, and he often did so in a way which left it open to the reader to remain agnostic about the spirits" (Larissy 1997:xxv). Yeats bluntly informs his readers of his position in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, writing that "mental images no less than apparitions" are "forms existing in... Anima Mundi" which can be "mirrored in a particular vehicle" or individual, and that he sees "no

reason to distinguish” (Jeffares 1990:54) between these forms. It must be recognized that Yeats’s Doctrine of the Mask, and the “battle” of *A Vision*, unfold not in an extra-worldly spiritual realm but “in the depths of the mind when the eyes are closed” (Ross 2001:85). That Yeats’s doctrine is therefore, when all is said, a psychological rather than extrawordly process confirms its concern with facing the “uncompromising actuality” of everyday ‘reality’, including and especially in the Irish colonial context, at the level of identity.

To discount Yeats’s occult dimension, as Said does, as an ‘eccentricity’ or aberration is not only to drastically downplay and even ignore the importance of this ‘modernist’ feature in Yeats’s work, but to fail to heed Yeats’s own words in “If I Were Four and Twenty” about his determination to “hammer” his “thoughts into unity” (Ellmann 1960:241). As Yeats puts it, he has “three interests”: in “a form of literature”, in “a form of philosophy” (magic and the occult), and “a belief in nationality” (Ellmann 1960:241). None of these “seemed to have anything to do with the other,” he writes, but having constructed himself as the archetype of Phase 17 he declares that “all three” are “one,” are “a discrete expression of a single conviction” (1960:241) of unity. Each, Yeats writes, “has behind it” his “whole” being and “has gained thereby a certain newness” (1960:241). Against this backdrop, it is clear that in his construction of Yeats as a ‘postcolonial’ figure, Said has focused on only two of Yeats’s three primary interests, and marginalized the other (magic and the occult). In so doing, the ‘modernist’ Yeats has been largely overlooked, and an incomplete picture of the ‘postcolonial’ Yeats presented.

While Said’s dismissal of the ‘modernist’ Yeats’s occult dimension is (to use his words regarding Yeats’s “slide into incoherence and mysticism” against him) “not to be excused” (1993:278), it is entirely understandable. Ellmann points out that Yeats’s occult activities “have understandably made everyone uneasy” (1960:3). “It would be more comfortable,” Ellmann writes, “if the outstanding poet of our time had hobnobbed with, say, Thomas Henry Huxley, instead of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mather, a medium in Soho, or Shri Purohit Swami” (1960:3). “But,” he adds, Yeats “has not obliged us, and a number of critics have therefore attacked him for failing to attach himself to a more decent and gentlemanly

creed” (1960:3). Nevertheless, Ellmann explains, Yeats “found in occultism, and in mysticism generally, a point of view which had the virtue of warring with accepted beliefs, and of warring enthusiastically and authoritatively” (1960:3). He also warns that occultism is “a big centre, a much bigger one, in fact, than is generally acknowledged,” and points out that along with “spells and spooks from every culture it has managed to assimilate many of the leading philosophical notions of eastern and western thought” (1960:3). “To identify it with hocus-pocus alone,” he cautions, “is evidence of a socially acceptable common sense but not of acquaintance with the subject” (1960:2).

Ellmann’s caution might well be redirected at Said decades later, although Said is far from the only critic guilty of disparaging and disregarding Yeats’s occult “divagations” in the decades since his death and since Ellmann’s warning. As Graf argues, echoing Ellmann, there has been a tendency in the “literary community” to “not take magic seriously” and to think of this aspect of Yeats as “an embarrassing pastime better left unacknowledged” (2000:35). The “tendency of scholars” to “second-guess or to ignore the esoteric subtext” of Yeats’s works “has resulted in *Per Amica* being thoroughly ignored, even though Yeats kept writing about how important it was and how *A Vision* arose from the thoughts expressed there” (2000:xvi). Yeats, Graf argues, is himself partly to blame for this situation. Pointing out, as Ellmann does in 1960, that Yeats called *A Vision* his “public philosophy” and harboured “a different, private philosophy that was not contained in *A Vision*” (2000:xv), Graf argues that “Yeats is largely responsible for making his true intent completely esoteric and unreadable to modern scholars who do not understand his magical worldview” (2000:159).

Indeed, as Ellmann argues, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* is “built up out of evasion so skilful that the reader is never sure whether he is being presented with a doctrine or with a poem in prose” (1960:223). And as for *A Vision*, Ellmann observes, much of the argument “is clothed in a style more metaphorical than any used in English prose since the seventeenth century” (1964:162). He writes that “in so far as it was philosophical, Yeats felt compelled to apologize for it” (1964:163). “If no reader has ever been converted to its doctrines,” he adds, “the reason is that one is never sure

what is being offered for acceptance or what attitude the writer wishes to elicit” (Ellmann 1964:162/63). This is echoed by Foster, who describes *A Vision* as “his (Yeats’s) bizarre study of the philosophy of history” (2001:71). In highlighting that *A Vision* has “found few followers,” he adds: “... it is hard to believe that it deserves them” (2003:606). In “the end,” Foster argues, “following the ‘System’” necessitates “the suspension not only of scepticism” but “of the faculty of rational analysis” (2003:285).

In all, the arcane content and abstruse prose of both *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision* have not only left critics guessing and condemned both works to receiving short shrift as ‘serious’ literary material in comparison to his poems, but also ensured that Yeats’s hopes of introducing his occult writings into the political scene were doomed to failure. As Hamburger puts it, Yeats’s poetic mask proved “valid only in Yeats’s poetry and not in those spheres, like politics and social life and even literary criticism, to which Yeats vainly tried to apply its ‘philosophy’” (1969:83). The utter ‘failure’ of Yeats’s doctrine and System in practical terms has prompted a number of critics to nevertheless espy a lesser, non-political value in *A Vision*. Foster argues that *A Vision*’s “real value” is “to students of Yeats’s mind” and of his artistic “aspirations” (2003:285), while Ellmann argues that the “best part” of *A Vision* is “not the explanation of the symbols” but “their application to psychology and history, where the ‘animation of experience’ dominates abstract definition”(1964:163/4). The direct link between the psychology and aspirations articulated in these works and the Irish colonial context, and therefore the implicit and explicit political content of these works, has been largely overlooked. As I will show in the next chapter, one can agree with Ellmann’s observation that “the inconsistencies” of *A Vision* “are of less importance than the powerful sense of tumultuous life, and of the struggle to transcend it, which the book conveys” (1964:164), and add that this tumultuousness and struggle cannot be divorced from the colonial context in which these works were produced.

The abstrusity of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*, one may speculate, could also be partly explained by historical circumstances: pro-rebel meant pro-German around the time *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* was written, there was a Literary Fund

pension and censorship to consider, while Yeats himself was in physical danger during the Civil War when *A Vision* was being compiled and completed. Obscurity of meaning, then, may have suited Yeats on more practical, rather than artistic, levels. In all, though, Yeats's occult precepts and writings, bizarre and somewhat confusing to even his most sympathetic readers and critics, left him in glaring intellectual solitude. As Ross argues, what "was most important to Yeats" was "what happened inside his mind" (2001:113), and clearly this distanced him from his countrymen and contributed to the failure of his ideas to enter the popular imagination. His occult works' seeming lack of material currency, exacerbated by the abstrusity of their expression and complexity of their content, ensured they did not have purchase in the public or political spheres. Given the Catholic ethos of the new state, and Yeats's forever compromised position as an Anglo-Irish Protestant, the 'occult' outpourings of a so-called Ascendancy poet were from the start doomed to be unwelcome and fodder for scorn and ridicule. As I have indicated, the stable, fixed identities Yeats attempted to circumvent in theory were, in the end, in practice not dislodged or disowned.

This distance between Yeats and his countrymen exposes what may be deemed the Achilles Heel of Yeats's political thinking: his problematic conflation of the individual and nation. As Kiberd argues, to read Yeats's *Autobiographies* is "to be constantly impressed and unnerved by the casual ease" with which he substitutes himself "as a shorthand" for his country and countrymen, "writing an implicit and covert constitution" for Ireland in the image of his "very creation" (1996:119). As I have indicated in this chapter, Ellmann points out that Yeats rewrote his *Autobiographies* "with *A Vision* in mind," and "put reticence upon his narrative and suffused it with the serenity of the man who has achieved Unity of Being" (1960:241), turning himself "into that man of phase 17 whom, once he had posited, he had decided to resemble" (1960:242). Yeats's substitution of himself "as a shorthand" for his countrymen can therefore be related to his construction of himself as an Irish national poet and archetype in *A Vision*, a system which indeed conflates self and nation.

Kiberd argues in regard to the Irish colonial context that, with the loss of native landscape and culture, the Irish artist turns to his “own private world” and “volunteers to fill the cultural vacuum, as a promissory note for a yet-to-be-implemented nation” (1996:119). The artist, Kiberd argues, “equates self and nation”: thus, in Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, “one youth” can claim “to incarnate the uncreated conscience of his race” (1996:119), while Yeats can do the same in “To Ireland in the Coming Times”: “Nor may I less be counted one/With Davis, Mangan, Ferguson,/Because, to him who ponders well,/My rhymes more than their rhyming tell/Of things discovered in the deep,/Where only body’s laid asleep” (*Collected Poems* 1971:57). In “such a self-charged context,” Kiberd argues, “nation-building can be achieved by the simple expedient of writing one’s autobiography,” and “autobiography in Ireland becomes, in effect, the autobiography of Ireland” (1996:119). This notion is echoed in Foster’s repeated references to Yeats’s biography being in many ways “the history of his country” (2001:59).

Kiberd explains that, in the Irish colonial context, the artist’s ideal is “the achieved individual, the person with the courage to become his or her full self” (1996:119) – exactly, I contend, also the ideal of the ‘modernist’ Yeats and the ideal expressed in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*. As a result, Kiberd argues, the “Irish self” becomes “a project,” with the reader “invited” to become “a co-creator with the author” (1996:120). The “characteristic text” is “a process, unfinished, fragmenting,” refusing “to exact a merely passive admiration for the completed work of art” (1996:120). This explains, to an extent, the “short aphoristic reflections” (Foster 2003:75) and what Ellmann calls the skilful “evasion” (1960:223) of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, and the “astrological pattern-making” (Foster 2003:75) and what Ellmann calls the extremely “metaphorical” (1964:162) style of *A Vision*. Both works, non-linear in structure, seem unfinished and splintered, apparently requiring their completion through the active engagement of the reader.

Indeed, as Ellmann draws attention to, in the last pages of *A Vision* “Yeats describes how, having fully evolved and knitted together the symbol of *A Vision*, he draws himself up into the symbol, as he could well do now that it was wholly personalized as a system and systematized as an expression of personality” (1960:286). However,



“after building up a system over three hundred pages,” Yeats startlingly “in the last two pages sets up that system’s anti-self” (1960:286): he prioritises The Thirteenth Cycle, which Yeats states “is in every man and called by every man his freedom” (1960:286). It “knows what it will do with its own freedom,” he adds, “but it has kept the secret” (1960:286). In irrevocably destabilizing or, in a sense, ‘undoing’ his System with an over-riding infusion of “free will, liberty and deity” which “is able to alter everything,” and by informing the reader that this Thirteenth Cycle “is in every man and called by every man his freedom” (1960:286), Yeats appears to invite the Irish reader to freely co-create with him the kind of ideal Irish self (of Phase 17) that he himself has constructed; to, in fact, recreate it for him or herself.

*A Vision*, then, presents itself as an ‘unfinished’ work and process, with the ideal Irish self becoming “a project” for the reader – and Yeats standing in as exemplar. Yeats thus envisages Irish sovereignty, and in this regard Anderson’s argument, outlined in chapter one, is apposite: nations, he argues, dream “of being free and, if under God, directly so” (1991:7). The “gage and emblem of this freedom,” Anderson adds, “is the sovereign state” (1991:7). However, that few if anyone in Ireland knew of or chose to accept Yeats’s invitation, as extended through not only *A Vision* but also *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, to fashion and become “his or her full self” and in due course a new type of nation(-state) is perhaps final proof that self and nation in Yeats’s case were not one and the same. This proof is compounded by the marginalization of Yeats by the Catholic establishment precisely because of his Anglo-Irish Protestant background. In the final analysis, the Irish did not understand what he was getting at, and many Catholic Irish did not care to simply because it came from him.

This is to, again, emphasize that *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*, and the ‘modernist’ Yeats himself, were (and continue to be) seen by many as morally, ‘philosophically’ and politically objectionable. Yeats was, of course, aware of this. Anticipating his critics, he wrote that when his reason had “recovered” he viewed his System as merely “stylistic arrangements of experience” that helped him “to hold in a single thought reality and justice” (Jeffares 1990:86). This disingenuous explanation appears to inform Said’s summation of Yeats’s System as important only insofar as it “symbolizes” Yeats’s “efforts to lay hold of a distant and yet orderly reality”

(1993:287). However, Yeats's metaphorical System is itself the answer to his detractors. As Unterecker points out, the "pattern of overlapping gyres which constitutes Yeats's Great Wheel" could in Yeats's System "only be accepted by the man of phase 17 because only that man would be concerned with that sort of synthesis" (1969:28). For those in other phases, other "religious, historical or psychological systems would be not only necessary but the only possible true ones" (1969:28). Believing in or disbelieving his System, and the extent of this, is therefore up to the individual. For Yeats, Unterecker argues, 'truth' is "only that which the individual can believe," for the "only true view of the world is the individual's" (1969:28).

This is not pure relativism, however, for as Yeats wrote elsewhere: "Man can embody truth but cannot know it" (Ellmann 1964:214); and elsewhere: "... the world being illusive one must be deluded in some way if one is to triumph in it" (1964:109). Individuals – including himself – Yeats therefore grants, "may be deceiving others and they may even be practising a form of deception upon themselves" (1960:176). The concept of the False Mask in his System makes this point. Rather, Yeats is more specific: his System presents the Nietzschean notion that "the individual creates his own world" (1964:94), and posits that "man must have a dream of what he might be in order to become it" (Ellmann 1964:108). The individual, it demonstrates, must have an ideal or Mask to weld him or herself to at the level of identity if self-determination is to be achieved. Yeats thus answers his detractors with what Pippin calls in general terms a "modernist authority," presenting in *A Vision* an artistic imagination that, although "difficult, opaque, strange, elitist, uncommercial, self-defining," demonstrates in its artistic activity "a kind of integrity and autonomy foreclosed in bourgeois life" (Pippin 1991:32). In particular, Yeats's "intensely self-conscious, historical, even philosophical art" presents his readers and detractors with what Pippin calls generally "a finally modern 'honesty'" – i.e. with, in the very multiplicity of the Mask in his System, what Pippin calls in general terms a "recognition of the contingency and mutability of human ideals" (Pippin 1991:32).

There are, therefore, many objections that could be lodged against Yeats's Doctrine of the Mask and System, given the multiplicity of perspectives represented by his

readers, critics and detractors. Not the least of these objections would be Yeats's modernist subscription to what Sheppard calls a "firm spiritual substratum" existing beyond or "within what looks like entropic chaos or unresolvable conflict" (Giles 1993:35). Fanon, of course, dismisses the collective unconscious insofar as he objects to what Crewe calls "Eurocentric, universalizing psychoanalysis," with "its erasure of cultural and political difference" (De Kock 2001:292). Fanon argues in *Black Skin, White Masks* that the collective unconscious is "not dependent on cerebral heredity" as Jung posits but "the unreflected imposition" of 'white' or European "culture" (1967:191); and that in the collective unconscious "the black man is the symbol of Evil" (1967:188) and furnishes the "white man" with the very "mechanism of projection" or "transference" (1967:190). These arguments, however, point emphatically to the notion of the unconscious in relation to colonial Othering and oppression, and are not inconsistent with Yeats's anti-colonial perspective in the specifically Irish context. Rather, as Sheppard explains, subscription to a (collective) unconscious is a modernist "sense" that "is deeply repugnant to those critics who have accepted the (anti-)ontology of postmodernism" (Giles 1993:35). Nevertheless, however repugnant, impractical and indefensible Yeats's Doctrine of the Mask and System (or aspects of these) may be deemed by many to be, it remains my thesis that the incorporation of the 'modernist' or occult Yeats into Said's construction of the 'postcolonial' Yeats would serve to bolster rather than undermine this construction.

That few if anyone accepted Yeats's invitation to "co-create" or recreate the ideal "Irish self", and thereby "a new kind of nation" (Unterecker 1963:31), does not, I contend, undermine the value of his interrogation of 'identity' in the Irish colonial context. Neither does it devalue his proffering of his Doctrine of the Mask as a "prescription" for the achievement of a postcolonial Ireland at the level of identity. Indeed, I submit that the 'modernist' Yeats, complete with occult preoccupations, and Said's 'postcolonial' Yeats should, rather than be seen as "two different men", more productively be reconceived (invoking Yeats's diagram purely for illustrative purposes) as two interpenetrating gyres that together provide a fuller, more dynamic picture of the individual Yeats.

As I have drawn attention to, Ellmann points out that the “portraits” of Yeats created by his biographers and critics in general “are not easily reconcilable, and the tendency has been, instead of reconciling, to prove certain of them inessential” (1960:2). If the gyres, given their intricacies, are not an appropriate image of such reconciliation in this regard, it suffices to state that an understanding of the ‘modernist’ Yeats is, in fact, essential to an understanding of the ‘postcolonial’ Yeats – and vice versa. Where the ‘postcolonial’ Yeats is separated from and not yet reconciled with the ‘modernist’ Yeats, Yeats’s conception of Irish national identity and credentials as a ‘postcolonial’ figure cannot be fully appreciated. The stark “Difference” between the constructions of the ‘modernist’ and ‘postcolonial’ Yeatses should therefore give way to an emphasis on their underlying “Unity”.

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### **Chapter Three: Yeats's Conception of Irish National Identity**

Yeats's grasp of the problems and strategic opportunities of 'identity', particularly regarding the espousal of individual and collective identity in the face and wake of colonial oppression in Ireland, finds considered expression in his development, refinement and articulation of his Doctrine of the Mask. Moreover, I contend that Yeats's doctrine – explicated in the magical poetics of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, incorporated into the mechanics and embodied by the overall structure of *A Vision*, and expressed in a wide range of Yeats's works – stands as one of the foremost articulations from within the colonial context, of a model or "prescription" for the envisioning and adoption of an emphatically 'postcolonial' national identity. It is a prime example of why, in addition to the roles and activities (such as 'nationalist' or 'political agitator') generally associated with him by biographers and critics, Yeats should be recognized in great measure and with a high degree of prioritization as a postcolonial visionary.

The Doctrine of the Mask must be viewed against the backdrop of Yeats's earlier 'correcting', in "The Celtic Element in Literature", of Matthew Arnold's essentialist stereotyping of the Irish as racially inferior. As Castle indicates, Ernest Renan – in his influential essay "Poetry of the Celtic Races" – characterises the Celtic temperament as "feminine, childlike, given to messianism and a 'transparent' or 'realistic naturalism'" that is "the sign of 'the love of nature for herself, the vivid impression of her magic'" (2001:47). This tactic of feminization, Castle points out, "had the effect of marginalizing Celtic races with respect to the patriarchal puritanism of English imperialists" (2001:47). Building on this marginalization and popularizing it as a colonial trope, Arnold – in his "On the Study of Celtic Literature" – develops Renan's "portrait of a feminized race forsaken by its conquerors" into "an imperial allegory of paternal appropriation" of "the Gael" (2001:47). The Gael's "'typical' qualities of energy, dynamism and turbulence," Arnold argues, justifies the inclusion of "the Irish in an imperial collective" (2001:47).

Arnold severely moderates his passion for the Irish, however, by insisting that "the 'Celtic nature' is inherently 'sentimental'" (2001:47). For Arnold, as Castle argues,

“sentimental” means a range of qualities, including “a lively personality, a keen sensitivity, sociability, hospitality, eloquence” and most of all “a desire ‘to aspire ardently after life, light, and emotion, to be expansive, adventurous and gay’” (2001:47). The Celt, Arnold adds, is “always ready... ‘to react against the despotism of fact’” (2001:47). It is the Celt’s “sentimental” nature that Arnold “finds not only attractive but in some ways desirable as a quality that might augment the English character, already dominated by Teutonic materiality and political strength” (2001:47). His union of English and Irish therefore resembles what Howes describes as “a happy patriarchal marriage between the feminine and attractive but inferior Celt and the masculine and superior Saxon” (1996:22/23). The Saxon’s rule is deemed to be “natural and inevitable,” but the Saxon’s existence “would be enriched by a feminine influence” (1996:23). The Celt is “a specimen of maimed masculinity, of illness and lack,” but “the Celt coupled with the Saxon” could become “the angel in the British house of empire, sweetening and completing it” (1996:23).

Arnold therefore rehearses the deracination and miscegenation of the colonized, accepting “into the imperial fold a sentimental, politically emasculated subaltern race” (Castle 2001:47) while encouraging the Irish “to accept the cultural role” that the Saxon “assigns to them” (2001:48). This is a role, Castle explains, “designed to further the aims of imperialism at the cost of the Celt’s native language and customs” (2001:48). The Celt, rather than “exercising its will in the political arena,” must “be content with becoming an object of modern science” (2001:48) and history. This reduction, through political emasculation, to “the status of an anthropological curiosity,” Arnold implies, “could only have come about because of racial inferiority” (2001:48).

Subscribing also to the nineteenth-century stereotype of the Irish “as ‘undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature,’” Arnold ascribes this unruliness to the Celt’s particular affinity with “the wild magic of nature” (2001:49). The Celt, Arnold claims, appears “‘in a special way attracted by the secret before him, the secret of natural beauty and natural magic, and to be close to it, to half-divine it’” (2001:49). This affinity, along with the Celt’s “sentimentality”, severely moderates “any hint of masculine energy and suggests a creative receptivity – a ‘reverence and enthusiasm

for genius, learning and things of the mind' – that is gendered feminine" (2001:49). The Arnoldean perspective is that "a 'feeling for what is noble and distinguished,' an 'indomitable personality', and 'sensibility and nervous exaltation' give the Celt access to nature's 'weird power and... fairy charm'" (2001:49).

Arnold thus effectively consigns the Celtic people "to a realm of magic naturalism" that is "at the farthest remove from cultural and political power" (2001:49). Castle quotes the assertion of Cairns and Richards, that Arnold defines the typical "'Celtic' personality" as "feminine, irrational, impractical and childlike" (Castle 2001:49). What I wish to stress is that this is an imperialist imposition at the level of identity. The Irish are represented as being, in their 'essence', inferior. This is a categorization concordant with Fanon's diagnosis of the colonizer-colonized relationship, explained in chapters one and two, whereby the colonized "child" is on "the unconscious plane" (2001:169) subject to rigorous control of its "fundamentally perverse... ego" and "essence" (2001:170). At the level of identity, in line with Hamer's arguments outlined in chapter two, the Irish are portrayed as supposedly "passive and spoken for"; the typical Gael is "represented in accordance with a hegemonic impulse" by which "it is constructed as a stable and unitary entity" (Said 1993:273).

Yeats, in what is itself an act of decolonization given this imposition of negative identity, challenges Arnold's claim of English racial and cultural supremacy. Against Arnold's assertion that the Celt is "unique in being able to 'half-divine' natural magic," Yeats counters in "The Celtic Element in Literature" that "this ability is not a racial trait" but "one characteristic of a people" who are "able to sustain contact with an 'ancient worship of Nature'" (Castle 2001:50). Yeats writes that the Celt's "'natural magic'" is really just "the religion of the world, the ancient worship of Nature" (2001:50). He therefore subtly shifts Celtic spirituality "from a racial to a temporal plane," and makes "a bold claim for the spiritual superiority of a 'timeless people'" (2001:50).

Notably, Yeats does not take issue with Arnold's attempt to prove a Celtic influence on English literature, but rather claims that unlike other folk traditions "the Celt alone has been for centuries close to the main river of European literature" (2001:51). Yeats

also does not take issue with Arnold's argument that "Celtic art seems to make up to itself for being unable to master the world and give an adequate interpretation of it, by throwing all its force into style," and thus the notion that "expression" in Celtic literature seems "usually to precede conceptualization" (Kiberd 1996:116). Nor does Yeats take issue with Arnold's famous conclusion that the Celtic sensibility can be defined "as a 'passionate, turbulent, indomitable reaction against the despotism of fact'" (Castle 2001:50).

However, Yeats quickly refutes "any racial stigma attached to the reaction against 'facts,'" claiming the Celt's response is in order to "embrace" that which is "superior to facts" – the "timeless, spiritual substratum of folk traditions" (2001:51). In all, this is the position that Yeats takes in regard to Arnold's "mystification of the Celtic character": what is for Arnold "a magically vivid and near interpretation of nature," Castle argues, is for Yeats "real" (2001:58). For Yeats, the "other-worldly is simultaneously this-worldly"; and "magic, far from being an eccentricity of the Celtic imagination," is "at the heart of Yeats's Revivalist project" (2001:58). As I will demonstrate in this chapter, this is the position informing Yeats's Doctrine of the Mask, in which the "timeless, spiritual substratum," Nature and "magic" are conjoined and interfused in terms of Yeats's conception of Irish national identity.

Castle argues that the effect of Yeats's statements is "to refute on literary-historical grounds the subaltern status of the Celtic people that Arnold presupposes on racial grounds" (2001:51). The "primitiveness of the Celt" described by Arnold in terms of racial essence "is redefined as a spiritual trait that links the ancient to the modern in a continuous, timeless unity" (2001:51). Furthermore, Yeats's "assent to the binomial distinction between primitive and civilized peoples," Castle argues, "carries the proviso that the Irish Celts were neither pre-literate, having an intimate connection with a rich folk tradition, nor without history, having an equally intimate connection with an 'ancient religion'" (2001:52). Yeats's response therefore "appears to grant Arnold's claims a certain legitimacy as a scholarly description of Celticism" while it simultaneously "subtly reinterprets his central argument about the Celtic imagination and its relation to English literature and the British Empire" (2001:49).



However, Castle argues, while “Yeats subtly reverses Arnold’s call for Celtic submission to the British Empire,” this reversal “raises an important question: does it generate an anti-colonialist discourse capable of resisting the discriminatory effects of primitivism, or does it in fact fail to avoid a remystification of the Celt, thus reinscribing Arnold’s strategies of binomial racial and cultural typing?” (2001:51). As Foster puts it, “though jeering at Matthew Arnold” Yeats still “apparently” subscribes “to the Arnoldean view of the Celt as dreamy, sensitive and doom-laden” (1998:53). Castle posits that the “subversion is by no means complete,” and that “a residual reliance on primitivist discourse in Yeats’s appeal to an ‘ancient worship of Nature’” and “surfacing more explicitly in his folklore projects” blocks Yeats “from offering a decisive critique of imperialist Celticism and its anthropological assumptions about the Irish ‘race’” (2001:51). Castle states that while Yeats “challenges the cultural superiority of the English and offers a kind of prophylactic for the madness of colonial domination,” the fact that he “does so without seriously questioning Arnold’s primitivist assumptions indicates either a subtle strategy or a blind spot” (2001:50).

The view that it indicates a blind spot hinges largely on Yeats’s literary treatment of the Irish ‘peasant’, with a number of critics accusing Yeats of (unwitting) complicity with imperialist or Ascendancy logic. However, as I’ve argued in chapter two, the occult deeply informs the ‘modernist’ Yeats’s so-called ‘primitivist discourse’, to the extent that he prioritises the occult over ‘the primitive’. In addition, I have pointed to the ‘modernist’ Yeats’s acute awareness of the constructedness of representations of Irishness in the colonial context, and have highlighted his reclamation of “the artist’s right to represent” (Castle 2001:88) in a poem like “The Fisherman” (1919). The incorporation of Yeats’s Doctrine of the Mask into *A Vision* constitutes, I contend, a decisive rebuttal and flouting of Arnold. Yeats’s doctrine is illuminating evidence of the fact that his apparent ‘failure’ to “seriously” question Arnold’s primitivist assumptions is indeed a “subtle strategy” and not a “blind spot”.

What appears to have escaped the notice of critics is that Yeats, in articulating his doctrine in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*, uses the very same terms and concepts used by Arnold. The essentialist, racial stereotyping of the typical Irishman “as ‘undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature’” (2001:49); as having a

“special affinity with ‘the wild magic of nature’” (2001:49); as having a ““reverence and enthusiasm for genius, learning and things of the mind’” (2001:49); as being “sentimental” (2001:47); and as having a sensibility that can be defined “as a ‘passionate, turbulent, indomitable reaction against the despotism of fact’” (2001:50) is more than just deliberately unhooked by Yeats from a racial basis. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, Yeats intentionally appropriates and mobilises these terms and concepts in ways that would never have been approved of by Arnold, to suit Yeats’s own vision of a non-essentialist, ‘postcolonial’ Irish national identity. Indeed, Yeats effectively usurps, transmogrifies and implodes the original terms and meanings constituting Arnold’s imposition of negative Irish identity. The words used by Arnold therefore subversively buttress Yeats’s “prescription” for creating a positive, distinct Irish national identity that dismantles the binary opposition of ‘superior’ colonizer-‘inferior’ colonized.

As Kiberd argues, Arnold’s view is that the “Irish imagination could raise and ennoble English pragmatism and that both could couple in a complete British person,” and Arnold’s proposed “fusion of Celtic and Saxon elements” is posited “in order to deny the separatist claims of the Irish” (1996:425). In this context, I wish to again underline Yeats’s tenet, explained in chapter two, that a fusion of Protestant and Catholic traditions in Ireland “would produce a new Ireland greater than the sum of its parts” (1996:425). Kiberd argues that this “deftly” repeats Arnold’s “manoeuvre”, but “in the opposite direction, recruiting the pragmatism of the English Protestant for an expanded and enhanced Irish personality” (1996:425). Arnold’s proposal, rendered “in order to deny the separatist claims of the Irish,” is therefore “mischievously modified... with the strategic purpose of *asserting* that very claim” (1996:425).

Kiberd argues elsewhere that the “idea of uniting Catholic imagination with Protestant efficiency must have seemed to Yeats a wily appropriation *for Ireland alone* of the Arnoldean theory of Irish creativity ‘completing’ English pragmatism in a unified British personality” (1996:124). As I will demonstrate in this chapter, Yeats’s Doctrine of the Mask enacts this conciliatory strategy at a ‘medium-level’ in attempting to effectively render the divisive labels of “Protestant” and “Catholic” within Ireland “meaningless” (1996:451), or rather, no longer mutually exclusive in

‘national’ terms. However, it must be added that this strategy is also enacted in Yeats’s doctrine at a ‘macro-level’ in tackling English Othering. Yeats’s seeming “blind spot” in regard to seriously questioning Arnold’s primitivist assumptions is shown in his doctrine to in fact be an anti-colonial modification of Arnold’s Celticism. Yeats’s doctrine transforms the terms of Arnold’s racial stereotyping of the Irish in such manner that “a potentially insulting cliché is retrieved by Yeats in a subtle and subversive fashion, to underwrite the very separatist claim which Arnold sought to deny” (1996:124).

In doing so, Yeats’s “residual reliance on primitivism” – which Castle argues blocks Yeats “from offering a decisive critique of imperialist Celticism and its anthropological assumptions about the Irish ‘race’” (2001:51) – in fact emerges as ‘modernist’ esotericism and psychology ‘dressed up’ like the proverbial wolf in sheep’s clothing. This is in order to call for, at the level of identity, what Foster calls a “distinctively Irish passion and imagination against the imposition of bloodless (and self-interested) English rationalism” (1998:53). I contend that Yeats’s brand of inclusive and liberated Irishness, as articulated in his Doctrine of the Mask in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and its incorporation into the System of *A Vision*, does indeed “generate an anti-colonialist discourse capable of resisting the discriminatory effects of primitivism” (Castle 2001:51). I will draw on Fanon’s statements and arguments in particular to underline this anti-colonialist discourse, in showing that it does indeed “avoid a remystification of the Celt” and the “reinscribing” of “Arnold’s strategies of binomial racial and cultural typing” (2001:51) – precisely because it debunks Arnoldean primitivism and Arnold himself altogether. Yeats’s doctrine constitutes “a decisive critique of imperialist Celticism” and its “anthropological assumptions about the Irish ‘race’” (2001:51). It promotes a non-essentialist, postcolonial Irish national identity designed to induce Irish national unity.

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Yeats’s Doctrine of the Mask delineates a process whereby individuals and nations may, through a realisation of and engagement with the constructedness of identity, achieve “Unity of Being” – a desired state of “true unified being” (Graf 2000:103) in

which psychological “fragmentation and abstraction” has been “overcome” (Foster 2003:179). Later in this chapter I will return to the issue, raised in chapter two, of Yeats’s problematic conflation of the individual and nation in the System of *A Vision*, in considering the implications of this for his conception of Irish national identity. At this stage, I wish simply to outline that the three elements of the process are the mask, the anti-self, and their “spiritual counterpart” (Ellmann 1964:151) the daimon. The process consists of four stages, each described metaphorically: turning from a mirror; meditating on a mask; a resultant immersion in and becoming the anti-self; and, in turn, a resultant evocation of the daimon that unites the individual or nation ‘to itself’. According to Yeats’s theory, which is applied to poetry in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, “before the daimon could find the artist, the artist had to become his anti-self, often by using a mask” (Graf 2000:98).

While these elements are treated separately, they in fact constitute an arrangement of overlapping, conflated concepts and images informed by and informing what Heaney calls the “unifying drive” that is “central to Yeats’s mind” (2000:xxi). As dominant motifs in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* that converge on and interfuse with one another in a unity, they are later “reimagined” in *A Vision* “in terms of new conceptions” (2000:xxii) which “mirror one another” (Ellmann 1964:151), such as Yeats’s gyres, Four Faculties, and the Great Wheel of his phases of the moon. Regarding the “new conceptions”, Yeats himself admits in Part XVII of “The Completed Symbol” in *A Vision* that he has “now described many symbols which seem mechanical because united in a single structure, and of which the greater number, precisely because they tell always the same story, may seem unnecessary” (Jeffares 1990:221). However, he adds, they have all “evoked for me some form of human destiny” (1990:222). The ‘placement’ and meaning of these complex concepts in Yeats’s Doctrine of the Mask, as well as the relationships between them, will be elucidated in this chapter in examining Yeats’s conception of a non-essentialist, inclusive, postcolonial Irish national identity.

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Yeats's doctrine is delineated from start to finish within the framework of problematizing and interrogating 'identity', with the espousal of positive Irish identity in colonial circumstances a central concern. In Book V of the first section of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, "Anima Hominis", Yeats portrays Irish middle-class society as blindly subscribing to a false, superficial 'reality' based on imposed or passively received and imitative identities. These identities, being seemingly stable and unified, appear to be 'natural' and 'normal'. The "crass, commercial" (Kiberd 1996:125) society that Yeats disparages is the domain of what he calls, strategically 'borrowing' Arnold's derogatory term, "sentimentalists" or "practical men" who "believe in money, in position, in a marriage bell, and whose understanding of happiness is to be so busy whether at work or at play that all is forgotten but the momentary aim" (Jeffares 1990:40).

Materialistic, conforming, subscribing to social roles and appearances, and lacking self-knowledge beyond their single, 'fixed' identities, these "sentimentalists" find their "pleasure in a cup that is filled from Lethe's wharf" (Jeffares 1990:40). They have thus, Yeats implies, forgotten their deeper creative nature and lapsed into spiritual torpor through oversubscription to a superficial sense of selfhood. They are 'sleepwalking' through what Yeats calls in "Ego Dominus Tuus" the "common dream" (Jeffares 1990:34) of their lives. Yeats's strategic use of the word "sentimentalists" alerts the reader immediately to the fact that his disparagement of the middle class has a colonial dimension, and that what is at issue and at stake is Irish national identity in the colonial context. In appropriating and mobilising this term, Yeats invokes the backdrop of Arnold's imposition of negative identity on the Irish.

Yeats is suggesting that the middle class – which he believes has "neither family tradition nor a belief in anything beyond the material world," is "acquisitive, priest-ridden" and "ready to take up shibboleths" (Ellmann 1960:180) – is an attractive and happy helpmate for colonial rule. As I've outlined earlier in this chapter, Arnold's conception of the inherently "sentimental" (Castle 2001:47) nature of the Irish suggests a happy, Celtic vacuity fit for "patriarchal marriage" (Howes 1996:22/23): a "lively personality, a keen sensitivity, sociability, hospitality, eloquence" and most of all "a desire 'to aspire ardently after life, light, and emotion, to be expansive,

adventurous and gay” (Castle 2001:47). Irish society, Yeats implies, is in effect ‘happily married’ to not only materialism but to a colonial superficiality at the level of identity that informs and is informed by modern materialism.

This is a view of ‘the middle class’ in the colonial context in general that is basically endorsed by Sartre and Fanon. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon bemoans the stultifying ties of the middle class to colonial politics and “the Christian religion” (2001:32). He argues that, owing to the colony becoming “a market” for the “mother country”, what he calls “reasonable nationalist political parties” (2001:51) within the colony garner support on the basis of protecting bourgeois economic interests. This results, he argues, in negotiations with “the mother country”, which allows “the people to work off their energy” through “peaceful” (2001:51) and ineffectual industrial action and boycotts.

The urban middle class or “puppet bourgeoisie of businessmen and shopkeepers,” Sartre argues in the Preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, can generally be seen as a creation of colonial “dividing and ruling” (2001:10). Occupying “a privileged position,” the middle class is, Sartre holds, a “sham from beginning to end” (2001:10) as far as national revolution is concerned. Fanon points to the historical “incapacity of the national middle class to rationalize popular action” and its “incapacity to see into the reasons for that action” (2001:119), owing to its ties with capitalism and therefore its “psychology... of the businessman” (2001:120). He writes that this “traditional weakness” is “not solely the result of the mutilation of the colonized people by the colonial regime” (2001:119). Echoing Yeats, he submits that it is “the result of the intellectual laziness of the national middle class, of its spiritual penury” (2001:119). Fanon warns that after independence the middle class which “refuses to follow the path of revolution” often falls “into deplorable stagnation” whereby it is, he argues, “unable to give free rein to its genius,” a situation it formerly blamed on “colonial domination” (2001:121).

While Yeats’s ‘branding’ of the Irish middle class as “sentimentalists” may appear to confirm his renowned “condemnation” and “active hatred” (Ellmann 1960:180) of this social grouping, and appear to align him with ‘aristocratic’ Protestant Ascendancy

hubris and even imperialist logic, I contend that Yeats is in fact consciously attempting to redefine Irishness. He is fulfilling Fanon's third or "fighting phase" of the colonized intellectual, in which the writer, having failed to "lose himself in the people and with the people," instead must "shake the people" (2001:179). Rather than "accord[ing] the people's lethargy an honoured place in his esteem," Yeats "turns himself" into what Fanon calls "an awakener of the people" (2001:179). From this, as Fanon argues, "comes a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature" (2001:179), and it is in this light that both *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision* must be viewed.

As Castle highlights, Yeats's Irish readers were all too familiar with Arnold's view of the Irish as racially inferior. Arnold had imposed negative identity on the Irish in what Yeats himself pointed out in his response were certain "'well-known sentences'" (Castle 2001:50) in Ireland, which I've outlined earlier in this chapter. The term "sentimental" as a defining feature of "the 'Celtic nature'" (Castle 2001:47) was therefore a stinging colonial imposition. In this light, Yeats's mobilisation of "sentimentalists" to lambaste Irish middle-class society in fact suggests that he is with tactical forethought attempting to spur his readers' subscription to his doctrine through "'the shock of new material'" (Ellmann 1960:244). Yeats's aim is to inflict upon his middle-class readers the experience – already had by Swift, Goldsmith and Berkeley – of finding "in England" the "opposite" that stings "their thought into expression" and makes "it lucid" (Kiberd 1996:322), regardless of whether they associate that "England" with Yeats himself.

This attempt to "shock" and even enrage is consistent with Yeats's status as a (high) modernist. As I've indicated in chapter two, as part of the "avant-garde" Yeats's aim is "in Ezra Pound's phrase" to "'make it new'" by "violating accepted conventions and decorums," to "shock the sensibilities of the conventional reader and to challenge the norms and pieties of bourgeois culture" (Abrams 1981:110). Given Arnold's Othering of the Irish, Yeats's attempt to "shock" is at the same time an attempt at decolonization by redefining Irishness positively. As Kiberd argues, Yeats "spoke neither for the noble nor the beggarman" when "the chips were down" but "for the emergent middle class" (1996:319). The economic system "set up by colonialism," as

Fanon notes, “hardly left” the middle class “any other choice” (2001:120). That Yeats’s Anglo-Irish identity is foregrounded by his detractors assists this project, adding to the “shock” inflicted. As I will clarify in this chapter, Yeats is specifically attempting to ensure that the middle class gives “free rein to its genius” – a term used derogatorily by Arnold as an aspect of Celtic inferiority but which for Yeats is associated with inclusive Irish national unity.

In Book I of “Anima Hominis”, Yeats emphasizes what he perceives to be a disjunction between his inner, private world and the external, “daily social world” (Coote 1997:385) of the “sentimentalists”. He portrays the effect of the external world of conventional society on his inner world of thoughts and emotions as deeply disturbing. He reveals that, after he has socialised with “fellow-diners”, he reflects on his feelings of “hostility that is but fear” and on his “undisciplined sympathy” in his interactions with “women” and “men who are strange to me” (Jeffares 1990:36). His fellow-diners, he adds, hardly seem to him “of mixed humanity” (1990:36), implying what Anderson describes as colonial “completeness and unambiguity” (1991:166) at the level of identity. Yeats reveals that he analyses his conversations “in gloom and disappointment,” and expresses anxiety that he has perhaps “overstated everything from a desire to vex or startle” (1990:36). His concern, he confides, is that all his “natural thoughts have been drowned” (1990:36).

Clearly, Yeats perceives an opposition between the individual’s private, inner world and the external, everyday world. The latter, he suggests, distorts and oppresses the former’s expression – whether “drowning” it completely, lulling the individual through social pleasantries into “undisciplined sympathy” with ‘herd sentiment’, or provoking what Yeats describes as his own hostile self-assertion in “dominating at a dinner party” (Coote 1997:385). Yeats’s resultant feelings of alienation and anxiety reflect what could be termed a kind of ‘identity crisis’: his extreme self-consciousness and acute awareness, since adolescence, of “the discrepancy between what he was and what he wanted to be, between what he was and what others thought him to be” (Ellmann 1964:93). In light of his private difficulties in socialising and his dejection over his “divided self” (Foster 2003:108), Yeats asks: “... and how should I keep my head among images of good and evil, crude allegories?” (Jeffares 1990:36).



Yeats is not only deeply “troubled” by his fractured selfhood but, as Graf explains, also dissatisfied that, in modern society, people see themselves “as separate” not only “from others” but “from the world,” which consequently “seems to be made up of polar opposites like good and evil” (2000:105). In Yeats’s Blakean terms, these are “what the religious call Good & Evil,” where Good is “the passive that obeys Reason” and “Heaven”, and Evil “the active springing from Energy” and “Hell” (Butter 1989:53). ‘Moral’ and ‘reasonable’ society is therefore governed by an “illusion of dualism” (Graf 2000:105) that facilitates and fortifies simplistic, passively received, conventional representations and categories of thought. Yeats suggests that because single, ‘fixed’ identities appear to be ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ in modern society, there is a prevailing simplism with regard to ‘identity’ itself. Modern society, Yeats implies, uncritically promotes exclusionary alterity with regard to identities, which are predicated on a “crude” Manichaeian binary of “good and evil”.

By distinguishing between the external, public world and the inner, private world, then, Yeats sets up the central conflict or opposition of his Doctrine of the Mask and System: that between what he calls “primary” or “objective” (external or outwardly-focused), and “antithetical” or “subjective” (internal or inwardly-focused), psychological states or aspects of being. This opposition is later reimagined in *A Vision* as Yeats’s “fundamental symbol” (Jeffares 1990:120): the interpenetrating gyres, where the “double cone or vortex” represents “subjectivity and objectivity as intersecting states struggling one against the other” (1990:122). As one “diminishes”, so the other “increases” (1990:120). Their interaction is thus what Yeats calls, quoting Heraclitus: “Dying each other’s life, living each other’s death” (1990:120). In this way, the “opposed values” do not “cancel one another out” (Kiberd 1996:326), and nor does Yeats allow one pole to “predominate... to the total exclusion” of “its opposite” (Hamburger 1969:81).

I wish to emphasize that the gyres, as Yeats’s basic symbol, in themselves reflect his deep awareness of alterity as the interdependence of opposites on each other for their own meaning – including at the level of identity. Yeats draws a distinction in *A Vision* between a “contrary” (the conceptual basis of his doctrine) and a “negation”. Quoting

Blake, he explains that these constitute a great “gulph” between “simplicity and insipidity”: Contraries “are positive... a negation is not a contrary” (Jeffares 1990:123). Referring to Hegel, he describes “negation” as “two ends of the see-saw” (1990:123) that appear to ‘cancel’ one another out in turn. While I will proceed to demonstrate the relation of the gyres to ‘Anglo’ and ‘Irish’, I wish for the moment to underline that Yeats’s symbol targets the problem of the colonized’s espousal of positive identity.

From the distinction Yeats draws, it is clear that he is aware, like Fanon, that the “zones” occupied by colonizer and colonized are “not complementary” but “opposed”, and that their single, ‘fixed’ identities are obedient “to the rules of pure Aristotlean logic” in that “both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity” (Fanon 2001:30). Yeats is aware that the imposed negative identity of the ‘inferior’ colonized or Other, even though apparently cancelled out by the ‘superior’ colonizer or Othering Self’s positive identity, serves to shore up and define the colonizer in terms of a Manichaeian binary, in the same way that “evil” shores up and defines “good”. In Yeats’s Blakean terms, colonial identity is a “negation”. As Fanon points out, there can be no “conciliation”, for “of the two terms, one is superfluous” (2001:30).

Yeats’s symbol, depicting dual opposites as interpenetrating rather than separate, reflects his deep awareness that the view of “good” necessitates “a vision of evil” (Kiberd 1996:323). It illustrates that images of “good and evil, crude allegories” are not mutually exclusive, but inextricably invest each other with meaning. It can be seen that, in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, Yeats portrays modern society as lacking the “vision of evil,” and as trafficking instead in stultifying “negations” at the level of identity. In this light, Yeats’s gyres constitute a symbol of psychological decolonization, highlighting the insipidity of colonial negation. Like Blake, Yeats holds that “Without Contraries is no progression” (Butter 1989:53), and as I will demonstrate in this chapter, Yeats appropriates and redeploys this insight in confronting the problem of the Other’s espousal of a positive identity in the face and wake of colonial oppression. As I will also demonstrate, Yeats ultimately constructs himself in *A Vision* as an individual whose ‘postcolonial’ awareness of the insipidity

of colonial negation allows him to be “content to see both good and evil” (Jeffares 1990:174).

While Kiberd holds that the gyres “remain vibrating in a sort of dynamic equilibrium” (1996:326), Ellmann more accurately captures the sense of the System’s “furious movement” (1964:161/2) in stating that the “vortexes” are “inextricably entwined yet perpetually at war with one another, now one and now the other triumphant in a series of regular, inconclusive battles” (1964:152). Their relationship is therefore intensely antagonistic. The conflict of antinomies, between ‘primary’ and ‘antithetical’, reflects for Yeats consciousness itself. As Ellmann highlights, Yeats believed “that he had discovered in this figure of interpenetrating gyres” the “archetypal pattern” which is “mirrored and remirrored by all life, by all movements of civilization or mind or nature” (1960:231).

I wish to emphasize that Yeats situates the battle of the gyres within the “human mind” (Ellmann 1964:162). Heaney rightly states that there is “surely political meaning, at once realistic and visionary” in Yeats’s “sense of life as an abounding conflict of energies” (2000:xxiv), and it is this political dimension of Yeats’s gyres that Kiberd explicitly foregrounds. Kiberd argues that the primary gyre may be associated with “Anglo” and the antithetical gyre with “Celtic” (1996:318). This is a position I agree with in broad terms in light of Arnold’s essay, and which I will proceed to elucidate and substantiate in this chapter. For the moment, I wish to highlight that Yeats submits that individuals and nations contain both primary and antithetical qualities “in varying proportions” (Ellmann 1960:229) – not merely one or the other. The conflict between ‘Anglo’ and ‘Irish’ aspects is therefore situated within the colonized individual’s mind. That, psychologically, individuals possess both aspects is, again, a decolonizing notion, showing that “the theory” of the “absolute evil nature” of the colonized is not to be countered by “the theory” of the “absolute evil” (Fanon 2001:73) of the colonizer.

Furthermore, this psychological battle is indicative of Yeats’s “tension”, outlined in chapter two, regarding externally imposed or inherited, seemingly stable and fixed identities: namely ‘Irish’ Othered by ‘English’, ‘Catholic Irish’ and ‘Protestant Anglo-

Irish' as Othered by each other, and the resultant 'Anglo' versus 'Irish' conflict within himself. As Ellmann indicates, Yeats had emphasized the interiority of the "continual combat" of opposites in asking: "Why should we honour those that die upon the field of battle? A man may show as reckless a courage in entering into the abyss of himself" (1960:6). Kiberd foregrounds the colonial dimension of Yeats's comment, suggesting it may have been posited to soften "the physical-force elements in Irish nationalism" and to argue that "Now that the English have gone, the Irish may draw back from the prosaic quarrel with others to the more poetic quarrel with the self" (1996:319). While Kiberd correctly highlights Yeats's concern with Irish psychological liberation after the withdrawal of the English, it must be added that Yeats's concern predates and anticipates the founding of the Free State.

As Kiberd alludes to but does not explore, Yeats had already posited in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* in 1917 that "We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry" (Jeffares 1990:40). The quarrel with others is not, of course, limited to that between the Irish and English. As Fanon points out, the "colonized's muscular tension finds outlet... in tribal warfare, in feuds between septs" and in "quarrels between individuals" involving "a positive negation of common sense" (2001:42). This was certainly true of the Catholic-Protestant divide before and after political 'liberation' in 1922. Accordingly, Yeats writes in the "Introduction" to *A Vision* that he distinguishes in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* "between the perfection that is from a man's combat with himself and that which is a combat with circumstance," and that *A Vision* builds on this "simple distinction" (Jeffares 1990:75).

The colonizer and rival factions within Ireland can therefore be associated with the "combat with circumstance". As I've argued in chapter two, Yeats holds that "personal liberation must precede national recovery" or political independence, "being in fact its very condition" (Kiberd 1996:124), and this may be associated with the individual's "combat with himself" in terms of, as I will explain in this chapter, the prioritisation of imaginative self-construction over circumstance or Othering. The ambiguity of "ourselves", however, indicates Yeats's close association of the combat within individuals with the "quarrels" among the Irish specifically, and his suggestion

of poetic creation in both cases has a clear ‘nation-making’ dimension. In all, as I’ve argued in chapter two, Yeats is faced with the problem of the colonized’s espousal of a positive, inclusive national identity in the face and wake of colonial rule in Ireland.

Knowing that assuming political power does not automatically translate into liberation, Yeats’s concern is with developing a ‘decolonized’ or ‘postcolonial’ psychology within Ireland – individually and collectively – in order for genuine political freedom from colonial rule to be achieved. As Kiberd points out, *A Vision*’s “are mostly internal quarrels, struggles... inside the person” shadowed by external conflicts like the Irish Civil War “which, in Yeatsian terms, was a regrettable but almost predictable phase in nation-building” (1996:319). Yeats, as I will proceed to demonstrate, through his Doctrine of the Mask and System imagines full political liberation and national unity in Ireland as a result of psychological decolonization of the Irish at the level of identity. His imagining is therefore not limited to strictly political liberation, which by 1925 (when *A Vision* was published) had already been to a significant extent achieved, in spite of the ensuing Civil War, with the establishment of the Free State.

In line with his distinction between “a man’s combat with himself” and “with circumstance” (Jeffares 1990:75), Yeats explains in *A Vision* that the subjective cone “is called that of the antithetical tincture because it is achieved and defended by continual conflict with its opposite,” while “the objective cone is called that of the primary tincture” (1990:122). Subjectivity, he adds, “tends to separate man from man” and “objectivity brings us back to the mass where we begin” (1990:122). By the antithetical cone, Yeats explains, “we express more and more, as it broadens, our inner world of desire and imagination, whereas by the primary... we express more and more, as it broadens, that objectivity of mind which... lays ‘stress upon that which is external to the mind’ or treats ‘of outward things and events rather than of inward thought’ or seeks ‘to exhibit the actual facts, not coloured by the opinions or feelings’” (1990:123). The antithetical tincture, he adds, is “emotional and aesthetic” whereas the primary tincture is “reasonable and moral” (1990:123).

Already, it is evident that Yeats draws on the terminology used in Arnold's stereotyping of the Irish as racially inferior. The association of the Irish with the antithetical gyre (desire, imagination and emotion), as I will proceed to explain further, is clear in that it opposes "fact" (Castle 2001:47), which is aligned by Yeats with the primary gyre (external world or "actual facts"). Thus Yeats reformulates Arnold's claim that the Celt is "always ready... 'to react against the despotism of fact'" (2001:47). Yeats initially explains that the "first gyres clearly described by philosophy are those described in the *Timaeus* which are made by the circuits of 'the Other' (creators of all particular things), of the planets as they ascend or descend above or below the equator," which are "opposite in nature to that circle of the fixed stars which constitutes 'the Same' and confers upon us the knowledge of Universals" (Jeffares 1990:120). Following Yeats's commencing line of thought in calling his cones Discord and Concord respectively, 'the Other' is associated with Discord or subjectivity, and 'the Same' with Concord or objectivity. The Concord of Empedocles, Yeats explains, "fabricates all things into 'an homogeneous sphere,' and then Discord separates the elements and so makes the world we inhabit" (1990:119).

Again, the relation of the gyres to the colonial context is clear: the objective or primary gyre (Concord, the Same) relates to homogeneity and conformity, and therefore to the notion of 'fixed' identity informing bourgeois culture and imposed by colonial rule; while the subjective or antithetical gyre (Discord, the Other) relates to the Celt's "indomitable reaction against the despotism of fact," and therefore to a notion of identity "opposite in nature" to that of 'fixed' identity and homogeneity. Thus Yeats writes his own meanings into the Aristotlean 'same-other' dichotomy informing 'colonial identity'. This opposition of "objective" and "subjective" is explored in "Ego Dominus Tuus", the introduction to *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*. The didactic poem takes the form of a dialogue between Hic and Ille, or as Pound famously mocked, between "Hic and Willie" (Kiberd 1996:446) – the former defending the objective, the latter the subjective. This foreshadows Aherne and the 'double-minded' Robartes in "The Phases of the Moon" (1919). Jeffares's notes to "Ego Dominus Tuus" are revealing: "Hic and Ille are Latin demonstrative pronouns, here used in the sense of 'the one' and 'the other'" (1990:370). In line with Pound's comment, and as I will demonstrate throughout this chapter, Yeats can be said – in

terms of Jeffares's notes as well as the meanings of homogenizing 'Same' and heterogeneous 'Other' that Yeats attributes to his gyres – to favour subjectivity over objectivity and therefore to favour the category of 'the Other' or Celt.

He does so in such manner that these categories of 'Same' and 'Other' – insofar as Yeats presents, describes and discusses them in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision* – resonate deeply with the liberationist concerns that attach to the term 'Other' as a marker of negative identity imposed on the colonized by the colonizer or 'unitary' Self in endorsing Sameness through exclusionary alterity and negation. For Yeats, the colonized Irish are positively rather than negatively associated with being 'Other', and this 'other' state of mind is subversively Yeats's proposed zone of imaginative self-construction by the (ex)colonized Irish. As I will explain, Yeats reimagines this opposition between 'the Same' (primary) and 'the Other' (antithetical) in terms of the Great Wheel of his phases of the moon and the Four Faculties moving within the gyres, such that his Doctrine of the Mask rather aptly 'redoubles' by reinforcement into Yeats's System for, quite literally, an Irish psychological 'revolution' at the level of national identity.

That Yeats favours subjectivity or the antithetical state over the objective or primary one is evident almost immediately in Book I of "Anima Hominis", in which he outlines his antidote to the sense of fractured selfhood and 'identity crisis' he experiences after socialising. Summarising the visionary experience that precedes writing poetry, he reveals that after he shuts his door, lights a candle and invites "a marmorean Muse," he finds "an art where no thought or emotion has come to mind because another man has thought or felt something different, for now there must be no reaction, action only, and the world must move my heart but to the heart's discovery of itself, and I begin to dream of eyelids that do not quiver before the bayonet: all my thoughts have ease and joy, I am all virtue and confidence" (Jeffares 1990:36).

Graf explains that only when "Yeats's mind" is "submerged" in an antithetical state can he "become a totally subjective individual, overcome the illusion of duality, and find a 'revelation of reality'" (2000:106). Not only does subjectivity bring Yeats the inspiration to write his poetry, but it also allows him to keep his head among the

“images of good and evil, crude allegories” informing identity in the ‘primary’ everyday world. The colonial dimension is alluded to by Yeats’s employment of the military image of the bayonet. As Fanon points out, the colonizer and colonized’s “first encounter was marked by violence” and “their existence together... was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannon” (2001:28). Yeats’s description aligns “bayonet” with the ‘primary’ world and colonial oppression, and projects Yeats’s “dream” of the self-possessed, heroic Irish individual whose “eyelids do not quiver” in the face of military might and threat of death. This colonial dimension, in which ‘Anglo’ is associated with primary and ‘Celtic’ with antithetical qualities in terms of Yeats’s ‘correcting’ of Arnold’s essentialist definition of the Irish as racially inferior, becomes even clearer in *A Vision*.

As Kiberd argues, the title *A Vision* in fact “deliberately refers the Irish reader back to the *aisling* or vision-poem, practised by the fallen bards like O Rathaille” (1996:318). It therefore suggests Yeats’s overall favouring of antithetical, ‘Celtic’ qualities in his System. This extends to Yeats’s Great Wheel of the 28 phases of the moon, in which any “antinomial conflict” can be registered “in terms of the waning or waxing of the moon” in similar fashion to “the preponderance of one or the other gyre” (Ellmann 1964:157). Basically, the Great Wheel depicts the “single incarnation” (Jeffares 1990:131) or lifetime of “a particular man” (1990:132) who moves from “the completely unindividualized or objective state of infancy (phase 1), rising to the full individuality or subjectivity of maturity (phase 15), and sinking back at last into ‘second childhood and mere oblivion’ (phase 28)” (Ellmann 1960:226/227).

In this scheme, there is again an overall opposition between objectivity and subjectivity: the primary phases occur from Phase 22 and the antithetical phases from Phase 8, with Phase 1 (the culmination of the primary phases) and Phase 15 (the culmination of the antithetical phases) positioned directly opposite each other. Phase 1 and Phase 15, Yeats explains, “are not human incarnations because human life is impossible without strife between the tinctures” (Jeffares 1990:129). The individual dies at phase 28 and “after a period begins the round once more,” but Yeats usually treats the phases as “a series of incarnations rather than as the stages of a single lifetime” (Ellmann 1960:227).



Again, Yeats avoids replicating the “crude” Manichaeic binary in terms of which the colonizer’s “saying” that “All natives are the same” might unwittingly be aped by replying that all the English are “... the same” (Fanon 2001:72). All individuals ‘travelling’ around the Great Wheel contain both objectivity and subjectivity “in varying proportions” (Ellmann 1960:229) and not merely one or the other. Yeats reveals that while the Great Wheel “taken as a whole” is divided into primary and antithetical phases, “seen by different analysis” (Jeffares 1990:135) the phases are alternately antithetical (odd numbers) and primary (even numbers) and every phase is in fact “in itself a wheel” (1990:136). Again, the conflict is not merely between the individual and external, including and especially colonial, circumstances, but within the individual or “human mind” (Ellmann 1964:162). Yeats’s portrayal of this inner war in terms of the Four Faculties moving within the gyres (i.e. in the mind) will be elucidated later in this chapter in re-examining the phases of the moon.

It suffices at this stage to underline that Yeats’s delineation of the primary phases suggests the type of “uniformity and massification” that marked “English society, whose members were all (according to Blake) ‘intermeasurable’, or (in Yeats’s elaboration) ‘chopped and measured like a piece of cheese’” (Kiberd 1996:323). These phases, which begin with the “Breaking of Strength” (Jeffares 1990:130) at Phase 22, belong to the world of the “single point of view” and “the ‘single vision’ of a mechanistic psychology” which Yeats equates “with Newton’s sleep” (Kiberd 1996:317). This is a world in which the empirical Locke may submit “all to the test of reason” and claim that “under standard conditions, each person would see ‘the same thing’” (1996:322). Thus the primary phases are characterised by census-like conformity at the level of identity, emphasizing compliance with and service to external circumstances and appearances (in the colonial context, dictated by the English).

As Ellmann puts it, the primary group of moons tends towards “the sheering away of personality and the assertion of undistinguished equality”; it “suppresses and husks” (1964:157) the individual. When the state of objectivity prevails every man “tries to look like his neighbour and repress individuality and personality” (Ellmann

1960:232). Therefore ‘unity’ in these phases is enforced homogeneity, and “moral” (Jeffares 1990:131). Yeats writes, for instance, that in the primary Phase 25 “men seek to master the multitude, not through expressing it, nor through surprising it, but by imposing upon it a spiritual norm” (1990:195). Ellmann notes that “the objective phases are disparaged” (1964:158) in Yeats’s didactic poem “The Phases of the Moon”. Yeats refers to the “coarseness of the drudge” of the primary phases, and reinforces their association with imposed or passively received and imitative identities by linking these phases with the ‘moral and reasonable’ job titles, labels and social roles of the middle-class ‘sentimentalists’: “Reformer, merchant, statesmen, learned man/Dutiful husband, honest wife by turn” (*Collected Poems* 1971:187). Yeats clearly associates colonial rule, bound up with modern Irish bourgeois society, with these phases.

As this points to, the ‘Celtic’ antithetical phases are in line with “the psychological bias” Yeats “learned from his father” to “minimize the importance of the external world” (Ellmann 1960:226), a bias also evident in Berkeley’s philosophy that “things exist only in so far as we perceive them” (Kiberd 1996:322) and opposed to Locke’s. Heaney argues that “the whole force” of Yeats’s “thought” works “against those philosophies” which regard “the mind’s activity as something determined by circumstance” (2000:xx). Accordingly, the antithetical phases tend towards “the energetic personality” of the “Renaissance hero”; this group of moons “extols the individual” and climaxes in “self-fulfilment” (Ellmann 1964:157). The individual progressing through these phases expresses “more and more” the “inner world of desire and imagination” (Jeffares 1990:123), such that, as I will demonstrate, these phases in particular represent Yeats’s envisioning of an imagined Irish community.

One can extrapolate from *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*, then, that informing and incessantly reinforcing a modern Irish society governed by “images of good and evil, crude allegories” is the political and cultural rule by the colonizer over more than seven centuries, suppressing antithetical expression through primary domination. In this context, the colonized Irish have, in line with Hamer’s diagnosis outlined in chapter two, been supposedly “passive and spoken for” and have not had “control” of their own “representation”, in “accordance with a hegemonic impulse” by which they

have been “constructed as a stable and unitary entity” (Said 1993:273). As I have shown, Yeats is acutely aware of exclusionary alterity predicated on the dualistic ‘good’ and ‘evil’, ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ poles of the Manichaean binary. He also realises, from bitter personal experience, that not only have the Irish been Othered by the English, but that Othering also exists between, broadly, the two major cultural traditions within Ireland: Catholics and Protestants.

Othering among the colonized, Fanon argues, is an outcome of colonial rule. As he puts it regarding the colonies in Africa: “Inside a single nation, religion splits up the people into different spiritual communities, all of them kept up and stiffened by colonialism and its instruments” (2001:129). Or, as Sartre argues more generally, in a way that speaks directly to Yeats’s Anglo-Irish Ascendancy background and Othered identity within Ireland: “... the mother country” has “planted” the colony with settlers and exploited it; has “multiplied divisions and opposing groups, has fashioned classes and sometimes even racial prejudices, and has endeavoured by every means to bring about and intensify the stratification of colonized societies” (2001:10). The “different tribes” therefore “fight between themselves since they cannot face the real enemy,” and, Sartre adds, “you can count on colonial policy to keep up their rivalries” under “the amused eye” (2001:16) of the colonizer.

Yeats delineates the psychological ramifications of imposed negative identity for the Othered in “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933): “How in the name of Heaven can he escape/That defiling and disfigured shape/The mirror of malicious eyes/Casts upon his eyes until at last/He thinks that shape must be his shape?” (*Collected Poems* 1971:266). The imposition through Othering of what Yeats calls a “disfigured shape” or self-image, and the psychological violence of this, is also underlined by Fanon. He argues that colonial domination “is total and tends to oversimplify” in the mode of negation, and every “effort is made to bring the colonized person to admit the inferiority of his culture... to recognize the unreality of his ‘nation’, and, in the last extreme, the confused and imperfect character of his own biological structure” (2001:190).

The Other's problem, as Yeats knows, centres emphatically on resisting what Fanon describes as the threat or grip of an "inferiority complex", with its concomitant "despair and inaction" (Fanon 2001:74). As Sartre argues, referring like Yeats to the experience of 'the mirror', the "only violence" is the colonizer's and this is "thrown back" by the "reflection" that "comes forward" from "a mirror" (2001:15). Fanon's description of the various mental disorders arising from the colonial war in Algeria highlights the destructiveness of the resultant 'identity crisis'. He writes: "Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: 'In reality, who am I?'" (2001:200). What is at issue and stake, then, is not only the Other's sanity but the espousal of positive identity in the colonial context, before as well as after political 'liberation'.

The concept of the mirror in relation to identity-formation is, of course, a pervasive trope in occult material and the field of psychology. Lacan, for instance, locates "the source of the human imaginary in the so-called 'mirror stage', whereby the child develops its identity (its ego) via an identification with the twin image reflected by the mirror or, in the absence of reflective surfaces, by a similar other" (Nobus 2002:63). Fanon notes that this type of "mirror" is deeply embedded in identity-formation in the colonial context. Analysing racism against "the Negro" in *Black Skin White Masks*, he argues that "once one has grasped the mechanism" described by Lacan one cannot doubt that "the real Other" for the colonizer ("the white man") will "continue to be" the colonized ("the black man") (1967:161). Nobus writes that Lacan, defining the ego "as an agency that 'is constructed like an onion' which can be peeled to 'discover the successive identifications which have constituted it'" (2002:63), holds that "the human imaginary has nothing to do with the installation and regulation of difference" but that "it is fundamentally geared towards the advancement of similarity and instead of a symbolic truce, it induces jealousy, rivalry, competition and aggression" (2002:63/64). The tendency is toward the Same, towards conformity and hostility – in Yeats's terminology, a primary or objective state of mind informing and informed by stable, fixed identity.

Given that the “colonial world is a Manichaeian world” (Fanon 2001:31) of ‘self-other’, of ‘good’ colonizer and ‘evil’ colonized, the question for Yeats is how the individual may “recognize” himself “in the midst of strife caused by the illusion of dualism” (Graf 2000:105) and keep his head “among images of good and evil, crude allegories” at the level of identity. Kiberd states that the “only answer known to Yeats was that of Mohini Chatterjee,” who “taught that all we perceive exists in the external world – this is a stream which is out of human control, and we but a mirror, and our deliverance consists in turning the mirror away so that it reflects nothing” (1996:352). In part VI of “Anima Hominis”, Yeats names Saint Francis and Caesar Borgia as examples of historical figures who “made themselves overmastering, creative persons by turning from the mirror to meditation upon a mask”, and adds: “When I had this thought I could see nothing else in life” (Jeffares 1990:41). Ellmann points out that Yeats, like Nietzsche before him, describes “‘the objective man’ ... as ‘a mirror’”, as opposed to the individual who “wears a mask he has designed for himself” (1964:93). Accordingly, the first step of his doctrine is to turn “from the mirror”. Graf adds that intentionally “turning from the mirror” was “Yeats’s metaphor for withdrawing perception from dualistic, external reality and becoming introspective” (2000:107) or antithetical.

As Yeats writes, “mirror on mirror mirrored is all the show,” and by ‘turning from the mirror’ he points to and away from the “manifold illusion” (Ellmann 1964:xvii) of a colonial context and middle-class society governed by a limited and limiting conception of selfhood. The mirror that Yeats advocates turning from is what Whitaker, quoted by Kiberd, refers to as “the objective mirror” (1996:324). That it is ‘objective’ aligns it with the ‘Anglo’ gyre. Graf explains that the image projected in the mirror is “one assumed without intention” and that it is “simply who the individual happened to become due to circumstance” (2000:107). It is also, Kiberd indicates, “a distorting mirror” (1990:325), presenting a superficial self-image such as the “defiling and disfigured shape” referred to by Yeats. This is a mirror, then, that reflects all externally imposed or passively received and imitative identity, including the unchosen, “defiled and disfigured” self-image or Other-ness imposed on the colonized, and by the colonized amongst themselves, in the primary, external world.

The colonized or Other, Sartre argues, can “only become what we are by the radical and deep-seated refusal of that which others have made of us” (2001:15). Yeats’s prescription to turn from the ‘objective mirror’ represents exactly this refusal. Indeed, “turning from the mirror” of essentialism and exclusionary alterity is an act of decolonization. It exposes the colonized Other’s identity as a construct produced by the colonizer or Othering Self. This has the effect of highlighting that, as Pieterse puts it in *Alterity, Identity, Image*, “Images of ‘others’ do not circulate on account of their truthfulness” but “because they reflect the concerns of the image producers and consumers” (Corbey/Leerssen 1991:200). Therefore, at the same time, Yeats exposes the constructedness of the Othering Self’s identity and the underlying Manichaean binary. On this basis, Yeats proposes the construction of identity anew by the colonized, ‘outside’ the binary.

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To enable submersion in the anti-self, and attract the daimon, Yeats prescribes in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* a conscious act of imagination – “meditation upon a mask” (Jeffares 1990:41). The imagining of a mask is, as Seiden and Graf explain, an elementary Golden Dawn practice in which one “identifies with and seeks to become” the “invoked angel or deity” (Graf 2000:110). As I will demonstrate, this practice is reframed by Yeats in his doctrine in terms of ‘identity’, in line with his synthesis of literary, national and occult preoccupations.

Ellmann argues that even in the early stages of its development, Yeats’s Mask has “multiple meanings” and is “a variable concept” (1960:175). He confirms that in these early stages Yeats is already “coming at the problem of identity” and “puzzling over such questions as: Can we discuss a man apart from his dreams and aspirations? Can a man think of himself without thinking of how he appears to others? Is not every man an actor? Who does not wear a mask?” (1960:177). From the wide-ranging functions and meanings of the Mask explained by Ellmann, three key features can be identified: that it is an imaginative construct; that it may serve strategic purposes; and that it may serve as a guiding, inspiring, ideal self-image that the individual tries ‘to live up to’ and become.

Firstly, as Ellmann explains, the Mask “is the social self,” with a “closely-related meaning” being that “the mask includes all the differences between one’s own and other people’s conception of one’s personality” (1960:176). Ellmann adds that the Mask offers a sense of detachment “from experience like actors from a play,” for to be “conscious of the discrepancy which makes a mask of this sort is to look at oneself as if one were somebody else” (1960:176). This “detachment” and “discrepancy” indicates Yeats’s awareness that the individual’s Mask or self-image, i.e. the individual’s identity, is a complex construct central to social interaction. Such detachment allows the ‘modernist’ Yeats, in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, to analyse his “social self” as though he were “somebody else”, in having regard for “other people’s conception” of his “personality”. Clearly, Yeats is aware that identity is accounted for by internal (antithetical) factors like “one’s own conception of one’s personality” and external (primary) factors like “other people’s conception of one’s personality”. Social interaction thus implies a need for impression and image management by the individual.

Secondly, as Ellmann points out in reference to Yeats’s public battles with his detractors, the Mask offers in public a “severance of the hero from the mob” or Yeats’s “base-blooded middle-class” (1960:181) enemies, with a two-fold effect: the “mob” is “protected” from “open-faced candour” and “too much reality,” while the “hero”, to whom the Mask offers “isolation” and “disguise”, is protected from “debasement” but is also able to “reveal himself” (1964:93/94) when appropriate. In this way, the Mask serves as “defensive armour” that can be worn to “keep from being hurt,” and yet is also “a weapon of attack” (1960:176). Again, Yeats clearly recognises that identity is a construct owing to the detachment implied by “isolation” and “disguise”. However, in this case its strategic value in social interaction is also underlined. On one hand, it may be harnessed to confront enemies in the (primary) external world, and thereby assist the individual in exerting an influence on and even determining worldly events and others’ perceptions. On the other, it may serve as a necessary front that protects and preserves the individual’s inner (antithetical) world of thought and imagination from external scrutiny and exposure, assisting the individual to examine and determine his or her own perceptions and experience in a

free rather than enforced manner. In this way, it resembles Jung's "full-blooded" and "properly fitting... persona," which "serves as an effective regulator of the exchange between the inner and outer worlds" so that "the demands" of the environment can be "met successfully" (Jacobi 1968:30).

Thirdly, the Mask is worn "to keep up a noble conception of ourselves," for "it is a heroic ideal which we try to live up to" (Ellmann 1960:176). The Mask "may be an image of himself which the heroic spirit sets up as his goal" and "proceeds to become" (1964:94). The Mask thus serves as "a weapon in an internal war, with heroic minds imposing the masks and heroic hearts rejecting it" as a "form of discipline and struggle" (1964:94). As an image of what the individual dreams of 'becoming', the Mask throws into stark relief what the individual 'is' or is deemed to be at the level of identity. Its desirability generates the inner conflict necessary to continually incite the striving to become it. Yeats therefore holds that the Mask, as an imaginative construct and ideal self-image, may serve as both the inspiration for and goal of a 'modern' self-determination.

Indeed, the notion of becoming one's 'ideal self' reflects Yeats's ratification of and involvement in what Pippin calls the "modern attempt at a genuine self-determination" in society and daily life "in a sweeping historical and an individual sense" (Pippin 1991:30). Yeats's Mask is evidence that for him, as "it seemed to so many," only "one form of such self-determination, a radical act of imagination, or a complete, aesthetic self-definition" would "fully realize the otherwise discredited notion of a 'free life'" (1991:30). In this light, Yeats's 'modernist' and Nietzschean subscription to the tenet that "the individual creates his own world" (Ellmann 1964:94) must be emphasized.

Kiberd explains that Yeats, opposing Locke's 'single point of view', "went further" than Berkeley "to assert that each man or woman creates a purely personal world" (1996:322). Accordingly, as Ellmann points out, the Mask "shuttles between the unblemished dream image and the actual face, and assumes that the former is more real as well as more prepossessing than the latter" (1964:94). The individual's ideal self-image, as part of a self-created "personal world", is in Yeats's doctrine deemed



so compelling and powerful as to “surpass and control” external or ‘objective’ “reality” (1960:292), effectively destabilizing that ‘reality’ and the psychological dominance it purports to exert. Yeats’s insistence upon “a relation between reality and the dream which makes the latter no mere capitalized abstraction but a driving force in life” (1960:176) means that the Mask takes imaginative possession of the individual and gives full expression to the “subjective” or antithetical self.

Encompassing these features, the Mask can be defined as an imagined, ideal self-image that, while it is “most unlike” (Jeffares 1990:35) the individual, is what the individual most desires to be at the level of identity. As Yeats defines it in *A Vision*, the Mask is the “direct opposite” of the individual’s “normal ego” (Jeffares 1990:132). It is “that object of desire or moral ideal which is of all possible things the most difficult” (1990:132) to become, or that “object of desire or idea of good” that is “created by passion to unite us to ourselves” (1990:206). The Mask, as an ideal ‘image of ourselves’, or rather an ideal image of our ‘difference from ourselves’, is therefore what Yeats proposes may serve as a self-chosen and self-fashioned identity. The potent combination of image, inference and evocation, Yeats holds, paradoxically serves to define an individual in terms of the self-image, through the struggle and determination to ‘become’ that imagined self.

The Mask can be seen to be not in itself the individual’s ‘identity’; rather, the individual’s identity encompasses the Mask as the desired ideal in relation to the “normal ego”, including the passionate self-identification that the image elicits. The cultivation of, and internecine relationship with, this ideal self-image or “alter ego that will be masterful and heroic” (Foster 2003:76), Yeats maintains, constitutes a method of intense, impassioned self-definition. ‘Identity itself’, then, is conceived of as a Blakean ‘contrary’ that works through “Attraction and Repulsion” (Butter 1989:47). Identity is thus for Yeats, like much of his verse, “founded on a necessary contradiction” (Kiberd 1996:128): it marks the celebration and possession of a self-image that is free of ‘primary’ or external domination while at the same time being an insistence that its possessor is yet to be ‘made’ in the likeness of that self-image by living up to it. The individual is therefore “not so much the creator of the Image” as “its inferred content” and “its outcome” (Kiberd 1996:124).

From this, it can be seen that Yeats conceives of two forms of Mask. As he states in a footnote to “Hodos Chameliontos” in his *Autobiographies*: “There is a form of Mask or Image that comes from life and is fated, but there is a form that is chosen” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:469). These two forms of Mask are underlined by Graf, although she quotes “fated” (2000:107). Nevertheless, Yeats’s attitude encompasses the bourgeois social approval implied by the former and externally imposed ‘choicelessness’ by the latter. For Yeats, the ‘mirror’ image described earlier in this chapter is the ‘primary’ identity “that comes from life” in the ‘daily, social world’. As Graf argues, it is “assumed without intention” and “simply who the individual happened to become due to circumstance” (2000:107). However, the Mask that is the individual’s ideal self is the “chosen” or antithetical Mask, and it is this self-derived identity that Yeats advocates be assumed by the individual. Kiberd argues that the Yeatsian Mask, precisely because it is chosen, is “truer than any face” (1996:125). Indeed, Yeats’s prioritisation of the “chosen” Mask that the individual has “designed for himself” (Ellmann 1964:93) over the ‘mirror’ one must not only be situated in the general ‘modern’ attempt at self-determination “in a sweeping historical and an individual sense” (Pippin 1991:30), but also – given the backdrop of Arnold’s Othering of the Irish – firmly and specifically in the Irish colonial context of Yeats’s times.

The image in what Whitaker calls “the objective mirror” (1996:324), or of what Yeats describes as “the objective man” who is in fact himself such “a mirror” (Ellmann 1964:93), can also be seen to be that of the “disfigured” Other portrayed by the colonizer, and it is this externally imposed negative identity that Yeats advocates turning from. Whereas the colonial or Othering Self sets up seemingly stable, unified identities in negative terms by way of simplistic Manichaeic “opposites” of good-superior/evil-inferior, and thereby promotes an exclusionary alterity in which the ‘opposition’ is merely the domination of one pole by the other, Yeats’s “chosen” Mask clearly enables an encounter with alterity within the colonized individual in positive terms. In a radical act of psychological decolonization, Yeats’s Mask minimizes the external Manichaeic negation of the colonized at the level of identity

and prioritises an internal, inclusionary Blakean opposition or contrary that permits, at this level of identity, progression towards self-determination.

Championing the ‘simplicity’ of the Blakean contrary by promoting an inclusionary, positive alterity within the Irish individual, Yeats proposes that from this tension of opposites “a greatness might be synthesized,” and that “in the union of opposites” (Unterecker 1963:31) what he calls a “new species of man” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:217), and what Unterecker calls a “new kind” of nation, “might be born” (1963:31). Ellmann concludes in *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* that just what Yeats “hoped Ireland would become is hard to say,” but speculates that “probably he wanted to give his country what he also lacked, a liberated, unified personality, free of uncertainty about power and principle, no longer struggling in the bonds of the past” (1960:291). That this is indeed the case is confirmed when Yeats’s Mask is situated specifically and firmly in the historical context of the colonial Ireland of Yeats’s times.

As Fanon argues, “Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men” (2001:28), or “quite simply the replacing of a certain ‘species’ of men by another ‘species’ of men” without “any period of transition” – a “total, complete and absolute substitution” (2001:27). Likewise, Yeats is imagining a fully liberated, ‘postcolonial’ Ireland: the creation of a ‘new species’ of Irishman and ‘new kind’ of Irish nation through psychological decolonization at the level of identity. Indeed, articulated during the “climactic insurrectionary” (Said 1993:266) period after 1916 and anticipating Irish self-rule after centuries of colonial oppression, Yeats’s Doctrine of the Mask must be viewed as his “prescription” for what Yeats calls, in Part XXIX of “Reveries Over Childhood and Youth”, sealing “with the right image the soft wax” of Ireland’s nation-ness “before it began to harden” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:104). That is, a guiding and defining ‘image’ of the ideal Irish self – an ideal ‘identity’ – is what Yeats believed could give shape to and unite a new but deeply divided Irish nation.

For Yeats, this ‘new species’ of individual and ‘new kind’ of nation would be psychologically united to their ideal owing to the progressional effect of identity conceived of as a contrary. As Yeats writes in “Four Years: 1887-1891”: “... nations,

races, and individual men are unified by an image, or bundle of images... because only the greatest obstacle that can be contemplated without despair, rouses the will to full intensity” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:167). Fanon, although not using the term ‘contrary’, apprehends its presence in the colonial context conceptually. In delineating the colonized’s “dream... not of becoming” but of “substituting himself” for the colonizer, he remarks that “in certain emotional circumstances the presence of an obstacle accentuates the tendency towards motion” (2001:41). What Yeats is imagining is a community united in its subscription to an imagined ideal at the level of identity. He envisages that this ideal or Mask – displacing the colonizer as the “greatest obstacle” because it is “of all possible things the most difficult” to achieve – will “accentuate” the colonized’s “tendency towards motion” in the direction of self-creation and self-determination.

In *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, Yeats portrays the starting-point for “meditation upon a mask,” and thus for ‘becoming’ the ideal self, as a negative and despairing one. Hamburger points out that Yeats “does not conceal the desperation and extremity” of his own “starting-point” (1969:81). Describing the situation metaphorically in terms of the archetypes of poet, hero and saint, Yeats writes that the “poet finds and makes his mask in disappointment, the hero in defeat... For the hero loves the world till it breaks him, and the poet till it has broken faith” (Jeffares 1990:44). The saint “has turned away, and because he renounced experience itself, he will wear his mask as he finds it...” (1990:44). All three figures are what Yeats calls “heterogeneous selves” (1990:41), and the defeated hero in particular is “heterogeneous and confused” (1990:43). The common thread is the internal or psychological disunity of each figure living in the ‘primary’ world, which as I have demonstrated includes for Yeats not only the ‘bourgeois world’ but also, more specifically, the Irish colonial context.

The condition of defeat, broken-spiritedness, and psychological disunity in the colonial context generally is underlined by Fanon, who states that colonial rule “consisted of the pathological tearing apart” of the colonized individual’s “functions and the crumbling away of his unity” (2001:254). The dehumanization of the colonized individual, as Sartre also argues, ensures that “shame and fear will split up his character and make his inmost self fall to pieces” (2001:13). For Yeats, such inner

disunity reflects that “All life” is “a struggle” (Jeffares 1990:308) or quest by individuals for unified selfhood, including and especially in the Irish colonial context. This is a “struggle towards harmony” or what he calls “Unity of Being” (1990:222) – a desired state of “true unified being” (Graf 2000:103) in which the individual has “overcome fragmentation and abstraction” (Foster 2003:179). In light of this struggle to ‘become’ unified, Yeats defines “passion” as “unfulfilled desire” (Jeffares 1990:46) and holds that “Passion is conflict, consciousness is conflict” (1990:312). On this basis, he argues that “the passions, when we know that they cannot find fulfilment, become vision” (1990:46).

Hamburger wryly points out that “psychologists know” that unfulfilled desires “can also become something very different” (1969:81). This observation is borne out by Fanon’s accounts of the colonized’s “autodestruction” in a “fraternal blood-bath” (2001:42); the susceptibility of “young people” in “under-developed countries” to “disintegrating influences” like “pornographic literature” and “above all alcohol” (2001:157) imported from the colonizer’s “Western culture” (2001:158); and the catalogue of “Mental Disorders” arising from “Colonial War” (2001:200). Regarding the “fraternal blood-bath,” Fanon explains that the colonized Other who is struck and made to “crawl” by the colonizer will not brook “the slightest hostile... glance cast on him,” for “the last resort” of the colonized individual “is to defend his personality vis-à-vis his brother” (2001:42). At stake is the remaining vestige of dignity at the level of identity. Such fighting and “suicidal behaviour” is, Fanon points out, proof to the colonizer that the colonized “are not reasonable human beings” (2001:42).

However, as Hamburger concedes, “vision” is what the passions “did become in Yeats’s case” (1969:81). Yeats’s emphasis on vision as opposed to self-destruction cannot be overemphasized in terms of decolonization. Not only does his ‘modernist’ prioritisation of the imagination and Image bypass the problematic articulation of identity in the colonizer’s ‘rational’, ‘reasonable’ and denigratingly dualistic discourse of ‘facts’ in the first instance, it also constructively serves to confirm the alternative of imaginative self-determination by the colonized, stressing unity rather than differences. Clearly, “vision” works against conflicts among the colonized by channelling and internalising within the individual the violent struggle for dignity at

the level of identity. Vision, then, is the choice to decolonize. For Yeats, the transmuting of unfulfilled desires into vision, into an imaged ideal, helps the individual “to purify his intent” and become “single-minded and contemplative instead of ‘heterogeneous and confused’” (Graf 2000:123). The mind, Yeats indicates, “needs an image for remaining focused” (2000:124). As Graf argues, the mask being meditated upon serves as a kind of “magical talisman” that helps the individual “to quiet and focus his mind” so that he can, in Yeats’s terminology, “become the anti-self and attract his daimon” (2000:124).

The Doctrine of the Mask, as articulated in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, requires that the individual meditate on a mask “whose lineaments permit the expression of all” the individual “most lacks, and it may be dreads, and of that only” (Jeffares 1990:43). Given the defeat, ‘fragmentation and abstraction’ of the ‘heterogeneous and confused’ individual at the start, it follows that the Mask – “whose lineaments” must “permit the expression of all” that the individual “most lacks” – is what Yeats in part XXI of “Four Years:1887-1891” defines as “an emotional antithesis to all that comes out of... internal nature” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:163). It is therefore an image of heroic fortitude and what Yeats calls in the same section “victory” over “fate” (1999:163); a vision of full liberation and unity at the level of identity. Kiberd explains that it is envisaged that “a full man” might “be inferred” from the Mask “and, in due course – such was the enormity of” Yeats’s “ambition – a nation” (1996:117).

According to Yeats’s doctrine, the Mask must “be developed with conscious intention” and its design must be “a wilful act” (Graf 2000:107), so that it is tailor-made to fit the individual’s “purpose and taste” (2000:113). In part VII of “Anima Hominis”, Yeats describes the cultivating of a Mask or “alter ego that will be masterful and heroic” (Foster 2003:76). Probably drawing on the “Egyptian symbolism” popular in the Golden Dawn “temples” (Roland 1995:113), Yeats indicates that the Mask the hero has found “hanging upon some oak” at Dodona is an archetypal image: it is “ancient”, and the hero changes “to his fancy” whatever “lingered... of Egypt” (Jeffares 1990:42). The hero touches the Mask “a little here and there, gilding the eyebrows or putting a gilt line where the cheek-bone comes” (1990:42). The introduction of gold is “solar” (Ellmann 1964:159) symbolism, which

Yeats writes in part VI of “The Stirring of the Bones” means “elaborate, full of artifice, rich, all that resembles the work of a goldsmith” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:279). Because Yeats’s self-fashioned Mask brings the individual back from deep subjectivity “to the mass where we begin” (Jeffares 1990:122), its stable, fixed appearance and relation to the objective or solar (gold) gyre is clear. The Mask is a bridge that allows the individual to “connect” and “reassociate” his antithetical world of emotion and imagination “with ‘the normal active man’” (Ellmann 1960:179) in the primary or “social world” (Coote 1997:385).

In this process of cultivating and identifying him or herself fully with the chosen Mask, the individual enters and becomes the anti-self. While the anti-self is “not explained systematically” (Graf 2000:99), Yeats reveals that it allows the individual to experience “no reaction, action only” in the process of artistic creation. That there is “no reaction” indicates that the Mask, as a product of artistic creation, will not replicate the Manichaeian binary and be marginalized in ‘talking back’ at the colonizer. The individual, in Yeats’s Blakean approach, realizes: “I must Create a System, or be enslaved by another Man’s” (Nurmi 1975:51), including and especially enslavement under the colonizer’s system in the Irish context. The individual therefore, again in Blake’s words from “Jerusalem”, “will not Reason and Compare,” for his or her “business is to Create” (Nurmi 1975:51) him or herself anew. In addition, Yeats discloses that it permits him the experience of ceasing “to hate” (Jeffares 1990:62). The Mask, as a new, positive identity created in this visionary state, is therefore not a counter-identity underwritten with hatred for the colonizer. Yeats, like Fanon, recognises that “hatred alone cannot draw up a programme” of decolonization, and that “Racialism and hatred and resentment – ‘a legitimate desire for revenge’ – cannot sustain a war of liberation” (2001:111). Instead, Yeats reveals, he is able to experience the “joy” of psychological unity: “all my thoughts have ease and joy, I am all virtue and confidence” (Jeffares 1990:36).

In this “completely subjective” (Graf 2000:105) state of inner harmony, the ‘modernist’ Yeats experiences a ‘flight out of time’. The Mask and images seen in this visionary state, Yeats writes, “burn up time” (Jeffares 1990:62). This ‘reality’ is, Hamburger confirms, “a timeless, absolute one” (1969:81). Graf explains that the

anti-self is “an alternative reality” that differs from “normal, consensual reality” (2000:104). It is “akin to the unconscious mind in Jungian psychological terms, or the subconscious mind in Freudian terms” (2000:102) – a state of mind which, as I’ve explained in chapter two, was held by many modernists to be ‘outside of time’. In this state, Yeats indicates, the individual experiences an “heroic condition” (Jeffares 1990:36) or Blakean “innocence” (1990:62). This “innocence” is “not inexperience, but its opposite” (Kiberd 1996:112), at root an “openness to the injuries risked in a full life” (1996:103). While the anti-self makes Yeats “love”, he points out it is more like “innocence” because “we may love unhappily” (Jeffares 1990:62) and love may even be “enforced” (1990:137). The Mask, in exemplifying a heroism and harmony that Yeats associates with the unconscious, can be seen as the psychological ‘gateway’ through which the artist ‘enters’ the unconscious.

In identifying with and becoming creatively absorbed in the Mask during its cultivation, the individual’s “conscious self” merges with the creative unconscious and the individual ceases to identify with his ‘normal ego’. The anti-self can therefore also be seen as “the opposite of the self” – The Mask – as well as “the complete absence of the self – egolessness” (Graf 2000:102). As Yeats writes in *A Vision*, Shelley discovered his “true self” or anti-self “at the moment when he first created a passionate image which made him forgetful of himself” (Jeffares 1990:189). Yeats describes this merging in part IX of “Hodos Chameliontos”, referring to the anti-self as “that age-long memoried self” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:216) and “that buried self” (1999:217). He writes: “I know now that revelation is from the self... that shapes the elaborate shell of the mollusc and the child in the womb, that teaches the birds to make their nest” (1999:216). This “self” is the subconscious or unconscious mind. Yeats propounds that artistic “genius is a crisis that joins that buried self for certain moments to our trivial daily mind” (1999:217), resulting in “true unified being” (Graf 2000:103). The Mask therefore permits this merging and enables the individual to experience artistic ‘genius’.

From this, it can be seen that Yeats equates the unconscious mind with Nature. Like Jung, he holds that the unconscious “is impervious to the critical and ordering activity of consciousness; in it we hear the voice of uninfluenced primal nature” (Jacobi



1968:35). It operates “for the most part in ways that are beyond our understanding,” with “a purposiveness of its own, directed toward the completeness and wholeness of the psyche” (1968:35). Ellmann writes that symbolism was for Yeats “an effort to restore the unity of mind and nature,” and he hoped to bring “the modern fragmentary man” and “nature into harmony again” (1964:24). In this light, the Mask can be seen as an effort to “pull the external world back into the mind by establishing a correspondence between nature and mental states” (1964:24). As a symbol of the individual’s unity, the Mask “would make the connections among the personal, national, and natural worlds” (1964:24).

This is in stark contradistinction to the negative view of the colonized’s unconscious held by the colonizer. As I’ve demonstrated in chapters one and two, the colonized are deemed to possess a refractory unconscious, and therefore to be deviant and demoniacal. In the colonizer’s eyes, the colonized’s unconscious is synonymous with wild Nature in negative terms, justifying the ‘taming’ of the colonized. This biological essentialism is reflected in Arnold’s feminization of the Irish in terms of a closeness to nature, with ‘taming’ to be achieved through ‘marital’ appropriation. However, it can be seen that Yeats’s ‘consent’ to Arnold’s definition of the Irish as having a “special affinity with ‘the wild magic of nature’”, and as being “in a special way” attracted by and “close to” the “secret... of natural beauty and natural magic” (Castle 2001:49), is deeply subversive. For Yeats, the unconscious *is* Nature, and its ‘wild’ or ‘natural magic’ is its artistic creativity.

Imploding the notion of the homogeneous Other, Yeats holds that Nature “never does the same thing twice, or makes one man like another” (Foster 1997:419). The unconscious or “buried self” is therefore associated with artistic genius, to such an extent that Yeats’s ‘consent’ to Arnold’s definition of the Irish as having a “reverence and enthusiasm for genius... and things of the mind” (Castle 2001:49) also becomes deeply subversive. Already, it can be seen that Yeats is reconstructing Irishness in terms of a ‘modern’ psychology compatible with his occult or ‘magical’ preoccupations. Indeed, his ‘modernist’ emphasis on the unconscious as a positive phenomenon, as purposively bent on psychological unity, constitutes an act of decolonization. It exposes the English notion of the unconscious as solely a repository

of 'evil' to be, in light of the 'modern' findings of Freud and Jung, highly questionable and outdated. It also reveals the English repression of the Irish Other at the level of identity, based on the notion of an 'evil' unconscious or 'essence', to be equally fallacious – and fundamentally 'unnatural'. The basis of colonial rule, with its 'primary' emphasis on Reason and 'fact', is therefore in its entirety called into question.

Fanon points out that in decolonization there is “the need of a complete calling in question of the colonial situation” (2001:28). By reifying the unconscious, Yeats shows that, as Fanon argues, the colonized’s “challenge to the colonial world is not a rational confrontation of points of view” (2001:31), for “no agreement” is “possible on the level of reason” (1967:123). Instead, Yeats’s is a ‘modernist’ but also Irish nationalist call for the unconscious to be embraced rather than tamed, to be harnessed by the colonized in imaginatively recreating themselves at the level of identity, as a united community. His statement that individuals and nations are unified by “an image... symbolical or evocative of the state of mind which is, of all states of mind not impossible, the most difficult” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:167) therefore refers specifically to the unity-seeking unconscious ‘state of mind’.

Yeats describes the merging of the “trivial daily mind” and “buried self” by reference to writers like Dante and Villon. He writes that “through passion” they become “conjoint to their buried selves”; that the “two halves of their nature are so completely joined that they seem to labour for their objects, and yet to desire whatever happens, being at the same instant predestinate and free, creation’s very self” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:217). In this psychological state or “innocence”, chance and choice, necessity and freedom, become one. Such men, Yeats adds, command our awe “because we gaze not at a work of art, but at the re-creation of the man through that art, the birth of a new species of man, and, it may even seem that the hairs of our heads stand up, because that birth, that re-creation, is from terror” (1999:217). This “new species of man”, as I will explain in examining the phases of the moon in *A Vision*, is Yeats’s ideal ‘postcolonial’ Irishman, recreated at the level of identity through the Mask.

That this recreation is “from terror” is owing to the loss of “the conscious self” or “ego” (Graf 2000:103) that the ‘sentimentalists’ take for reality. Cultivating a Mask is, as Graf argues, “an exercise calculated to expose” identity “as a temporal, artificial construct, a means of abolishing the ego” (2000:114). This is why the “knowledge of reality” beyond the ‘primary’ world is for Yeats “a kind of death” (2000:103). In “Anima Hominis”, he states that “the anti-self or antithetical self” comes not to ‘sentimentalists’ but “to those who are no longer deceived, whose passion is reality... for the vision, for the revelation of reality, tradition offers us a different word – ecstasy” (Jeffares 1990:40). Ecstasy, he writes, is the “end of art”: a “sudden sense of power and of peace, that comes when we have before our mind’s eye” an image or “a group of images, which obeys us, which leaves us free, and which satisfies the need of our soul” (Foster 2003:72). This is akin to the “Ecstasy” of Plotinus: the “liberation” of the “mind” by “entering a state in which you are your finite self no longer” (Roland 1995:29).

Plotinus’s “ecstasy” is for Yeats, as Ellmann explains, “the supreme experience” (1960:251/2), and it is associated by Yeats with the imagination and unconscious. Such images before the “mind’s eye”, Yeats reveals, exist in the “general vehicle of Anima Mundi,” which he also calls ““The Soul of the World”” (Jeffares 1990:54) and describes as the world’s “Great Memory passing on from generation to generation” (1990:50). Devastating even further the colonizer’s notion of the unconscious as the storehouse of ‘evil’, Anima Mundi “bears a strong resemblance to Jung’s Collective Unconscious” (Larissy 1997:xvii). Yeats writes that, in order to “liberate” his mind from the ‘primary’ world, he has “always sought” to immerse his mind “in the general mind where that mind is scarce separable from what we have begun to call ‘the subconscious’” (Jeffares 1990:48). He holds that the archetypal images and symbols of Anima Mundi may be accessed by the individual in order to create not only poetry, but for the purposes of re-creation at the level of identity through an Image or Mask.

As Unterecker argues, “because mythology and history, reducing men to types, mere images, simpler figures than flesh and blood, does offer us patterns,” Yeats posits that the individual may “choose” a Mask “from those stored up by the past” (1963:30). Yeats writes that if the individual “can suspend will and intellect,” he or she can

“bring up from the ‘subconscious’ anything” he or she already possesses “a fragment of” (Jeffares 1990:49). By meditation on “some great master,” for instance, the “conscious self” can be reduced to “humility... leaving the unconscious free to work” (Foster 2003:71), evoking in the individual the very qualities represented by the archetypal image. In this way, underlining the power of the imagination, a Mask can be chosen and fashioned by the individual, and the fusion of the individual with the Mask in the anti-self produces ‘a new species of man.’

The decolonizing effect of this is to demonstrate that, given the power of the imagination in creating a “purely personal world” (Kiberd 1996:322), i.e. in determining an individual’s experience and ‘reality’ despite circumstances, the Irish cannot convincingly be reduced to an ‘evil’ and/or inferior ‘essence’. Because the Mask may evoke the positive qualities desired by the individual, ‘essence’ can be seen to be the effect of identity – not the other way round, as proponents of Aristotlean logic (like Arnold) would have it. For instance, if the individual were to have a negative essence that determined negative identity, the evocation of the desired positive qualities through the ‘contrary’ effect of the ‘opposite’ Mask-as-identity would serve to prove the co-existence of another ‘opposite’ essence. The individual would have two competing essences, not one fixed and immutable (negative) essence. The unconscious, as a kind of non-essentialist “essence” which may yield “anything you already possess a fragment of” (Jeffares 1990:49), is shown to be too encompassing to be limited to any one set of characteristics without the knowledge that other alternatives are possible.

In Yeats’s view, the individual may possess multiple self-determined identities, strategically adopted from among the multiplicity of images of Anima Mundi in the mode of a ‘contrary’, for a range of contexts. Unterecker explains that for Yeats “ultimate reality” is not “in any one” of an individual’s Masks but “in their interaction” (1963:30). The Mask-as-identity is therefore necessarily non-essentialist. It is designed to evoke the exact opposite effect of essentialism, showing that a self-determined alternative is always possible, and that ‘chosen’ identity supersedes ‘objective’ identity. The Mask is strategically adopted with the conscious awareness that stable, unified identity is a construct. ‘Identity itself’, then, is not “an immutable

graven image”; it is always-already multiple and multifaceted: a “protean and fabulous beast” (Foster 2001:55). While analyzing Yeats in regard to ‘gender’ is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worth noting that his insights regarding the constructedness and multiplicity of ‘identity itself’ resemble a number of those of thinkers like Kristeva, Butler and Fuss in the fields of feminist and queer theory. For instance, Fuss argues that “identity is rarely identical to itself but instead has multiple and sometimes contradictory meanings” (1990:136), and this is a view compatible with Yeats’s Mask. Parallels between Yeats and such theorists are, of course, unsurprising given the feminization of the Irish by Arnold, and Young’s argument that the Self-Other opposition itself allows the colonial “constitution of the other as ‘other’” to be set “alongside racism and sexism” (1990:4).

Hamburger writes that Yeats’s “high degree of consciousness” of the constructedness of the Mask “saved” him “from being taken in by his masks, or from substituting them for his own face” (1969:82). Indeed, Yeats situates his Mask in the practice of ‘active virtue’. He writes in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*: “If we cannot imagine ourselves as different from what we are, and try to assume that second self, we cannot impose a discipline upon ourselves though we may accept one from others” (Jeffares 1990:42). Active virtue, “as distinguished from the passive acceptance of a code, is therefore theatrical, consciously dramatic, the wearing of a mask...” (1990:42). Kiberd argues that, while “a necessary fakery,” the Mask is “not vulnerable to the charge of bad faith” because it is “consciously and confessedly manipulated” (1996:308) through active virtue. Virtue – to be active – must in fact “be an endless, theatrical playing with such masks” (1996:121). The Mask thus offers “not the truth, but a way towards it,” and is “not to be slavishly imitated” but rather “awakens each man and woman to the hero in themselves” (1996:309). As Hamburger indicates, the utility of adopting a Mask is to go “against the grain of the empirical self,” creating an opposition that provides the individual with the “tension and intensity” (1969:82) necessary for artistic creativity and heroic self-determination.

The multiplicity of the Mask therefore does not decontextualize and separate ‘identity itself’ from what Butler calls in *Gender Trouble* “the constitution of class, race, ethnicity and other axes of power that both constitute ‘identity’ and make the singular

notion of identity a misnomer” (1990:117). However, it also means that the individual is not limited to a passive acceptance of “code”, which is the externally imposed, ‘objective’ identity-as-social-construct. Ellmann indicates that, because choosing “a single mask” may “be too serious an arrest of the changing world and mind,” Yeats permits that individuals may “strip the masks” they “have created” for themselves” (1964:12) in favour of other masks, depending on the individual’s inclinations, objectives and circumstances. This is to say that a Mask is strategically chosen or rejected to suit the individual’s ends, for the “urge to destruction, like the urge to creation, is a defiance of limits” (1964:12). The “end of such practice”, Graf argues, is “not multiple-personality disorder” but a reinforcement of the awareness that identity is an imaginative, “temporal... construct” (2000:114). Active virtue is therefore a conscious, strategic exploitation of the constructedness, provisionality, and protean nature of ‘identity itself’.

Lastly, the creative absorption in the Mask attracts the Daimon, which can be defined as the spiritual “force of genius” (Graf 2000:125) or “the occult power of artistic inspiration” (Foster 1998:30). As Graf explains, “Yeats always insisted... that the daimon is the source of all creative work” (2000:125). Yeats’s conception of the Daimon derives from ‘traditional’ sources, namely Plato, Platonism’s middle period, and “late antiquity” (Graf 2000:126). He conceives of the Daimon “as a tutelary spirit” that descends “to a chosen man, becoming his intuitive, inner voice” and bestowing “visions” (Graf 2000:126). In this way, Yeats’s Daimon resembles the “Genius” of Roman mythology, which was also a “tutelary spirit” that “attended a man from cradle to grave, governed his fortunes, determined his character” (Kirkpatrick 2000:426).

The Daimon is also closely associated with the occult. As both Roland and Graf highlight, the Golden Dawn’s “most theatrical ritual was a re-enactment of the crucifixion in a room said to be a replica of Christian Rosenkreuz’s funeral vault” (Roland 1995:113). The initiate was “apparently tied to a cross and swore an oath of loyalty which began: ‘I will from this day forward, apply myself to the Great Work – which is, to purify and exalt my Spiritual Nature so that with the Divine Aid I may at length attain to be more than human, and thus gradually raise and unite myself to my

higher and Divine Genius, and that in this event I will not abuse the great power entrusted to me” (1995:113). The pursuit of unity with one’s “higher and Divine Genius” is therefore an occult practice informing Yeats’s conception of the Daimon as “the force of genius,” and Yeats reframes this notion of “genius” in terms of ‘identity’.

Again, Yeats’s ‘assent’ to Arnold’s stereotyping of the Irish as having a “creative receptivity – a ‘reverence and enthusiasm for genius, learning and things of the mind’” (Castle 2001:49) can be seen to be far removed from Arnold’s intended feminization of the Irish, and deeply subversive. On the ‘contrary’, the Daimon represents the exacting strain and violence of psychological decolonization at the level of identity, and the ultimate uniting of the ‘self-possessed’ Irish ‘to themselves’. Yeats proceeds to define the Daimon in *A Vision* as the “ultimate self” (Jeffares 1990:132). As Graf points out, the Mask has to be “the opposite of man’s internal nature, because such a mask would be an image of the Daimon” (2000:124). The idea is that the Daimon or “spiritual alter ego” can be “psychically established” through meditation upon a mask, and the “opposite qualities and identifications” of the Daimon complete the individual’s “own personality” (Foster 2003:72). As Yeats writes, the “ghost is simple, the man heterogeneous and confused,” and they are “but knit together when the man has found a mask whose lineaments permit the expression of all the man most lacks” (Jeffares 1990:43).

The “force of genius” or Daimon thus brings about the “true unified being” (Graf 2000:103) of the individual; it is the force of artistic genius that constitutes the “crisis that joins that buried self for certain moments to our trivial daily mind,” resulting in the birth of “a new species of man.” This ‘knitting together’ is the culmination of deep antagonism in the mode of the gyres. Yeats describes the relationship between the individual and Daimon as “warfare” (Jeffares 1990:43), and calls the Daimon the “enemy (1990:45). He writes that the “more insatiable all desire, the more resolute to refuse deception or an easy victory, the more close will be the bond, the more violent and definite the antipathy” (1990:43). In a sense, the individual is ‘terrorised’ by the Daimon, adding to the “terror” that ‘births’ the “new species of man” recreated through art.

This, then, is the individual's decolonizing "combat with himself" (1990:75), or rather with his ideal or "ultimate self", in order to achieve unity with that self and be "self-possessed." As Sartre puts it, "to thrust out colonialism" the "irrepressible violence is neither sound and fury, nor the resurrection of savage instincts, nor even the effect of resentment: it is man re-creating himself" (2001:18). When the colonized's "rage boils over, he rediscovers his lost innocence and he comes to know himself in that he himself creates his self" (2001:18). Such innocence is for Yeats Blakean, and the thrusting out of colonialism and Otherness is for Yeats an internal, psychological violence. The Daimon, he writes, is "part of our being..." (Jeffares 1990:41), for man and Daimon "meet always in the deep of the mind" (1990:43). The Daimon, Yeats argues (quoting Heraclitus), is "our destiny", and as Yeats declares in *A Vision*, destiny is "that which comes to us from within" (1990:134).

This conflict, Yeats reveals, stems not merely from man's passionate desire to become his "ultimate self", but is "a struggle with the Daimon who would ever set us to the hardest work among those not impossible" (1990:43). Artistic genius thus has a purposive 'mind of its own', and Yeats confides that he does not believe the Daimon is with him until he starts "to make a new personality" (1990:62) – a chosen Mask or identity. He notes that, choosing from "among images" of the subconscious, he is "full of uncertainty, not knowing" when he is "the finger, when the clay" (1990:62). The supercharged 'nature' of the struggle with the Daimon is symbolised by lightning. Yeats writes that the Daimon's "descending power is neither the winding nor the straight line but zigzag" (1990:59). He likens the Daimon to "sudden lightning, for all" the Daimon's "acts of power are instantaneous" and the individual perceives "in a pulsation of the artery, and after slow decline" (1990:60).

The extreme difficulty of the struggle, Yeats argues, explains "why there is a deep enmity between a man and his destiny, and why a man loves nothing but his destiny" (1990:43). That which comes easily, Yeats holds, "can never be a portion of our being: 'soon got, soon gone'" (1990:41). The Daimon is therefore also "of all things not impossible the most difficult" to attain. It can be seen that this combat is an internal 'contrary' that instigates and incites self-determination, inducing a mindset



aimed at the achievement of a psychological unity that is craved by the individual. This unity, once achieved, is to have been so hard-won as to not be ‘soon gone’. Sartre’s description of the decolonized individual encapsulates Yeats’s envisaged result of combat with the Daimon. The individual who “makes himself man” at the expense of the colonizer, Sartre writes, emerges “a different man; of higher quality” (2001:20). For Yeats, this is a “new species of man,” recreated at the level of identity or “personality”. For Yeats, personality is, as Ellmann points out, “the whole man, the great totality, an army, not a guerilla force” (1960:20), i.e. the full ‘self-possessed’ identity of the decolonized individual.

Artistic genius, whether in poetry or in the recreation of selfhood, is thus achieved via the individual’s ‘contrary’ fusion with a Mask. This fusion is exactly what Yeats notes in the style of his poetry. He writes in “Hodos Chameliontos”: “... as I look backward upon my own writing, I take pleasure alone in those verses where it seems to me I have found something hard and cold, some articulation of the Image which is the opposite of all that I am in my daily life, and all that my country is” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:218). The words “all that my country is” indicate the national dimension of Yeats’s Mask. As Unterecker explains, Yeats “speculated that perhaps his doctrine of the Mask might be extended from person to country and so give direction not only to an individual but a people” (1963:31), not only in Ireland but elsewhere too.

Indeed, Kiberd points to Yeats’s “essay on Matthew Arnold in the Celtic element in literature,” in which “Yeats had endorsed the basic outlines of the Celticist analysis, but for the word ‘Celtic’ had repeatedly substituted ‘ancient’” (1996:318). “As early as 1897,” Kiberd adds, Yeats “was expanding the meanings of ‘Celtic’ to global dimensions, sensing that the ancient was due for a return” (1996:318). Although without reference to Ireland’s colonial context, Unterecker points to Yeats’s disclosure that he had “half-planned” a “new method” and a “new culture” that his “native scenery might find imaginary inhabitants” (1963:31). This is, of course, a disingenuous claim by Yeats given the obvious extent of his planning in formulating his doctrine, but it serves to confirm that the Mask is his proposed method or fulcrum for “imagining” a united nation into being. Again, as Yeats argues in “Four Years:

1887-1891”: “... nations... and individual men are unified by an image, or bundle of related images, symbolical or evocative of the state of mind which is, of all states of mind not impossible, the most difficult to that man... or nation” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:167).

While one may easily grant the choosing and adoption of a Mask in the case of the individual, exactly how a particular unifying image “or bundle of related images” is to gain mass purchase among “a people”, and how collective consensus is to be reached as to exactly which image or images should constitute an ideal national identity, is not clear in Yeats’s Doctrine of the Mask or System. As Unterecker points out, Yeats’s “hope for an Ireland united in the contemplation of a heroic mask” was not and “has not been realized” (1963:31). This brings me back to the issue of Yeats’s conflation of self and nation in his System, raised in chapter two. The words “opposite of all that I am in my daily life, and all that my country is” bear out Kiberd’s observation that Yeats “substitutes” himself “as a shorthand” for his country” (1996:119). Kiberd, as I’ve outlined in chapter two, argues that this is owing to the artist in the Irish colonial context having to turn to his “own private world... to fill the cultural vacuum, as a promissory note for a yet-to-be-implemented nation” (1996:119). The emphasis therefore falls on the artist’s ideal of “the achieved individual, the person with the courage to become his or her full self” (1996:119) – which is clearly the ‘modernist’ and nationalist ideal of Yeats’s doctrine. The “Irish self” therefore becomes “a project”, with the reader “invited” to become “a co-creator with the author” (1996:120).

This, I have argued, explains to some extent why *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision* are abstruse texts that constitute “a process, unfinished, fragmenting,” refusing “to exact a merely passive admiration for the completed work of art” (1996:120) and seemingly requiring their completion through the reader. As I have argued, they are an invitation to the reader to become “a co-creator with the author,” of the ideal “Irish self”. In proffering his Doctrine of the Mask as a ‘prescription’ for creating such a self, and in actually (as I will proceed to demonstrate) constructing himself in *A Vision* as his own ideal “Irish self”, the Daimonic Man of Phase 17, Yeats’s System becomes an invitation to individual Irish readers to actively follow suit – with Yeats

and his Mask the “exemplar of the nation” (1996:308). As Fanon notes in general terms, the colonized artist through his works “invites participation in an organized movement” (2001:195) of revolution and decolonization.

While the relationship between the individual and nation is not clarified or ‘solved’ in Yeats’s System and remains problematic, Yeats certainly does see a correlation between, and likeness in, the decolonization of the individual and that of a collectivity. This is expressed metaphorically in that the gyres represent “every man’s, nation’s, and era’s nature” (Unterecker 1959:25), while the ‘being’ moving around the Great Wheel of his phases of the moon, a scheme which I will proceed to examine more closely, may be both an individual or a nation. As he reveals in *A Vision*, “Nations... may have their Daimons” (Jeffares 1990:218). This conflation of individual and nation in Yeats’s System could be explained by his linking, as I have indicated in discussing the anti-self, of an individual unconscious with a collective unconscious or what Yeats calls “the general mind” (Jeffares 1990:48). As Tratner puts it, Yeats knows “the basis of any new civilization will arise from the ‘general mass’” (1995:163), and the “birth of a new species of man” is for Yeats also “the birth of a new mass” (1995:152).

Tratner explains that Yeats “sought all his life to write a poetry that would express or create a national mind,” and around “the time of the Easter 1916 massacre” he “became convinced that certain political acts, particularly violent ones, could be sufficient, if timed properly, to bring about radical change in everything, including the mind of the artist” (1995:135). Tratner adds that Yeats became deeply concerned with “the shifting currents deep in the nation’s soul, the shifting spirit of the masses” (1995:136). The “only way to create the nation,” Yeats sensed, would be “to disrupt the individual mind” (1995:135) through violence. Tratner argues that Yeats was therefore “faced with the problem that generated his poetry: how to allow his mind to join with the shifting tides, how to generate the myth that would make violence revolutionary and passionate, not merely chaotic” (1995:148). The “emotions released by violence,” Yeats suspected, could through myth be made to “cohere” and be turned “into passion, into a collective emotion that unites the masses in something like love”

(1995:149). Such emotion is, as I have outlined in this chapter, described in Yeats's doctrine as a Blakean "innocence".

Tratner notes that Yeats's "goal" throughout "all his later poems," shadowing the material violence of historical upheavals like the Easter Uprising, is "to find that particular conjunction of image and cataclysm, of myth and terror, that would unite and mutate the Irish people" (1995:152). An instance of this attempt, Tratner argues, is "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen", in which Yeats faces "the images in his mind that frighten him" and "begins to create a terrorist poetry, a poetry that is truly postcolonial because it goes beyond the entire colonial world that formed the mind of Yeats himself" (1995:152). As Tratner also notes, quoting Blackmur, Yeats's "goal in many of his later poems was to create a sense of terror in his readers," for only "out of such violence directed against the self, Yeats believed, can the images emerge that will transform the world" (1995:163). What would thereby be created would be "something neither the artist nor anyone else can understand" (1995:154).

While Tratner does not identify the Mask specifically (or *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*) as being part of Yeats's efforts to create a 'new kind' of Ireland, I have shown that it is the ideal image of what the individual wishes to become that Yeats believed could turn violent emotions into coherent passion and unite the individual 'to himself' through this 'contrary'. Again, as Unterecker argues, Yeats was convinced that "every passionate man... is, as it were, linked with another age, historical or imaginary, where alone he finds images that rouse his energy" (1963:30/31). Drawing on the images "stored up by the past" in mythology and history, the Doctrine of the Mask "erects" on the individual's "personality" a "kind of private mythology in which the individual struggles to become that which is most unlike himself" (1963:30). However, owing to a perceived link between the individual and collective unconscious, Yeats holds that this struggle may be extended to 'national' proportions in terms of collective imagining. He speculates in Part III of "Hodos Chameliontos":

Is there nation-wide multiform reverie, every mind passing  
through a stream of suggestion, and all streams acting and  
reacting upon one another, no matter how distant the minds...

Was not a nation, as distinguished from a crowd of chance comers, bound together by this interchange among streams or shadows; that Unity of Image, which I sought in national literature, being but an originating symbol? (O'Donnell/Archibald 1999:210).

Of course, this sense of a collective unconscious and imagining – of an imagined community – is informed by the ‘modernist’ Yeats’s occult precepts: that the “borders of our mind are ever shifting” and “our memories are part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself”; that “many minds can flow into one another... and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy”; and that this “great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols” (Graf 2000:34). Yeats’s Doctrine of the Mask is therefore not limited to the individual. A ‘nation’ as a collectivity can, in Yeats’s estimation, be evoked and unified by a Mask or bundle of related Masks because of a shared unconscious or shared capacity to imagine; to be inspired in terms of shared ideals and aspirations of self-determination. As Ellmann explains, Yeats would after 1927 portray “Ireland’s eighteenth century as a Renaissance delayed by special historical conditions” (1960:269) and include Swift, Berkeley, Burke, and Goldsmith “in his image to give it mass and solidity” (1960:270). In the earlier “Four Years: 1887-1891”, however, it is the purposive movement of a ‘general mind’ in Ireland that Yeats espies and hopes will coalesce into a ‘single-minded’ search for national unity. He writes in part XXIV: “I had seen Ireland in my own time turn from the bragging rhetoric and gregarious humour of O’Connell’s generation and school, and offer herself to the solitary and proud Parnell as to her anti-self, buskin following hard on sock, and I had begun to hope, or to half hope, that we might be the first in Europe to seek unity as deliberately as it had been sought by theologian, poet, sculptor, architect, from the eleventh to the thirteenth century” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:167/168). He adds, promoting his doctrine and System: “Doubtless we must seek it differently... but find it we well might could we first find philosophy and a little passion” (1999:168).

It is because of the deep “shifting currents” and “shifting spirit” of the collectivity that Yeats avoids offering any explanation of how mass agreement on adopting a specific

Mask, or bundle of related Masks, to 'define' the Irish nation would be reached. However, he conceives of the probability of his Doctrine of the Mask working for the collectivity in a process similar to that followed by the individual. His belief is that the collectivity may achieve a 'mind of their own' owing to violent or cataclysmic events like Easter 1916, a 'mass mind' and imagining which hold the possibility of 'nation-making' and national unity. As Ellmann explains, the Easter 1916 rebels had seemed to Yeats "ordinary people" who had "suddenly found their heroic opposites, not like Yeats by effort and discipline, but by the sudden violence of a great action" (1960:220/21). Yeats, Tratner argues, perceived that out of "violence directed against the self" images may "emerge that will transform the world" (Tratner 1995:163). Such images of decolonization could be used as revolutionary inspiration by the collectivity, and unite them. What would be created, Tratner argues, would be "something neither the artist nor anyone else can understand" (1995:154).

Yeats therefore does not, as Said claims he does, stop "short of imagining full political liberation" (Said 1993:287/88) in Ireland. While Yeats does not know exactly what the unprecedented 'postcolonial' Ireland or who the 'postcolonial' Irish would turn out to be on a mass scale, he envisions personal decolonization and liberation at the level of identity through the 'terror' or violence of an individual's 'combat with himself', and its aftermath of impassioned psychological unity. Yeats's intention is that from the individual's Mask or style "a full man" might "be inferred" and "in due course – such was the enormity of his ambition – a nation" (Kiberd 1996:117). As I have indicated, Foster argues that Yeats sought to shape "the present and future consciousness of 'the nation' – whoever they were" (2001:xix/x). This is to say that national recovery is for Yeats to be the result of a chain reaction of liberation that starts and ends with each individual, as part of the collectivity – giving birth to a united nation of 'true' or antithetical (i.e. self-determined) individuals. His Doctrine of the Mask and System therefore focus on the individual in the first instance, in order to set this chain reaction in motion.

The effect of Yeats's conflation of the individual and nation in terms of a 'being' revolving around the Great Wheel is to indicate that the individual must fully associate him or herself with the 'nation' in order for decolonization, in terms of both

identity and political self-rule, to be fully realized. This conflation of self and nation informs the process of “national construction” (2001:162) described by Fanon. Each individual, Fanon argues, “ought to continue in his real, everyday activity to associate himself with the whole of the nation, to incarnate the continuous dialectical truth of the nation and to will the triumph of man in his completeness here and now” (2001:162). When this occurs, “Individual experience, because it is national and because it is a link in a chain of national existence, ceases to be individual, limited and shrunken and is enabled to open out into the truth of the nation and of the world” (2001:161). When the “imagination” is fed by colonial atrocities and “the nation stirs as a whole,” Fanon argues, the decolonized individual is “not an a posteriori product of that nation; rather, he coexists with it and triumphs with it” (2001:250).

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In the context of Arnold’s “binomial racial and cultural typing” (Castle 2001:51) of the Irish, and reflecting Yeats’s deep concern with ‘identity’ in the colonial setting, Yeats’s phases of the moon map the process of Irish psychological decolonization at the level of identity, culminating in the adoption by the individual (and by extension, nation) of a ‘postcolonial’ Irish national identity. The “being” (Jeffares 1990:137) or “human mind” (Ellmann 1964:162) is split into what Yeats calls the Four Faculties moving within the gyres. These Faculties, resembling Blake’s Zoas and comprising two pairs of contraries, are Will and Mask, and Creative Mind and Body of Fate. Will and Mask are indicative of the aspirations of the colonized at the level of identity: they are “the will and its object, or the Is and the Ought (or that which should be)” (Jeffares 1990:124). The Will is an individual’s “normal ego” (1990:132) and the Mask is the Will’s “opposite or anti-self” (Ellmann 1960:229). The Will constitutes “the basic choice which determines the individual’s phase” (1960:229) in the Great Wheel, while the Mask is the “object of desire or idea of good” (Jeffares 1990:132) or the form “created by passion to unite us to ourselves” (1990:206). Aligned with the subjective ‘Celtic’ gyre, Mask and Will “are lunar or antithetical or natural” (1990:124).

The colonial dimension and incorporation of the Doctrine of the Mask into *A Vision* is therefore clear. As Yeats puts it in part VI of “A Packet for Ezra Pound”, “all gains of man come from conflict” (1990:79) with his opposite. The Mask or “opposite” alone, as Yeats puts it in “Ego Dominus Tuus”, may “disclose” (1990:35) all that the individual seeks to be. Accordingly, Yeats has it that the individual seeks his or her “opposite or the opposite of” his or her “condition”, and “attains” his or her Mask or “object so far as it is attainable, at Phase 15” (1990:131) – the Full Moon phase. It is owing to this phase that Yeats’s ‘new species’ of Irishman and ‘new kind’ of Irish nation are born into ‘postcoloniality’. The “self so sought”, Yeats explains, is “that Unity of Being compared by Dante in the *Convito* to that of ‘a perfectly proportioned human body’” (1990:131), a ‘self’ that is a coherent and unified whole. Yeats elaborates on such unity in “Four Years:1887-1891”, writing that Unity of Being can be likened “to a musical instrument so strung that if we touch a string all the strings murmur faintly” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:164). In *A Vision*, Yeats holds that “the sole activity and the sole unity is natural or lunar” and all unity “is from the Mask” (Jeffares 1990:131) – and this includes national unity. That the “condition” referred to is colonial suppression becomes clear in Yeats’s definitions of the opposites of Creative Mind and Body of Fate.

These are “thought and its object, or the Knower and the Known” (1990:124). Creative Mind is the “intellect” (1990:133), “all the mind that is consciously constructive” and “that part of the mind which acts on external events” (Ellmann 1960:229). Invoking Arnold’s stereotyping of the Irish in terms of a “reaction against the despotism of fact,” and bespeaking colonial subjugation, Body of Fate is “the sum, not the unity, of fact, fact as it affects a particular man” (Jeffares 1990:131), or “the series of events forced upon him from without” (1990:132), or the external “physical and mental environment” (Ellmann 1960:229). Aligned with the objective ‘Anglo’ gyre, Body of Fate and Creative Mind are “solar or primary or reasonable” (Jeffares 1990:124). The association of Body of Fate with colonial rule is apparent in that Body of Fate “is always primary” and it is “in sympathy with the primary phase while it opposes the antithetical phase” (1990:138). Opposing the colonized’s aspirations at the level of identity, Body of Fate is “the reverse of the Mask, which is sympathetic to an antithetical phase but opposes a primary” (1990:138). At the same time, the Body



of Fate is “the source of antithetical energy” (1990:140): its opposition to the Mask fuels the colonized’s intense desire for the Mask.

Primary and antithetical aspects are therefore internalised in the human mind, which is “a kind of resolution of the energies of these Four Faculties” (Ellmann 1960:230). As Ellmann argues, the Four Faculties “may roughly be translated as Imagination and the Image of what we wish to become, and Intellect and the Environment” (1964:160). This Environment, I have shown, especially includes the colonial environment. As Yeats presents it, only “by the pursuit or acceptance of its direct opposite” or Mask and “by forcing that form upon the Body of Fate” can Will “attain self-knowledge and expression” (Jeffares 1990:132). Only by the (ex)colonized Irish adopting a national identity in spite of the colonizer-imposed physical and mental environment can they imaginatively ‘become’ themselves (i.e. imagine themselves as a community and become that community) and express their unity. Yeats therefore grounds the phases of the moon firmly in terms of decolonization at the level of identity, with the battle of the faculties basically “between what we” (the colonized) “are and what we” (the colonized) “dream of becoming” (Ellmann 1964:160).

The individual’s ‘unfulfilled desire’ or intense passion, as described in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, in seeking to become united to his or her “object of desire or idea of good” or “ultimate self” (Jeffares 1990:132), is exactly what, in *A Vision*, leads an individual to engage with ‘identity’ and what propels the colonized individual or nation towards Phase 15. As Fanon puts it, “the experience of desire” is “the first milestone on the road that leads to the dignity of the spirit” (1967:218) of the colonized. Yeats reimagines passion as “continual Discord through Deception,” with another word for Deception being “desire”, without which, Yeats argues, there would be “no conscience, no activity” (Jeffares 1990:139). As Yeats explains, a Discord “is always the enforced understanding of the unlikeness of Will and Mask or of Creative Mind and Body of Fate” (1990:139). The relations between Will and Creative Mind, Mask and Body of Fate, he later explains, are “discords” (1990:147).

This means that desire of the “Is” or “normal ego” (1990:132) to become the “Ought (or that which should be)” (1990:124) at the level of identity is informed by the

unlikeness of the “Ought (or that which should be)” and Body of Fate. This is the unlikeness of imagined ‘postcolonial’ political freedom/national identity and colonial oppression/Othering. The former is the colonized united to themselves at the level of identity through a “form created by passion” (1990:131), and the latter the colonizer’s imposition “from without” (1990:132) of a denigrating physical and mental environment, including Otherness at the level of identity. This is why, in the antithetical phases, “the being seeks by the help of the Creative Mind to deliver the Mask from Body of Fate” (1990:137). The antithetical phases, it is clear, are the phases of decolonization at the level of identity.

Against this liberationist backdrop, Yeats again draws his distinction between his ideal, ‘new species’ of Irish individual and the ‘fated’, conforming colonial individual (whether the colonizer or submissive and/or imitative ‘bourgeois’ colonized). In aligning each individual with the gyres, Yeats again invokes and subverts Arnold’s imposition of negative Irish identity. Yeats calls his ideal Irishman “antithetical man” and disparages what he calls “primary” man (1990:132). Yeats explains that in the case of antithetical man, the “stage-manager” or Daimon “offers his actor an inherited scenario, the Body of Fate, and a Mask or role as unlike as possible to his natural ego or Will, and leaves him to improvise through his Creative Mind the dialogue and details of the plot” (1990:132). He must “discover or reveal a being which only exists with extreme effort, when his muscles are as it were all taut and all his energies active” (1990:132). Clearly, this is the individual who has entered the anti-self and fashioned his Mask, becoming through violent inner or psychological combat united with his “ultimate self” or Daimon, and emerging a “new species of man” from “terror”. This is the decolonized or ‘postcolonial’ individual recreated at the level of identity, through his Mask.

In part XXI of “Four Years: 1887-1891”, Yeats extols such decolonized individuals, and counts himself among them. Thoughts, he explains, can “sustain us in defeat, or give us victory, whether over ourselves or others” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:163). These “thoughts, tested by passion,” he adds, may be called “convictions” (1999:163). Antithetical man is, then, liberated from colonial rule and its mindset. As Yeats puts it: “Among subjective men (in all those, that is, who must spin a web out of their own

bowels) the victory is an intellectual daily re-creation of all that exterior fate snatches away, and so that fate's antithesis" (2003:179). Fanon refers, in *Black Skin White Masks*, to such 'daily re-creation' regarding the decolonized "Negro": "In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself" (1967:229).

Yeats therefore imagines the antithesis of external "fate" or colonial oppression: full liberation of the Irish at the level of identity, in terms of a "constantly renewed choice" (Jeffares 1990:133) of self-(re)creation that triumphs in the face and wake of colonial circumstances. Clearly, Yeats is imagining full political liberation in Ireland through a chain reaction of "personal liberation" in the first instance. Antithetical man represents the achievement, through a "radical act of imagination, or a complete, aesthetic self-definition," of a 'modern' self-determination that fully realizes "the otherwise discredited notion of a 'free life'" (Pippin 1991:30). Fanon, again, underlines this 'self-deriving' and self-dependence of the decolonized individual: "The body of history does not determine a single one of my actions. I am my own foundation" (1967:231).

In the case of "primary man", Yeats explains disparagingly, the "Will is weak and cannot create a role, and so, if it transform itself, does so after an accepted pattern, some traditional clown or pantaloons" (Jeffares 1990:132). It is submissive and subservient primary man who "must cease to desire Mask and Image by ceasing from self-expression, and substitute a motive of service for that of self-expression" (1990:132). Thus the "primary is that which serves, the antithetical is that which creates" (1990:133). Instead of "the created Mask", primary man has "an imitative Mask", and "when he recognizes this his Mask may become the historical norm" (1990:132). The Mask of primary man, whether of 'superior' colonizer or 'inferior' Other, is therefore that reflected in the objective mirror. His Mask or identity is not self-determined or "chosen" like that of antithetical man. It is instead externally imposed, passively received or imitative. His identity is "simply who the individual happened to become due to circumstance" (Graf 2000:107), specifically colonial circumstance.

On this basis, Yeats again draws his crucial distinction in terms of ‘identity itself’, between what he now calls “free” (voluntary) and “enforced” (imposed or imitative) Masks. The “antithetical Mask and Will are free,” he explains, while “the primary Mask and Will are enforced” (Jeffares 1990:133). The “free” Mask and Will, Yeats reveals, are “personality” (1990:133), and this can be seen to constitute a ‘contrary’. However, the enforced Mask and Will are “code” or “character” (1990:133), and this can be seen to operate in terms of ‘negation’. Yeats therefore frames ‘identity itself’ in terms of “personality” and “character”. “Personality”, Yeats confirms in *A Vision*, is “self-dependent” (1990:155) and “always assumed” (1990:181), while “character” or “code” arises because “when the primary phases begin man is moulded more and more from without” (1990:133).

Within this Systematic framework, and from within his ‘endorsement’ of “the basic outlines” of Arnold’s “Celticist analysis” (Kiberd 1996:318), Yeats plots the trajectory of Irish psychological revolution: decolonization at the level of identity, and thereby the emergence of a ‘new species’ of Irishman and ‘new kind’ of Irish nation. Phase 8, Yeats explains, marks “the beginning of the antithetical phases (“those where the bright part of the moon is greater than the dark” – Jeffares 1990:128) and the ‘Beginning of Strength’” (1990:133). The Irish individual begins to free himself from colonial Othering, for here the “imitation that held it to the enforced Mask, the norm of the race now a hated convention, has ceased and its own norm has not begun” (1990:133). The individual has ‘turned from the mirror’ to his own imagination, for the phases between Phase 8 and Phase 15 are associated “with elemental water, because there the image-making power is at its height” (1990:138). As Fanon notes, “on the eve of the decisive conflict for national freedom” there is “the rebirth of the imagination” (2001:197), and this is opposed to the colonizer’s ‘primary’ Reason. The colonized’s “challenge to the colonial world is not a rational confrontation of points of view” (2001:31).

At Phase 8, the “struggle” is “to find personality” (Jeffares 1990:132). Primary and antithetical “are equal and fight for mastery” (1990:133), but because Will can “conceive of a Mask separate from or predominant over Creative Mind and Body of Fate”, i.e. over the colonial physical and mental environment, “there is personality not

character” (1990:181). When “this fight is ended through the conviction of weakness and the preparation for rage,” Yeats explains, “the Mask becomes once more voluntary” (1990:133). Decolonization is under way; identity is for the antithetical individual now increasingly within the realm of choice and self-determination. This “struggle” and “fight” for antithetical “personality”, and ensuing “rage”, is indicative of the “violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world” being “claimed and taken over” by the colonized individual “at the moment when, deciding to embody history in his own person, he surges into forbidden quarters” (Fanon 2001:31). As Fanon argues, to “wreck the colonial world is henceforward a mental picture of action which is very clear, very easy to understand and which may be assumed by each one of the individuals which constitute the colonized people” (2001:31).

For Yeats, this mental picture of “action only” (Jeffares 1990:36) is the chosen or “free” Mask or “personality”, fashioned in the “forbidden quarters” of the mind: in the unconscious or imagination, denounced and rigorously controlled by the colonizer as the site of ‘evil’. The wrecking of the colonial world is for Yeats the action, rather, of Blakean “Evil”, the “active springing from Energy” (Butter 1989:53). As Yeats explains, when the “old primary becomes the new antithetical” the “old realisation of an objective moral law is changed into a subconscious turbulent instinct” (1990:148). This is in line with Fanon’s argument that in the “colonialist context” the “good is quite simply that which is evil for ‘them’” (2001:39). Yeats’s is a “mental picture” or vision of individual and collective unity which he believes may “be assumed by each” Irish individual in imagining and actively forging an inclusive, non-essentialist, ‘postcolonial’ Irish nation.

Arnold’s essentialist, racial stereotyping of the typical Irishman “as ‘undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature’”; as having a “special affinity with ‘the wild magic of nature’”; and as having a sensibility that can be defined “as a ‘passionate, turbulent, indomitable reaction against the despotism of fact’” is therefore appropriated and mobilised by Yeats in order to call for the exact opposite of Arnold’s ‘marriage’ proposal: a violent, ‘modern’ revolution of the mind in which the “world of rigid custom and law” – i.e. the colonial world – is “broken up by the ‘uncontrollable

mystery upon the bestial floor” (Jeffares 1990:148) or unconscious/imagination. As Fanon puts it, “decolonization is always a violent phenomenon,” and because it “sets out to change the order of the world, is... a programme of complete disorder” (2001:27). For Yeats, this is a purposive ‘disorder’ bent on unity and liberation, whereby the “disappearance of colonialism” means “the disappearance of the colonized man” (Fanon 2001:198).

Antithetical men, Yeats explains, are “violent in themselves because they hate all that impedes their personality, but are in their intellect (Creative Mind) gentle” (Jeffares 1990:133). The “being of antithetical man” is “full of rage before Phase 12, against all in the world that hinders its expression, after Phase 12, but before Phase 15, the rage is a knife turned against itself” (1990:133). At Phase 12, Yeats explains, the “phases of hatred for some external fate are giving way to phases of self-hatred” (1990:161). The “nature is conscious of the most extreme degree of deception” and “is wrought to a frenzy of desire for truth of self” (1990:163). There is, Yeats adds, “now the greatest possible belief in all values created by personality” (1990:163). The phases where the individual “defines himself mainly through an image of the mind” have “begun” or are “beginning” (1990:162).

This is the violence of psychological decolonization, at the level of identity, described by Fanon. He argues that “Total liberation is that which concerns all sectors of the personality,” and that the “objective” of the colonized individual “who fights against himself is to bring about the end of domination” (2001:250). This necessitates also paying “attention to the liquidation of all untruths implanted in his being by oppression” (2001:250). This means turning against internalised Other-ness and division. At “the level of individuals,” Fanon explains, the phenomenon of violence “is a cleansing force” (2001:74). It “frees” the colonized individual “from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect” (2001:74). The violence of decolonization, Fanon also argues, “is in action all-inclusive and national” (2001:74), investing the colonized with “positive and creative qualities” which bind them “together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain” (2001:73).

In this vein, in the second quarter of the wheel the Mask “is strongest” (Jeffares 1990:138) of the Four Faculties. At Phase 12, “true personality begins” (1990:158) and “is strongest near Phase 15” (1990:134) or Full Moon. The deep subjectivity of the individual increases from Phase 12. There is now “the reflection inward of the Four Faculties,” for “all are as it were mirrored in personality” and “Unity of Being becomes possible” (1990:135) in “the four phases closest to full moon” (Ellmann 1964:158). The individual has found and is fashioning his free Mask in the anti-self: “Hitherto we have been part of something else,” Yeats writes, “but now discover everything within our own nature” (Jeffares 1990:135), meaning the individual has accessed the unconscious and Anima Mundi. In these phases, the antipathy of the individual’s ‘combat with himself’ is intensified, for he is at war with his ‘ultimate self’ or Daimon: the force of ‘Genius’ that Yeats associates with ‘Unity’.

As Yeats explains, it is precisely because the “double mind” of visionary experience “is created at full moon” or Phase 15 “that the antithetical phases are but, at the best, phases of a momentary illumination like that of a lightning flash” (1990:270). The “lightning flash”, of course, indicates the attraction of the Daimon, symbolized in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* as “sudden lightning” (1990:60). The antithetical phases, and Phase 15 in particular, can clearly be related to the pictorial key and meanings of The Tower card of the Tarot. The card, among the Major Arcana, depicts lightning striking the top of a tower and two bodies “plummeting earthward” (Echols, Mueller, Thomson 1996:84) – significantly, at full moon. Traditionally, The Tower represents “reorganizing the personality” (1996:84). The tower is the limited and limiting “ego structure” and “outer façade” the individual has “constructed”, and the card suggests the ego can “move in only two directions (i.e. think only in dualities)” (1996:85). This is the dualistic thinking Yeats bemoans in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*. The “flash of clear vision” or lightning shatters “existing modes of thinking” (1996:84).

Furthermore, the falling bodies reflect “a mixture of conscious and unconscious” (1996:84), indicative of Yeats’s description of the merging of the ‘daily trivial mind’ with the ‘buried self’. Their fall symbolizes “a clean break from the past” (1996:84), and the lightning therefore overthrows entrenched “rigidity and delusion” (1996:84). The lightning represents “the spiritual force” – Yeats’s Daimon – that violently

“releases the imprisoned inner self to go on to higher fulfilment,” for being suddenly “thrust into an alternate awareness can be a liberating experience” (1996:84). Indeed, the “full moon holds the promise of a new cycle,” and overall the card is “linked to “victory and a new direction for the future” (1996:85). In its “most positive sense,” the card “reflects the ability to go our own way, follow our own direction, possibly even defy social conventions or other organized traditions, and make it work for us” (1996:85).

Yeats’s occult knowledge is therefore reframed in terms of a ‘postcolonial’ Irish national identity that he believes will enable the Irish nation to attain “victory and a new direction for the future”. Graf highlights that the concept of the “tower” has not only autobiographical resonance in Yeats’s Thoor Ballylee residence (purchased in 1917), but that in the 1920s the tower replaces the mask as Yeats’s main “working symbol” just as the mask “replaced rose” (Graf 2000:187). The nationalist dimension, at the level of identity, of Yeats’s Doctrine of the Mask and phases of the moon grows even clearer in that, in Yeats’s later poems, the tower signifies “not only a single soul, but also the collective, national soul of a country” (Graf 2000:197) – specifically, Ireland.

In the antithetical phases of the moon, the lightning symbolises not only the ‘force of genius’ relating to the successful fashioning of a Mask that permits the full expression of personality; it also symbolises the charged ferocity – the “deep enmity” (Jeffares 1990:43) and “intense emotion” (Fanon 2001:111) – informing the decolonizing individual’s combat with himself. The individual experiences what Fanon calls “Those lightning flashes of consciousness which fling the body into stormy paths or which throw it into an almost pathological trance where the face of the other beckons me on to giddiness, where my blood calls for the blood of the other, where by sheer inertia my death calls for the death of the other... ” (2001:111). This “death” of the colonized individual, whose “rage is a knife turned against itself,” is recorded by Yeats in “The Phases of the Moon”: the “soul”, under “the frenzy of the fourteenth moon” begins “to tremble into stillness/To die into the labyrinth of itself!” (*Collected Poems* 1971:185). This is the “terror” described earlier in this chapter, the “death” of



the individual's "normal ego" through the merging of the unconscious and conscious 'halves' of the individual's nature.

Indeed, the individual enters complete subjectivity – what Yeats calls an "immovable trance" (Jeffares 1990:168) and "profound reverie" (1990:270) – at Phase 15 or Full Moon, where the antithetical phases "come to a climax" (1990:128) and the individual "attains his object" or Mask "so far as it is attainable" (1990:131). As Ellmann notes, Phase 15 is "the link" between *A Vision* "and Yeats's poetic method" (1960:288) or Doctrine of the Mask delineated in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*. Ellmann writes that while Yeats "does not explicitly say so," it is "clear that to this phase belong the symbols of poetry, caught up into reconciliation" (1960:228). However, this is also clearly the phase of complete immersion in the anti-self and imagination, replete with the archetypal images and symbols of Anima Mundi – the psychological state in which identity has been remade through the fashioning of a Mask.

At Phase 15, Yeats confirms, the individual has "reached the end of that elaboration of itself which has for its climax an absorption in time, where space can be but symbols or images in the mind" (Jeffares 1990:167). This "elaboration of itself" is the creation of the Mask or personality, with the assistance of the taskmaster Daimon, while the "absorption in time" indicates complete subjectivity in an unconscious "trance" or imaginative "reverie". While Yeats initially associates "time with subjectivity" because thoughts and emotions have "duration and quality" (1990:122), he later states that the Mask or form "created by passion to unite us to ourselves" is actually "apparently the timeless" (1990:206). The chosen Mask is therefore linked to the "timeless, absolute" (Hamburger 1969:81) subconscious 'reality' or anti-self, in which images of Anima Mundi "burn up time" (Jeffares 1990:62) during a modernist 'flight out of time'.

The individual's psychological or gyring 'movement', through "meditation upon a mask", to the 'still point' of complete immersion in the unconscious or anti-self, can therefore be traced visually by the progression of the antithetical phases of the moon to Phase 15. As Yeats writes, Phase 15 is "the consummation of a slow process," for since Phase 12 "all images, and cadences of the mind, have been satisfying to that

mind just in so far as they have expressed this converging of will and thought, effort and attainment” (1990:168). Clearly, the individual has been shaping and perfecting his Mask, has “selected, moulded and remoulded, narrowed its circle of living, been more and more the artist, grown more and more ‘distinguished’ in all preference” (1990:168). However, at Phase 15, “nothing is apparent but dreaming Will and the Image” or free Mask “that it dreams” (1990:168). This Mask is “beauty” (1990:206), and this is the phase of “greatest possible beauty” (1990:169) where contemplation and desire are “united into one” (1990:168). Quoting Plotinus, Yeats writes that “things that are of one kind are unconscious” (1990:131).

In this psychological state, “all effort has ceased” (1990:168), “strife” (1990:129) is absent, and “All thought becomes an image” (*Collected Poems* 1971:185) or Mask. The individual has imaginatively fused with the Mask, which is “consumed in Will” (Jeffares 1990:131). Thought and Will, as well as “effort and attainment”, are “indistinguishable” (1990:168), while “Chance and Choice have become interchangeable without losing their identity” (Ellmann 1960:228). This state is, clearly, the liberating “Ecstasy” of Plotinus described earlier in this chapter, what Yeats calls the “end of art”: a “sudden sense of power and of peace, that comes when we have before our mind’s eye” an image “which obeys us, which leaves us free, and which satisfies the need of our soul” (Foster 2003:72).

Above all, this is the psychological state in which the “trivial daily mind” and “buried self” have merged, permitting the “birth of a new species of man” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:217) through his self-fashioned Mask or personality. As Fanon puts it, “Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men” (2001:28), the “replacing of a certain ‘species’ of men by another ‘species’ of men” (2001:27). This “new species of man” is, as I have explained, Yeats’s ideal ‘postcolonial’ Irishman, antithetical man. The words “Chance and Choice have become interchangeable” indicate that antithetical men, like Dante and Villon, are “predestinate and free, creation’s very self” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:217). Arnold’s essentialist, racial stereotyping of the typical Irishman as having “an ‘indomitable personality’” (Castle 2001:49) is therefore appropriated and subversively transformed by Yeats into an unequivocal validation of a separate ‘Irish’ identity that is the exact opposite of the

Other, i.e. Arnold's 'inferior' and 'sentimental' Celt. This "new" Irishman, in light of the 'primary' (facts) and 'antithetical' (imagining) aspects of Yeats's phases of the moon, can be seen to arise from within the very framework of Arnold's "binomial racial and cultural typing" (2001:51) of the Irish. This "new" Irishman eschews the conjugal subordination 'humanely' offered by Arnold, and instead welds his own ideal Image of himself, to himself. This subversion and self-validation informs Yeats's reference in "Under Ben Bulbin" to "the indomitable Irishry" (*Collected Poems* 1971:400).

Ellmann explains that the ideal phase "where Unity of Being is more possible than at any other phase" is "shortly after the full moon, phase 17" (1960:240). While Yeats does not name himself, he clearly constructs himself (as a number of critics have noted) as an exemplary figure or archetype of this phase, along with Dante, Shelley and Landor. Foster points out that Yeats saw himself and Dante as being "destined by astrology to be superpoets" (2003:286). Dante's presence at Phase 17, however, also confirms that this is the phase of the "new species of man". Yeats's antithetical man or ideal Irishman is in this phase called "Daimonic Man" (Jeffares 1990:171). In this phase, Yeats explains, "expression of Daimonic thought, is now more easy than at any other phase" (1990:172). Daimonic Man's Mask, he reveals, is one "of simplicity that is also intensity" (1990:172).

"He who attains Unity of Being," Yeats writes, "is some man, who, while struggling with his fate and his destiny until every energy of his being has been roused, is content that he should so struggle with no final conquest" (Jeffares 1990:285). For the individual who enjoys Unity of Being, "fate and freedom are not to be distinguished; he is no longer bitter, he may even love tragedy like those 'who love the gods and withstand them'" (1990:285). Again, that "fate and freedom are not to be distinguished" underlines that the individual of this phase is Yeats's "new species" of Irishman, decolonized at the level of identity and "no longer bitter" about the colonial past. As Ellmann also explains, the individual finds himself in "such unity" to be "closest" to the Blakean "radical innocence" (1964:158) described earlier in this chapter. No longer struggling in the bonds of the Manichaeian colonial world,

Daimonic Man is also Blakean in being “content to see both good and evil” (Jeffares 1990:174), having surpassed ‘negation’ through a ‘contrary’ at the level of identity.

Yeats’s construction of himself as his own ideal Irishman confirms his overall concern with ‘identity itself’, a concern all the more evident in that, on the whole, the table of the 28 phases of the moon focuses on how an individual “defines himself” (1990:162) in his circumstances, on the patterns that emerge in how an individual might answer the question “Who am I?” (1990:175), and on actually constructing the mindsets and identities of his chosen specimens as case studies. Foster describes *A Vision*, with its “idea of defining a personality, especially by adopting or creating a Mask in a ‘free’ rather than an ‘enforced’ manner,” as “the work of a mind that tries to see people as constructs” (2003:284). Indeed, the Great Wheel, complete with exemplary figure(s) at most of the phases, constitutes a modernist lumping together of poets and personages, some personally known to Yeats, of divergent historical periods and contexts, in such manner as to generate, by the movement of the ‘being’ around the Wheel, a sense of the constructedness, multiplicity and instability of ‘identity itself’.

Thus Yeats’s table of exemplary figures, who take on the air of archetypes rather than flesh-and-blood people, reads like a ‘Who’s Who’ of Yeats’s ‘constructs’: Walt Whitman at Phase 6; George Borrow, Alexandre Dumas, Thomas Carlyle, and James Macpherson at Phase 7; Parnell at Phase 10; Spinoza and Savonarola at Phase 11; Baudelaire, Beardsley, and Ernest Dowson at Phase 13; Keats and Giorgione at Phase 14; William Blake, Rabelais, Aretino, and Paracelsus at Phase 16; Dante, Shelley, and Landor at Phase 17; Goethe at Phase 18; Gabriele d’Annunzio “perhaps”, Oscar Wilde and Byron at Phase 19; Shakespeare, Balzac, and Napoleon at Phase 20; Lamarck, Bernard Shaw, Wells, and George Moore at Phase 21; Flaubert, Herbert Spencer, Swedenborg, Dostoevsky, and Darwin at Phase 22; Rembrandt and Synge at Phase 23; Galsworthy and Lady Gregory at Phase 24; Cardinal Newman, Luther, Calvin, George Herbert, and George Russell (A.E.) at Phase 25; Socrates and Pascal at Phase 27.

This “formulaic approach” (Foster 2003:284) to analysing people, whether in terms of ‘personality’ or ‘character’, in itself reflects Yeats’s prioritisation of the antithetical or imaginative dimension of ‘identity itself’ over primary ‘fact’. As Foster describes it, “economies of the imagination are made: the definition of certain ‘phases’ seems to rely almost entirely on choosing a specimen personality and analysing it” (2003:285). He points out that Dowson, “as described in ‘The Trembling of the Veil’, apparently dictates the formulation of Phase Thirteen” (2003:285). ‘Fact’ therefore gives way to Yeats’s own imagination, with Yeats interspersing among this panoply of constructed figures other ‘types’ of ‘people’ that are either complete fiction or left to the reader’s imagination. These include “The Idiot of Dostoieffsky perhaps” at Phase 8; “An unnamed artist” at Phase 9; “many beautiful women” at Phase 14; “some beautiful women” at Phase 16; “a certain actress” at Phase 19, the “Hunchback” at Phase 26, and the “Fool” at Phase 28. In all, the relation of his list of largely illustrious and artistic individuals to nations and ‘nation-making’ is not explicitly explained or clarified. Rather, Yeats includes himself in this list by constructing himself as artist-exemplar of the most desirable of the phases: as the ideal ‘type’ of (Irish)man, with this phase therefore also that of the ideal ‘type’ of (Irish) nation. Collectively, these individuals – matched with their respective phases, through which the ‘being’ (an individual or nation) proceeds ‘in turn’ around the Great Wheel – serve Yeats in portraying ‘identity itself’ as multiple and protean, as an unstable, imaginary construct that, when chosen as a ‘personality’ in the mode of the antithetical man, nonetheless has genuine material currency in terms of self-determination in the face of an opposing external physical and mental environment and its ‘facts’.

Significantly, Yeats places Queen Victoria in the ‘primary’ Phase 24, which is characterised by “self-righteousness and scorn of others” (Jeffares 1990:191). In this phase, the individual is “flooded with mercy... for those over whom the code can have no rights, children and the nameless multitude” (1990:191), and the enforced Mask “holds together a... social order” (1990:192). Most notably, Arnold is subversively placed in the ‘primary’ Phase 18, where Unity of Being is no longer possible. The man who insisted “the ‘Celtic nature’ was inherently ‘sentimental’”, a term which meant above all “a desire ‘to aspire ardently after life, light, and emotion” (Castle 2001:47), is cast by Yeats as “The Emotional Man” (Jeffares 1990:174). Yeats

explains that, with the antithetical tincture closing in this phase, the “being” turns to “emotional philosophy” (1990:175). The tincture “begins to attain... its active form,” which is either “love” as “the union of emotion and instinct” (1990:175) or, in light of “Enforced lure” (1990:174) or “artificial choice” (1990:176), “sentimentality” (1990:175).

Foster points out that “the parallels” between the Irish mythic hero Cuchulain and Yeats’s “own perceived personality” had long “been clear”, and during question-and-answer sessions with his medium-wife at Stone Cottage in December 1917 “the idea of the mythic hero as his own alter ego was specifically established” (2003:112). Cuchulain, though too not named, is “established as WBY’s own mask, or solar opposite” and installed “in the heroic Phase Twelve” of the “archetypal System of *A Vision*” (2003:112). As Unterecker argues, Yeats felt that the Mask of a “modern” country like Ireland would “resemble that which is most unlike modern Ireland, the Ireland of priest, merchant, and politician,” and that such an opposite would “resemble ‘an Ireland/The poets have imagined, terrible and gay’”, specifically “Cuchulain’s Ireland, a land of reckless heroes” (1963:31). Unterecker refers to a much-quoted passage from part XXIII of “Four Years: 1887-1891”:

“Have not all races had their first unity from a mythology, that marries them to rock and hill? We had in Ireland imaginative stories, which the uneducated classes knew and even sang, and might we not make those stories current among the educated classes... it might... so deepen the political passion of the nation that all, artist and poet, craftsman and day-labourer would accept a common design?” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:167)

Unterecker adds that this “common design – this great image – was the myth-founded Mask of Ireland which, being opposite to the modern world, was the Mask for the modern world, ‘of all states of mind not impossible, the most difficult to that man... or nation’” (1963:31). Yet “if the modern Yeats, the modern Irishman, or modern Ireland” chooses “to put it on, from that Hegelian tension of opposites a greatness

might be synthesized, in the union of opposites a new kind of nation might be born” (1963:31). Yeats’s proffering of Cuchulain as the Mask for Ireland, to marry the Irish to “rock and hill”, of course raises the same question posed by Castle in regard to Yeats’s subtle reversal of “Arnold’s call for Celtic submission to the British Empire”: Does it “generate an anti-colonialist discourse capable of resisting the discriminatory effects of primitivism, or does it in fact fail to avoid a remysification of the Celt, thus reinscribing Arnold’s strategies of binomial racial and cultural typing?” (2001:51). The answer to this lies in the telling line quoted by Unterecker: “an Ireland/The poets have imagined, terrible and gay” (1963:31). Far from an unreflectively ‘primitive’ or ‘nativist’ Irish Mask, the Mask Yeats proffers is not only somewhat Blakean but is a specifically ‘modern’, Nietzschean Cuchulain. As Ellmann puts it, the “man who emerges from” Yeats’s “poetry is a modern man though his name be Cuchulain” (1960:298).

Indeed, the only exemplary figure named in the heroic Phase 12, the phase of “The Forerunner” (Jeffares 1990:162), is Nietzsche. In this “phase of the hero” the individual “overcomes himself, and so no longer needs... the submission of others, or... conviction of others to prove his victory” (1990:163). It is therefore unsurprising that the personal liberation of Yeats’s ideal Irishman, the Daimonic Man of Phase 17, is via a Nietzschean Mask of ‘tragic joy’, evoking the “heroic ecstasy” or “heroic mood” that is “Bitter and gay” (Hamburger 1969:83). The Nietzschean Mask is why the decolonized or psychologically liberated individual of Phase 17 “is content that he should so struggle with no final conquest” (Jeffares 1990:285). Again, it is evident that “victory” for Yeats, as he indicates in his *Autobiographies*, is a Nietzschean “intellectual daily re-creation of all that exterior fate snatches away, and so that fate’s antithesis” (O’Donnell/Archibald 1999:163), as outlined earlier in this chapter in regard to the psychology of antithetical man. As I’ve mentioned in chapter two, Ellmann underlines Yeats’s framing of “the Nietzschean lines” (1964:93) in a poem like “Lapis Lazuli”: “All things fall and are built again,/And those that build them again are gay” (*Collected Poems* 1971:339). This specifically Nietzschean attitude is therefore also framed by Yeats in terms of Irish national identity. The Daimonic or ideal Irish individual, Yeats holds, may be inferred and evoked by the Nietzschean Mask of Cuchulain. Such a Mask would be “The Forerunner” of and evoke Unity of

Being. As Ellmann highlights, Yeats wrote “as early as 1919” that, were he 24 instead of 54 years old, he “would propose to the nation his new doctrine” of the Mask and “Unity of Being” (1960:245).

Clearly, Yeats has not “stopped short of imagining full political liberation” (Said 1993:287/88) in Ireland. As Fanon puts it, after “national liberation” the “people realize that life is an unending contest” (2001:74). The “struggle... goes on” (2001:74). Yeats’s Nietzschean personal liberation therefore not only precedes the strictly political “triumph” and “liberation” in Ireland which his ‘occult’ works and *Autobiographies* clearly anticipated, but fully inhabits and moves through Said’s “second more openly liberationist moment” (1993:271) into the ‘postcolonial’: into a liberated future grounded in everyday ‘reality’ or uncompromising actuality, made possible by the prior psychological decolonization of the Irish at the level of identity. Yeats writes in *A Vision* that “All life is... a struggle” (Jeffares 1990:308), and national liberation, he therefore warns, is ongoing and ‘work-a-day’ rather than forever guaranteed or immune to the tragedy and limitations of everyday existence. Postcolonial self-determination and nation-building must, he advocates, be the heroic “victory” of the Nietzschean antithetical man, “an intellectual daily re-creation of all that exterior fate snatches away.” This necessarily applies, too, at the level of national identity or ‘personality’. Yeats plainly states in *A Vision* that ‘personality’ ranges “from an individual charm... to a hard objective dramatization” (Jeffares 1990:133), the latter indicative of national identity – and that personality “no matter how habitual, is a constantly renewed choice” (Jeffares 1990:133).

His imagining of full political liberation in Ireland also takes the form in *A Vision* of applying Phase 15 as the ideal ‘phase of complete beauty’ to historical cycles. He writes that “If I were left to myself I would make Phase 15 coincide with Justinian’s reign, that great age of building in which one may conclude Byzantine art was perfected” (Jeffares 1990:269) as “the vision of the whole people” (1990:268). This idea of imaginative, artistic “building” by a united collectivity informs Yeats’s later poetic construction of his ideal ‘state’, psychological and political, in “Sailing to Byzantium” (1928) and “Byzantium” (1933). These poems, as Bradford points out in his essay “Yeats’s Byzantium Poems: A Study of Their Development”, “are deeply



concerned with the achievement of Unity of Being through art” (Unterecker 1963:130). In “Sailing to Byzantium”, Bradford explains, Justinian’s city becomes Yeats’s “golden city of the imagination,” an “imagined land where Unity of Being has permeated an entire culture” (1963:94). As Foster puts it, Byzantium is for Yeats “a gleaming personal emblem” of the unity of “religious, aesthetic and practical life” (2003:288) – what Yeats calls the “concrete and sensuous unity of phase 15” (Jeffares 1990:251). In light of the colonial dimension of *A Vision* explicated in chapter two and this chapter, the Byzantium of Phase 15 constitutes a thinly veiled poetic imagining of and encouragement towards Yeats’s ideal Irish community united in common purpose or design by a shared Mask or identity representing that design. This is a community endlessly and artistically nation-building through the natural and purposive creativity of the unconscious or imagination. As Ellmann puts it, although “the poet has sailed to Byzantium” his “heart, ‘sick with desire’, is full of Ireland” (1960:260).

Furthermore, Yeats’s imagining of full psychological and political liberation in Ireland in terms of unity is evident in the very construction of himself as a model figure or archetype of Phase 17. As Kiberd speculates, Yeats’s gyres may be seen in terms of “the spiritual hyphenation of the Anglo-Irish, forever seen as English in Ireland, and always Irish in England” (1996:317). He argues that the gyres “may well be a version, in world-historical terms, of the Anglo-Irish antithesis out of which Yeats and the Irish revival came,” and adds that “if so, they are also part of his attempt to transcend it” (1996:318). Applying the gyres to Yeats’s specific historical context and System at the level of identity, Kiberd holds that the primary gyre may be associated with “Anglo” and therefore with “democratic, scientific, factual, objective, Christian, realistic, God over one soul” (1996:318). The antithetical gyre, he adds, may be associated with “Celtic” and therefore with “hierarchical, aesthetic, visionary, subjective, pagan, idealistic, multiple self” (1996:318). Yeats’s “guile”, Kiberd argues, prompts “him to expose the limitations of either term by fusing both” and thereby dismantling the binary opposition, in “the conviction that while it takes talent to discern differences, only genius can establish the underlying unity” (1996:317).

This decolonizing fusion of the gyres not only functions at a ‘macro-level’ in subverting Arnold’s essentialism and the English Othering of the Irish, but also at the ‘medium-level’ in subverting the reciprocal Othering by the Catholic and Protestant factions within Ireland. As Kiberd also argues, the gyres take on the overtones of “the two major religious traditions” (1996:451) within Ireland. Kiberd states that the primary gyre “might loosely be termed Protestant, in its sponsorship of democratic, rational, Anglicized thought, as against the antithetical or Catholic gyre, which is hierarchical, aesthetic, visionary and subjective” (1996:451). The “underlying desire” of *A Vision* is therefore “to render those labels meaningless by reaching that point at which each gyre is interpenetrated by its own opposite,” and “so to write a kind of constitution for the infant state” (1996:451). This ‘constitution’, as I have shown, would be based on an inclusive unity forged through a shared national identity.

In addition, the gyres’ subversion of Othering applies at the ‘micro-level’, within Yeats himself. As Kiberd puts it, Yeats is, despite “a reputation for dreaminess,” as “‘Anglo’ (cautious, analytic, even cunning) as he is ‘Irish’ (passionate, careless, emotional)” (1996:317). Yeats’s placement of himself at Phase 17, Kiberd argues, shows that he “has elements of the Primary about him, and hints of the Anglophone” but “is predominantly Antithetical or Celtic” (1996:318). The “interpenetration of cones” thus “perfectly captures” Yeats’s “dual inheritance” (1996:318) as Anglo-Irish. However, while the Otherness of both ‘Anglo’ and ‘Irish’, and of the hyphenated ‘Anglo-Irish’, is subverted by the interpenetration of the gyres and the “varying proportions” (Ellmann 1960:229) of primary and antithetical qualities within all individuals, it remains that Yeats’s System is “so manipulated as to favour the antithetical Celtic over the primary English elements” (1996:325). As I have shown, Yeats charts and advocates the decolonization and therefore re-creation of the Irish individual and nation at the level of identity, a process that culminates in the ‘birth’ of a unified ‘new species’ of Irishman and ‘new kind’ of Irish nation through the application of his Doctrine of the Mask.

Yeats thus emerges at Phase 17 as his own ideal, archetypal Irishman and Irish national ‘superpoet’, as the antithetical or Daimonic Man whose Mask is the “exemplar of the nation” (Kiberd 1996:308). In so ‘manipulating’ his System to

favour the Irish, as I have shown, he strategically appropriates and subverts the very same terms used in Arnold's Othering of the Irish. The essentialist, racial stereotyping of the typical Irishman "as 'undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature'"; as having a "special affinity with 'the wild magic of nature'"; as having "an 'indomitable personality'" and "a 'reverence and enthusiasm for genius, learning and things of the mind'" (Castle 2001:49); as being "sentimental" (Castle 2001:47); and as having a sensibility that can be defined "as a 'passionate, turbulent, indomitable reaction against the despotism of fact'" (Castle 2001:50) is not just deliberately unhooked by Yeats from a racial basis, but is, to use Yeats's words from "Easter 1916", "changed utterly" (*Collected Poems* 1971:203). Yeats commandeers and transforms Arnold's terms and their meanings in order to seditiously underwrite his conception of Irish 'personality' or national identity. That Yeats does so reveals that his 'failure' to "seriously" question "Arnold's primitivist assumptions" is not "a blind spot" but indeed "a subtle strategy" (Castle 2001:50).

That these terms are "changed utterly" is, of course, consistent with the 'modernist' Yeats's intent to "make it new" by "violating accepted conventions and decorums," to "shock the sensibilities of the conventional reader" and "challenge the norms and pieties of bourgeois culture" (Abrahams 1981:110). It is also in line with the Irish bardic tradition, in which the bard "similarly fashioned and refashioned traditional materials in the creation of new traditional texts" (Castle 2001:68). Yeats's 'modernist' or 'bardic' authority and making of 'new originals' therefore addresses Castle's argument, outlined earlier in this chapter, that Yeats's "subversion" of Arnold's Celticism "is by no means complete" (2001:51). As I've explained earlier in this chapter, Castle claims that a "residual reliance on primitivist discourse in Yeats's appeal to an 'ancient worship of Nature'" and "surfacing more explicitly in his folklore projects" blocks Yeats "from offering a decisive critique of imperialist Celticism and its anthropological assumptions about the Irish 'race'" (2001:51).

However, Yeats's Doctrine of the Mask, as I have demonstrated, reveals any "residual reliance on primitivist discourse" or folk 'tradition' to strategically form part of a modernist discourse that mobilises distinctly Yeatsian conceptions of Nature, Celt and myth which prioritise the unconscious, imagination, occult and psychology over 'the

primitive'. As I have shown, Yeats's recourse to 'modern' psychology and esotericism does, in fact, decisively critique Arnoldian primitivism and Celticism by debunking it (and Arnold) altogether. Yeats's understanding of primitivism in relation to Irish identity is, as I've argued in chapter two, acute owing to his problematic Anglo-Irish background in the Irish nationalist context. As Yeats writes in *A Vision*, his "instructors certainly expect neither a 'primitive state' nor a return to barbarism as primitivism and barbarism are ordinarily understood" (Jeffares 1990:255). Rather, "antithetical revelation is an intellectual influx neither from beyond mankind nor born of a virgin, but begotten from our spirit and history" (1990:255). His concept of the antithetical does not, therefore, rely on or translate into primitivism. It is a 'modern' concept, applied to 'modern' Ireland, in order to make Irishness newly original.

In light of the interpenetration of the gyres, then, the 'modern' and 'postcolonial' Ireland that Yeats imagines is one free of Othering and negation at the level of identity. Yeats envisages the Irish as an inclusive, imagined community united through a 'contrary' in the adoption and espousal of an heroic, ideal Mask: a freely chosen and self-fashioned national identity or 'personality' that permits self-determination and the full expression of psychological unity by the decolonized Irish individual and nation. Such a Mask, Yeats tells us, is "beauty" (Jeffares 1990:206). It is the Mask that "in the crisis of creation" causes "a person to fuse with the opposite, buried self" (Kiberd 1996:123). The resultant "birth of a new species of man," Yeats also tells us, "is from terror" (O'Donnell/Archibald 1999:217). This is a familiar formulation by Yeats of the birth of the new Irish nation, a nation "changed utterly". In arguably his most famous line, from "Easter 1916": "A terrible beauty is born" (*Collected Poems* 1971:203).

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#### **Chapter Four: Mediations and Implications of Yeats for South Africa**

I wish to conclude with a brief consideration of Yeats's Doctrine of the Mask and conception of Irish national identity in relation to the issues of national identity and national unity in postcolonial, postapartheid South Africa. Such a consideration is invited by Said's statement that "we should think of Yeats... as an Irish poet with more than strictly local Irish meaning and applications" (1993:281). Elaborating on his point that Yeats "rises out of his national environment and gains universal significance," Said draws attention to the fact that Neruda "accepted" Yeats "as a national poet representing the Irish nation in its war against tyranny" (1993:281). Said adds that "according to Neruda, Yeats responded positively to that unmistakably anti-fascist call" for support of a writers' congress in Madrid in 1937 "in defence of the Republic" (1993:281). In light also of how "Neruda saw no difficulty in thinking of himself as a poet who dealt with internal colonialism in Chile and with external imperialism throughout Latin America" (1993:281), Yeats and his concerns, Said argues, should similarly be seen to transcend "his national environment".

This is to say that Yeats must inevitably be situated in what Kiberd calls the "international theme", whereby Yeats saw himself as having exactly such wider "meaning and applications" outside of Ireland, 'internationally' among those belonging to other nations. As Kiberd indicates, the "Irishman" Yeats considered himself "the heir of all the ages, creating not just a national poetic" but "a new species of man," and became a role model for poets and colonized peoples "in other places" (1996:129). That Yeats subscribed to and cultivated this "theme" is, of course, unsurprising given the "tremendously heightened role" (Pippin 1991:41) assumed by the 'modernist' artist" in general as "the 'antennae of the race'" and "especially the 'unacknowledged legislator' for mankind" (1991:30). This "heightened role" informs Eliot's argument, outlined in chapter two, that Yeats "in becoming more Irish... became at the same time universal" (Unterecker 1963:58) and could "speak for every man, or for men very different from himself" (1963:59). It is also unsurprising given Yeats's occult belief in a Collective Unconscious, accessible to people within and across national borders. Furthermore, Anderson's stressing of mass print-literacy is apposite in this regard: there is ample evidence in Yeats's biography and works

indicating he was influenced and inspired by poets ‘in other places’, whom he sought to emulate and surpass in poetic achievement.

Kiberd underlines that Yeats was, for instance, able to construct himself as a ‘national poet with international significance’ by drawing on the example of Whitman. As Kiberd explains, Yeats used the American as a “test-case” or “sort of sounding board,” even “devoting his analysis of Phase Six in *A Vision* to Whitman’s attempt to reconcile individualism with communal ideals” (1996:128). Kiberd points out that both Yeats and Whitman, “experiencing themselves as media for unseen forces which spoke through them,” actively “staked their claim” as “representative men” or “types of a nation” (1996:129). However, the “traditions which they pioneered were also international,” Kiberd argues, in that both poets “were certain that the conditions which produced them and their poems could be repeated in other places” (1996:129). Yeats was, Kiberd points out, “indeed an exemplar to Indian poets like Rabindranath Tagore, as Whitman was to many Latin Americans including Pablo Neruda” (1996:129).

The notion of Yeats as an international “exemplar” informs and is informed by the perception, far from limited to Neruda and in fact widespread “in other places” outside of Ireland, of Yeats “as a national poet representing the Irish nation in its war against tyranny.” The “conditions” of colonial oppression and “tyranny” in Ireland, which in many ways produced Yeats and his poems, have of course their parallels with such “conditions” (marked by their own historical specificities) outside of Ireland, which have produced other poets (like Neruda) and poems. The result is that, given the inseparability of mass print-literacy from ‘international’ history and politics, Yeats has emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries as an inspirational anti-colonial figure in the eyes of nationalist intellectuals and statesmen ‘in other places’ outside Ireland. Indeed, Yeats’s work has resonated deeply with his readers in particularly the former colonies, who have deemed his nationalist, liberationist verse to be of great relevance and importance to themselves and their concerns in their own national contexts.

This South Africans well know, given President Thabo Mbeki's predilection for quoting Yeats in his speeches and writings (a prime example of this will be examined below). Nigerian Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1959), taking its title from the apocalyptic line in "The Second Coming" and relating the "disorder" of the "inflamed colonial situation" to the "colonial intervention in the first place" (Said 1993:283/4), has also added to Yeats's enduring political and intellectual currency – and popularity – in Africa. This popularity may to some extent also be ascribed to long familiarity, thanks to Yeats's assimilation "into the canon... of modern English literature" (Said 1993:265) and the teaching of his works in what Anderson calls "colonial school-systems" (1991:120). Yeats may therefore be one example of how, as Anderson argues, colonial education ironically helped to promote "colonial nationalisms" (1991:120). In the context of decolonization and nation-building in Africa, Eliot's claim that Yeats can "speak for every man, or for men very different from himself" appears to have been borne out.

This is not, however, without its complications. There is a danger of decontextualising Yeats from the specificities of the Ireland of his times, inviting the "blanket wishful thinking" informing "so many untested generalizations" and "assumptions" – including those "behind comparative post-colonial studies" – about "the Platonic solidarity between struggling Irish nationalists and their supposedly analogous victims elsewhere" (Foster 2001:xiv). As I've argued in chapter two, it remains an unpalatable part of history that racial attitudes in Ireland during Yeats's lifetime were "not radically different from those held elsewhere in Europe at the time" (McCracken 2003:xviii). Far from a concordance of Irish and black South African liberationist aspirations, the Irish considered it "an affront to be denied home rule, let alone nation statehood," on the basis that they were "... 'white men'" (McCracken 2003:pxviii). McCracken points out that it "was the Boers" or Afrikaners – the later architects of apartheid – whom the Irish saw and supported as "the downtrodden and the underdog" in the South African colonial context, not the oppressed black population. With "a few notable exceptions," McCracken remarks, "minds were closed to any other interpretation of the South African situation" (2003:xviii/xix).

In this light, despite later Irish “sympathy with the liberation movement in South Africa” (McCracken 2003:xviii), the ‘importing’ of nationalist, liberationist poetic inspiration to South Africa from a pro-“white” Ireland largely unsympathetic to “black” self-determination, could be deemed highly disquieting. As Young points out, it is “still an open question... whether an African pastoralist shares the same existential ‘bestial floor’ with an Irish poet and his readers” (1990:131). Again, Young’s unsatisfactory reference to “pastoralist” rather than intellectual aside, the point is that appropriating Ireland’s national poet to ‘speak for’ decolonization, liberation, and nation-building in (South) Africa risks subtly casting the Ireland of his times as pro-black (South) African, at the expense of what Foster calls the “mesh of nuance, complexity and contradiction involved when the stories of nations intersect with those of supposedly emblematic individuals” (2001:xvii) like Yeats.

In his eulogy “Apartheid is dead! Hail the Spirit of Anton Rupert!” in *ANC Today*, Mbeki himself overlooks Irish pro-white racism during Yeats’s lifetime, and argues: “Because of its own struggle against British imperialism, for the liberation of the Irish and all colonized nations, the IRB actively supported the struggle of the Boers against the British during the South African (Anglo-Boer) War” (2006:2). Having quoted at length from Yeats’s “Easter 1916”, he points to the “striking irony” that the “progeny of the IRB Boer supporters ended up as militant supporters of the ANC fighters against apartheid rule” (2006:3). “Thus the Irish descendants of John MacBride,” Mbeki writes, “turned into opponents of the Boer descendants of John MacBride’s former comrades-in-arms” (2006:3). Mbeki then relates “these changing alliances” (2006:3) to the Afrikaner Rupert’s life, praising him for advocating “a partnership that had to be extended to the black population as well” (2006:4).

Mbeki writes that Rupert “was sufficiently inspired by the spirit of righteousness and justice... to end his life as a celebrated South African and African patriot, a prophet of an inclusive future for the children of our country and continent” (2006:5). Mbeki concludes that Rupert therefore “did not disappoint the expectations of John MacBride’s Irish Brigade” and, adapting Yeats’s verse, comments: “Our people are blessed that too long a sacrifice did not make a stone” (2006:5) of Rupert’s heart. While the conciliatory spirit of Mbeki’s essay is laudable, the association of black



South African emancipation with Irish anti-colonial expectations, and with Yeats's "Easter 1916", is erroneous. Clearly, what Mbeki calls the Irish "struggle" for the liberation of "all colonized nations" did in fact not include the freeing of the black population in South Africa.

Of course, pro-white sentiment in Ireland can by no means be said to be a direct or indirect reflection on Yeats himself. As Yeats argued, "whenever a country produces a man of genius he is never like that country's immediate idea of itself" (Kiberd 1996:128). Indeed, the view of Yeats as a "national poet representing the Irish nation in its war against tyranny" elides the fact that his relationship with the Irish was largely adversarial. Yeats's "war on tyranny" and Othering, as I have demonstrated, was waged not only against England, but against his countrymen and within himself. In this light, it is to Mbeki's credit that his description of Yeats in his essay, as "the outstanding Irish poet and patriot" (2006:2), grants Yeats the full Irish-ness many of his countrymen sought to deny him before and after his death.

This recognition has been long in coming in Ireland. According to Catherine Fahy, one of the curators of a two-year Yeats exhibition which opened at Dublin's National Library of Ireland in May 2006, Yeats has "67 years after his death... finally been embraced into the nation's folk memory" (*The Economist* 2006:82). This was a "process eased by the decline of strident nationalism" and by his "assimilation into the Celtic Tiger's tourist trade" (2006:82). Fahy is quoted as saying: "Nationalist Ireland has got over its crisis about Yeats" (2006:82). This recognition, at least 'officially', of Yeats's Irishness also follows the legalisation of divorce in Ireland in 1996.

Taking Said's cue, then, I wish to extract from Yeats's Doctrine of the Mask and System what I hold to be the 'kernel' or principal value of his theorising for the contemporary South African context, i.e. his inspired reframing of Blake's notion of the 'contrary' in terms of an explicitly non-essentialist national identity. As Kiberd points out, Yeats was "certain that the conditions which produced" him and his "poems could be repeated in other places" (1996:129). Such "conditions" in the Irish colonial context of Yeats's lifetime are outlined by Lyons, who conceives of "several

distinct ‘cultures’” existing in Ireland, where ‘culture’ “stands for a system of beliefs, attitudes and ways of thought, in a sense mediated and refined through an understanding of history” (Foster 2001:38). These cultures were “sometimes overlapping, more often sealed into separate, self-justifying compartments” (2001:38). It “was not simply a ‘Protestant’ versus ‘Catholic’ tradition,” but rather a case of “varieties of identification” (2001:38). While these “certainly took religious labels,” religious identification was “as often as not... simply a flag for a whole range of attitudes and values” (2001:38). There were also ‘identifications within identifications’, such as “the utterly distinct cultures of Ulster Presbyterianism and Southern Ascendancy identity” (2001:38) within Protestantism.

The “implicit friction” between such groupings “broke out again and again,” and there was little hope for “a ‘solvent’... which would meld or blend them into a less confrontational whole” (2001:38). Irish diversity therefore consisted of “colliding cultures” (2001:39) within the relatively small geographical space of the island, and this diversity was “a diversity of ways of life... deeply embedded in the past and of which the much advertised political differences” were “but the outward and visible sign” (2001:38). Lyons explains that between 1890 and 1939, from the “fall of Parnell to the death of Yeats,” it was not a case of “an anarchy of violence in the streets, of contempt for law and order” that might make “the island, or any part of it, permanently ungovernable” (2001:38). It was instead “an anarchy of the mind and in the heart,” an anarchy “which forbade not just unity of territories but also ‘unity of being’”, which “sprang from the collision... of seemingly irreconcilable cultures, unable to live together or to live apart, caught inextricably in the web of their tragic history” (2001:38).

Lyons stresses “the depths and intensity of the feelings by which... men were divided rather than united” (2001:40) during Yeats’s lifetime. As I have explained in chapter two, the enmity between, broadly, the major, rival traditions of ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’ informed and was informed by essentialism or Othering. This was evident in what Foster calls the “vehemence” with which Yeats was from very early in his poetical career “assailed by literary and political enemies who were prepared to impeach him on the grounds of Protestant Ascendancy background, as well as moral

and political unsoundness” (2001:47). It was precisely Yeats’s Othered Anglo-Irish Protestant identity, the counterpart of Catholic Otherness imposed by the Protestant Ascendancy class, which was cited by his detractors before and after his death as grounds for denying him Irishness. The “conditions” which produced Yeats were, therefore, in large part colonialism and its offspring within the colony: division owing to essentialism at the level of identity.

While South Africa and Ireland have both suffered colonial oppression, it remains that South Africa is a significantly larger territory, and its historical, cultural and social circumstances are vastly different from those in Ireland. Nevertheless, I wish to submit that the basic “conditions” of essentialism and division in the Ireland of Yeats’s lifetime comprise a striking parallel with “conditions” in South Africa. Like Ireland, South Africa has been riven by essentialism and division between “colliding cultures” within its territory, compartmentalized under colonialism and apartheid in terms of skin colour: whites, blacks, coloureds, Indians. South Africans know all too well how the “implicit friction” between and within these ‘separate’ groupings has broken out “again and again,” particularly along lines of race and political affiliation. Cultural diversity in South Africa, constructed through the mechanism of Othering, remains “deeply embedded in the past.” Indeed, South African history, marked by racial segregation and conflicts bred by colonialism and apartheid, could also be described as one “of seemingly irreconcilable cultures, unable to live together or to live apart, caught inextricably in the web of their tragic history.”

I have emphasized that the “conditions” of Othering and division deeply inform the positing by Yeats of a specifically non-essentialist, inclusive Mask: an “idea of good” that was “most unlike” (Jeffares 1990:35) his countrymen, and “of all possible things the most difficult” (1990:132) for his countrymen to choose, adopt and bring into being. In doing so, as I have demonstrated, Yeats imagined Ireland as a community whose identity or personality would be “created by passion” (1990:206) to inclusively unite the Irish ‘to themselves’, in the mode of a Blakean contrary. It is this explicitly non-essentialist, non-exclusionary ambition and conception of national identity, then, that makes the postcolonial, postapartheid South African context so, so to speak, ‘Yeatsian’. It is with a high degree of conscious awareness and purposiveness, like

that typical of subscription to Yeats's seemingly stable and unified Mask, that South Africans are constructing a national identity and building 'their' nation without any of the objective criteria or essentialist categories (race, language, religion, etc) that have conventionally been invoked by nationalists worldwide as the basis for nationhood and national unity. As Erasmus puts it: "In light of its history of divisions, post-apartheid South African nationalism focuses particularly on building a unified South African national identity" (Daniel/Southall/Lutchman 2005:18).

Non-essentialism, expressly, is the hallmark of what Daniel, Southall and Lutchman refer to as the "new South Africa" (2005: xxx). In this postcolonial, postapartheid context, the 'national' emphasis continues to be on "reconciliation between oppressors and oppressed" – broadly, the white minority and black majority – "in a land where race had historically been the primary criterion for allocating wealth, power and life-chances" (2005:xxxiv). Rapprochement between Ireland's rival religious traditions, which were deeply divided in large part owing to Anglo-Irish Protestant minority privilege and oppression of the Irish Catholic majority under colonialism, was, of course, what Yeats had intended in positing his postcolonial Mask. For Yeats, as it is for South Africa, construction of a non-essentialist national identity was to serve as a "solvent" in order to "meld or blend" the rival factions at the level of identity "into a less confrontational whole" (Foster 2001:38).

In this 'Yeatsian' sense, to strive for inclusive and unifying non-essentialism is to seek imaginatively and creatively the 'anti-self' or opposite of essentialist, divisive group characterisation. In the South African context, one might speculate, the 'Mask' or archetypal Image serving unification most has been postapartheid South Africa's first president and the champion of non-essentialism, Nelson Mandela, to whom apartheid South Africa, with what might be called non-essentialist or 'Yeatsian' intent, chose collectively to "offer herself to... as to her anti-self, buskin following hard on sock" (Unterecker 1963:31) in the first 'multiracial' democratic elections in 1994. As Daniel, Southall, and Lutchman describe South Africa's non-essentialist or postcolonial/postapartheid aspiration: "The elections of 1994 marked the most significant juncture ever in South African history, away from a society which employed race as its fundamental organising principle and which condemned the

majority of people to poverty and oppression on grounds of colour, to one which aspires to the abolition of race as a criterion of status, class and wealth, to political equality and to ‘a better life for all’” (2005:xix). It must be added that non-sexism, among a range of anti-discrimination policies, forms part of this national ideal, informing the broader project that Mbeki calls the “African Renaissance”.

The non-essentialist or ‘Yeatsian’ complexion of contemporary South Africa is ‘doubled up’ in that the national identity under construction is evidently taking effect in the mode of a contrary. According to a Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) study in 2005, a “sense of national identity was found to be ‘in the process of formation’”, with most of the 2 500 South Africans surveyed combining “their racial identification with a strong national identity in what is known as ‘dual identity’” (Kassiem 2005). It found that, “while nation-building was still growing,” it “appeared to be ‘bearing fruit’” (Kassiem 2005). The “majority of black, white, coloured and Indians,” the report states, “do feel strong ties with the nation and show patriotism” (Kassiem 2005). A total of 83% of respondents were “happy to be South African citizens,” which indicated this sentiment “was ‘widely shared’ within the nation” (Kassiem 2005). The study also found that “over two-thirds of whites and four-fifths of blacks said they would rather be South African citizens than citizens of any other country” (Kassiem 2005).

These findings appear to confirm Daniel, Southall, and Lutchman’s assertion that “it is generally acknowledged... considerable progress towards a common sense of citizenship and nationhood has been made since 1994” (2005:xxxiv). South Africans’ subscription to, and progress towards, what might in Yeatsian terms be called the country’s “object of desire or moral ideal which is of all possible things the most difficult” (Jeffares 1990:132) to achieve, appears to be owing to the evocation and inference permitted by a non-essentialist or ‘Yeats-like’ Mask. Daniel, Southall, and Lutchman argue that South Africa is “a fundamentally better and morally far superior place” (2005:xix) than in 1994, with the government and citizens working towards fulfilling “a common vision of identity, growth and development for the ‘new South Africa’” (2005:xxx). The intended effect of such a “common vision of identity” or, in Yeats’s terminology, a Mask, is of course a non-essentialist and inclusive national

unity. This, in light of the HSRC's findings, appears to be tentatively emerging, with widespread patriotism perhaps an early sign of the imagined community taking shape. Indeed, according to Daniel, Southall, and Lutchman, South Africa is "more united, more peaceful, more optimistic, more self-confident and more ambitious" (2005:xix) than in 1994.

However, this somewhat rosy outlook is severely undermined by the continuation of essentialist thinking and crude forms of racial imposition at the level of identity, which threatens the coming into being of a truly inclusive postcolonial, postapartheid society. Despite its progress towards fulfilling its non-essentialist aspiration, post-1994 South Africa remains beset with Othering – the very problem that in post-1922 Ireland "forbade... unity of being" and scuppered Yeats's vision of a united Irish nation. What Daniel, Southall, and Lutchman call "a lack of national coherence," or of what Yeats called Unity of Being, is evident in that "fault lines based upon race continue to shape opportunity and attitudes" (2005:xxxiv). As Erasmus explains, these fault lines extend across society, from education to labour and politics, according to the essentialist, seemingly stable and fixed "apartheid racial categories" of "white, Indian, coloured and black" (Daniel/Southall/Lutchman 2005:13).

According to the HSRC study, the "different race groups equivocally think people from other race groups are racist" (Kassiem 2005). "Especially among black and white South Africans," the report states, "racism is reciprocal, with blacks thinking whites are racist and whites thinking blacks are racist" (Kassiem 2005). The report also states that the "historical African-white schism is confirmed by the mirroring pattern that most whites regard blacks as racist" (Kassiem 2005). Coloureds and Indians, the report adds, are "generally regarded as less racist than the other race groups," while whites are considered the most racist group: by 80% of blacks, 65% of Indians, and 37% of coloureds (Kassiem 2005). In all, the report stresses, there is "still a definite need for improvement in race relations" (Kassiem 2005).

Clearly, as Erasmus argues, despite "the implementation of legislation to end exclusionary practices based on race," race "continues to be a site of division and exclusion amongst South Africans" (Daniel/Southall/Lutchman 2005:7). Of course,

race is not the only site of division and exclusion. Other such sites include gender, sexuality, class, age, and the urban/rural dwellers gap, which intersect with race and each other in a range of ways. Race, however, constitutes the primary site of division and exclusion, given its prioritization as *the* criterion of classification under apartheid. This legacy has meant that, in postapartheid South Africa, increased “racial heterogeneity in everyday life” has not translated into “the disappearance of racial antagonisms and exclusionary practices based on race” (2005:20). Whereas “racial divisions” were “legally and socially enforced during apartheid” (2005:14), Erasmus argues, they appear in contemporary South Africa “to be self-imposed” (2005:7). Thus “underlying racialised divisions” (2005:20) and “racial exclusions” (2005:7) can be “so subtle they are very often hard to recognise and identify” (2005:14), and are frequently “based on unspoken racial antagonisms” (2005:20).

Essentialism, or what Erasmus calls “race thinking”, therefore persists “even in ‘non-racial’ South Africa”, where “racialised scripts of reality and behaviour” are in fact “norms rather than exceptions” (2005:8). Race thinking, Erasmus explains, comprises building-block “ideas that race and racialised identities are fixed and definitive” (2005:24), and that they are “ways of being” that “should determine one’s political actions and right to belong” (2005:27). This conception of stable, fixed identity is, of course, akin to and a legacy of the ‘colonial’ identity’ outlined in chapter one. Such identity, constructed in the mode of the census and based on Aristotlean essentialism, epitomises “completeness and unambiguity” on the basis that “everyone” has “one – and only one – extremely clear place” (Anderson 1991:166) at the level of identity. Unsurprisingly, then, Erasmus argues that race thinking in South Africa has been perpetuated by “the national census,” as well as by political parties’ election campaigns and “post-apartheid programmes for affirmative action, equity, and black empowerment” (2005:21).

Erasmus adds that race thinking is also manifesting by way of using race as “cultural and political armour” (2005:27), and in terms of an essentialist “familialism” that assumes “one can read someone’s politics and belonging from the colour of their skin” (2005:24). The former takes such forms as: advocating “colour-blindness” (2005:22) to “protect privilege” (2005:22); playing the proverbial ‘race card’ as “a

defence against criticism” and “intra-racial and national difference” (2005:22); and invoking the “double standards” (2005:25) of victimage in claims of racism and “reverse discrimination” (2005:27). In the last case in particular, “blackness and whiteness” are often presented as “polar opposites”, equating “the ‘Self’ with suffering, authenticity and innocence, and the ‘Other’ with oppression, in-authenticity and guilt” (2005:27).

Such Self-Other victimage at the level of identity, in accordance with Aristotelean ‘same-other’ logic and operating as per the Hegelian dialectic, was of course deplored by Yeats. This is evident in his description of Phase 22 – the beginning of the phases ‘primarily’ marked by enforced ‘character’ or ‘code’. Yeats reveals that the “mind that has shown a predominantly emotional character” has been called “that of the Victim” (Jeffares 1990:184). Disparagingly, he associates the mental “interchange” involving “Victimage” with “the gusts of sentimentality that overtake violent men, the gusts of cruelty that overtake the sentimental” (1990:184). Interestingly, Foster remarks that “it is hard to avoid the feeling that the new, modernized, liberated Irish consciousness feels a sneaking nostalgia for the verities of the old victim-culture” (Foster 2001:xv). “Victimhood” or “victim-culture” is, he notes, “in its way, a culture of superiority” (2001:xv). The ‘liberated’ South Africa, too, is clearly not immune to such emotional ‘gusts’ of victimage and ‘superiority’ on either side of the racial divide.

In South Africa, Erasmus points out, such ‘mirroring’ modes of race scripting are often accompanied by a hegemonic and “common idea that racism is a disease to be cured and/or an evil to be eradicated” (2005:9). Erasmus argues that this locks South Africans into “a discourse of legal and bureaucratic remedies on the one hand,” and into “a moralising discourse dividing ‘good’ and ‘bad’ South Africans on the other” (2005:9). Dualistic thinking – informing and informed by pervasive “images of good and evil, crude allegories,” and bemoaned by Yeats in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* – therefore remains part and parcel of the ‘new South Africa’. Rather than racism being about “the prejudices of particular individuals,” it constitutes a dualistic discourse that “permeates... our society” (2005:10), including and especially at the level of identity.



Such “racial disjunction” is, as Daniel, Southall, and Lutchman reiterate, “of course, one of the most notorious outcomes of apartheid, and its elimination constitutes one of the government’s most pressing priorities” (2005:xxxiii). Nevertheless, despite continuing efforts at “elimination”, the fact that people have been ‘divided rather than united’ throughout South African history has meant that an emphatic and genuine national unity continues to elude the ‘postcolonial, postapartheid’ South Africa. In regard to this, the meaning and application of Yeats’s conception of a non-essentialist national identity or Mask in the Irish context, framed specifically in terms of his distinction between a contrary and a negation, is illuminating when weighed against the South African context, according to Said’s assertion that Yeats should be thought of as having “more than strictly local Irish meaning and applications” (1993:281).

As I’ve mentioned earlier in this chapter, the HSRC study indicates that South Africans appear to be combining “their racial identification with a strong national identity in what is known as ‘dual identity’” (Kassiem 2005). However, the report states, “strong national identity” does “not stop people from associating with a strong racial identity” (Kassiem 2005). Among “the racial minorities,” the report states, “national identity is more contested, especially when combined with a strong group identity,” and “this tends to result in more negative perceptions of racism among other ‘fellow’ minority groups” (Kassiem 2005). The report adds that, on the other hand, among “blacks, a combination of racial identity and national identity, or what we call dual identity, coincides with more positive views of other race groups” (Kassiem 2005). On this basis, the report argues, it appeared that “strong national identity was the answer to bridging the gap among some racial groups,” and that “national identity might ‘contribute to unifying, rather than excluding and dividing the various population groups’” (Kassiem 2005).

Clearly, ‘dual identity’ in South Africa is acting as a contrary in the manner Yeats argued a Mask would in Ireland, i.e. a “common vision of identity,” particularly when strongly identified with, is serving to infer and evoke the South African ‘nation’. This appears to be “bearing fruit” in that the “majority of black, white, coloured and Indians do feel strong ties with the nation and show patriotism.” That 83% of respondents were “happy to be South African citizens,” and most indicated “they

would rather be South African citizens than citizens of any other country,” appears to confirm Yeats’s Blakean principle that “‘Contraries are positive’” (Jeffares 1990:123).

Significantly, however, the contrary is strongest among those whose claim to national identity is ‘less contested’, namely “blacks”, who consequently have “more positive views of other race groups,” but is not as strong among those whose claim to national identity is ‘more contested’, namely the “racial minorities”, who consequently have “more negative perceptions.” Questions arise, then, as to why the minorities do not identify as strongly as “blacks” with the nation’s celebrated non-essentialist national identity, why in their case “national identity” continues to be “more contested”, and why their strong group identification persists in a way that gives rise to “more negative perceptions”. A range of answers could be posited, but it suffices to state that essentialist negation or Othering clearly continues to divide South Africans according to racial allegiances and perceptions.

This is despite the ideal of an inclusive, non-essentialist South Africa having come about with the realization that essentialist or objective criteria for ‘nation’ status, particularly the criterion of race, would not be viable in a postapartheid context. Evidently, the widespread awareness that the non-essentialist national identity is a construct has not translated into a widespread awareness of the constructedness of race. As Erasmus stresses, “race has no inherently biological or cultural basis” (Daniel/Southall/Lutchman 2005:7); it is “a socio-historical and political construct” (2005:9) and in the South African context “intersects with other axes of inequality and identity such as class, gender, sexuality, culture, nationality, ethnicity and religion” (2005:10). While race is also “not an illusion” and racial “meanings have real effects on people’s lives” (2005:10), it is still not “a fixed and tangible thing we can find in our blood or DNA; nor is it something we are born with because of our culture” – its meanings are learnt and taught “to our children” (2005:10).

Therefore, in much the same way that “religious labels” and identifications were in Yeats’s lifetime “simply a flag for a whole range of attitudes and values” (Foster 2001:38), racial labels in South Africa, such as “black(ness)” and “white(ness)”, are

flags for what Erasmus calls “hierarchical structures of meaning attached to skin colour” (Daniel/Southall/Lutchman 2005:10), and skin colour – like what Lyons calls “the much advertised political differences” in Ireland – but the “outward and visible sign” (Foster 2001:38) of attached meanings. The result, as Lyons saw it in the Irish context, is that ‘cultures’, while “sometimes overlapping,” are “more often than not sealed into separate, self-justifying compartments” (Foster 2001:38). As Erasmus indicates, racist “practices and ideas that race is fixed” remain in South Africa “not exceptions to the norm” but in fact “the norm”, reflecting a lack of awareness or unwillingness to acknowledge that race “meanings” are in fact “not fixed” but “change over time and from one context to another” as “people struggle over” (Daniel, Southall, Lutchman 2005:10) these meanings.

It can be seen, then, that the constructedness of South Africa’s non-essentialist national identity is generally recognized by the citizenry, and yet the “group” or “racial identification” with which national identity (if not altogether rejected) is combined, with varying degrees of success in what the HSRC calls ‘dual identity’, remains attached to essentialist categories and notions of Other-ness. In Yeatsian terms, the contrary is being sabotaged by negation, deferring the forging of a more emphatic and genuine national unity. Therefore, while the “common vision” of a non-essentialist national identity appears to be holding up well given that 83% of South Africans across the races are “happy to be... citizens,” there remains a distinct “lack of national coherence” or Unity of Being, and a sense that, as often as not, “Things” like non-essentialism, reconciliation, inclusivity and nation-building continue to “fall apart” (*Collected Poems* 1971:211) according to inherited, persisting racial fractures.

As Erasmus describes it, the “dynamics of race in South Africa today are in a state where for some there remains a remarkable continuity with everyday life under apartheid, while alongside there are daily struggles with ways of breaking away from this legacy” (Daniel/Southall/Lutchman 2005:30). Erasmus adds that the “euphoria of the first years of freedom has long worn off,” and argues that the “time has come for citizens to ask themselves: What do I do to make a difference to the way in which race works in this country... more importantly, what do *I* do to keep race working in more or less the same way as it always has?” (2005:30). Clearly, the postcolonial

visionary Yeats, in promoting an inclusive and non-essentialist alterity at the level of identity, i.e. one resituated within individuals in positive terms in the mode of a contrary, as an explicitly constructive alternative to the destructive, externalized “two ends of the see-saw” (Jeffares 1990:123) of essentialist and exclusionary Othering and negation, assists South Africans in answering such crucial ‘postcolonial, postapartheid’ questions. Yeats’s theorizing regarding national identity in the Irish colonial context offers a Blakean reminder to South Africans that “Without Contraries is no progression” (Butter 1989:53).

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