Shakespeare and Yeats's Plays

Impact, Influence, Intertextuality

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the multi-faceted relationship between the plays of Shakespeare and W.B. Yeats. While existing studies have tended to focus on the question of poetic influence, this thesis argues that specifically theatrical questions were also at the heart of Yeats's interest in Shakespeare, and shows that these dramatic concerns were closely bound up with the system of thought Yeats developed in *A Vision*. Moreover, this thesis resists the limitations of an emphasis on the problematic question of influence by taking an intertextual approach that sets the plays of the two dramatists alongside one another, and examines them in terms of the wider framework of Yeats's theoretical writings. In doing so the thesis reflects the cyclical structure of *A Vision*.

Chapters One and Two assess the respective uses given to thresholds and masks by the two playwrights. It examines their development by Yeats as a means to representing the struggle between subjectivity and objectivity, and looks at how Yeats finds a critical stimulus for his concern with these devices in Shakespeare. The threshold is seen to originate in physical lines of demarcation on the stage which later become more sophisticated and less literal representations of liminality. Masks are considered as the functional successors to thresholds in Yeats's plays, and again both their physical and symbolic contributions are examined. Both devices are shown especially to reflect the symbolic tendencies of Shakespeare and Yeats.

While masks offer one way in which a character's anti-self can be suggested, Chapter Three analyses the comparable achievement of the play-within-a-play. This self-consciously theatrical set-piece is shown to be employed by Shakespeare and Yeats as a way of confronting on-stage audiences with parallel and alternate versions of their selves.

Chapter Four surveys two interlocking dramatic devices: the subplot, which is used to mirror and comment upon the main plot, and 'Shakespeare's Myth', which pairs contrasting characters in order to mutually enhance the audience's understanding of them. These devices posit subjective and objective qualities against each other.

The Fool is considered as representative of subjectivity in Chapter Five, which looks at how both Shakespeare and Yeats conceive of the Fool as subversive of conventional wisdom. The analysis of self and anti-self of preceding chapters is extended.

Chapter Six explores tragic joy, which is experienced by the hero in his acceptance of death. It is shown how the themes of liminality, destiny and subjectivity are conjoined in the act of putting on a mask to confront death.

In recapitulating the material of the preceding chapters the Conclusion argues that what Shakespeare and Yeats share is an interest in the subjective conflict of the soul as opposed to a concern for practical objective appearance. Shakespeare's ability to represent the soul is a great inheritance for Yeats as a symbolist dramatist because the soul is, to him, a constant subject of drama and the only subject of symbolism. The continuation of the anti-naturalistic dramatic tradition in twentieth century absurdist plays is regarded as a legacy of Shakespeare and Yeats.

CONTENTS

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I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Neil Corcoran for his careful judgement and unsparingly insightful supervision. The assistance of Dr. Nick Davis and Professor Marcus Walsh has also been greatly appreciated. I dedicate this thesis to my family as a gesture of thanks for their sacrifices and love.

INTRODUCTION

Commenting in his *Autobiographies* on a production of *Hamlet* he had seen in 1909, Yeats wrote:

> I feel in *Hamlet*, as so often in Shakespeare, that I am in the presence of a soul lingering on the storm-beaten threshold of sanctity. [1]

Characteristically, Yeats attempted to relate his experience of the play to his own complex philosophy of personal development. This is just one of numerous references Yeats made to Shakespeare during a career in which he was repeatedly troubled, provoked and inspired by the legacy of his English dramatic predecessor. What is especially revealing about this particular reflection of Yeats's is that the lesson he takes from it is influential on various levels. It had an impact not only on his abstract philosophical thoughts about the struggle of the soul, but also upon his theatrical practices: the notion of the threshold is refigured in the play *The Land of Heart's Desire* both as a symbol for the heroine's confrontation with her own fate and, more concretely, as physical thresholds on the stage (doors and windows) that serve a range of complementary dramatic functions.

The focus of this thesis is the sophisticated relationship Yeats's plays have with those of Shakespeare. Taking its starting point in Yeats's writings on Shakespeare, it traces the common themes and devices that the theatrical works of the two authors share. It is in part the story of how Yeats's

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[1] W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan, 1955), p. 522.

experience of Shakespeare's plays helped to focus and enrich his own development as a playwright. But it is not simply a study of influence, as Yeats's responses are often idiosyncratic developments of aspects of his own system of thought, and because there are significant parallels between the authors that exceed the problematic causal relation of influence. Instead it is a study of the intertextual relations of dramatic device and thematic concern as manifested in the works of the two playwrights. Yeats's *A Vision*, a work which shuns linear logic, is an important source, and much of the cyclical nature of that writing is necessarily reflected in this thesis. By applying the system of *A Vision* not only to Yeats but also to Shakespeare, this thesis tries whenever possible to employ a cyclical analysis instead of tracing a single line horizontally between Shakespeare and Yeats.

What the two playwrights share, I shall argue, is an interest in the conflict of the soul – however one wishes to describe it – as opposed to a concern for practical objective appearance. In particular Shakespeare was an important force in determining Yeats's preference for the symbolic, rather than realistic, theatre. This is evident from Yeats's preferred symbolic tools, which were taken to embody the spiritual struggle within 'the deeps of the mind': the threshold, and its functional successor, the mask. An alternative, but parallel, exploration of the soul's struggle is undertaken by both writers through the use of the play-within-a-play. I go on to look at the subplot, another of Shakespeare's dramatic devices which stirred Yeats to refine his understanding of the balance between subjective and objective

(the two bases composing the Great Wheel in *A Vision*) and his associated thoughts about 'Shakespeare's Myth'. The Fool, a figure who is the representative of subjectivity, is a crucial concern. Finally, this thesis turns to the last phase of the conflict of the soul, symbolised by the Great Wheel: tragic joy, an experience which Shakespeare and Yeats's heroes share.

For Yeats, as a dramatist who aimed at the expression of the conflict of the soul, Shakespeare's Hamlet was an influential figure throughout his life. As a boy in the mid 1870s, while attending with his father a production of *Hamlet*, Yeats was impressed by Henry Irving's portrayal of the hero's 'self-possession':

> When I was ten or twelve my father took me to see Irving play Hamlet [...] For many years Hamlet was an image of heroic self-possession for the poses of youth and childhood to copy, a combatant of the battle within myself.[2]

As Jonathan Allison argues, 'Hamlet became a touchstone by which Yeats measured others.'[3] When Yeats described W.E. Henley, whom he admired beyond words, he used the expressions 'self-possession' and 'reverie',[4] which he also applied to Hamlet: 'his eye steadily fixed upon some object in complete confidence and self-possession, and yet as in half-broken reverie'.[5] His criticism of Henley's poems also reflected Hamlet: 'He is like a great actor with a bad part: yet who would look at Hamlet in the grave

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[2] *Autobiographies*, p. 47.
[3] Jonathan Allison, 'W.B. Yeats and Shakespearean Character' in *Shakespeare and Ireland: History, Politics, Culture*, eds. by Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray (London: Macmillan, 1997), p. 117.
[4] Yeats described Hamlet's hesitation as 'the passionate hesitation of his reverie'. See *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 242.
[5] *Autobiographies*, p. 124.

scene if Salvini played the grave-digger?'[6] Hamlet represented a sort of mask that Yeats aspired to assume: 'I wished to become self-possessed, to be able to play with hostile minds as Hamlet played, to look in the lion's face, as it were, with quivering eyelash.'[7]

Yeats found ample ammunition in his observation of Shakespeare's masterful theatrical techniques for his attack upon the naturalistic theatre. 'At Stratford-on-Avon', his essay on Shakespeare's historical plays, gives space for criticism of the realistic theatre. In particular Yeats regarded naturalistic scene-painting as 'not an art but a trade' in the sense that 'it is, at best, an attempt to copy the more obvious effects of Nature by the methods of the ordinary landscape-painter, and by his methods [it is] made coarse and summary'.[8] To illustrate this anti-naturalistic argument he used the placement of Richard's and Richmond's tents alongside each other in Shakespeare's *Richard III* as an example. He claimed that such a setting was not absurd at all since 'Art is art, because it is not nature'. Peter Ure argues that in this essay Yeats considered Shakespeare as 'a bold anti-naturalist'.[9] Leonard E. Nathan supports that Yeats was set apart from other contemporary writers on account of his philosophical seriousness, which is repeatedly encountered in his efforts to find a viable dramatic form.[10] Shakespeare was indispensable to these efforts.

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[6] *Autobiographies,* p. 125.
[7] Ibid., p. 93.
[8] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 100.
[9] Peter Ure, 'W.B. Yeats and the Shakespearian moment' in *Yeats and Anglo-Irish Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1974), p. 210.
[10] Leonard E. Nathan, *The Tragic Drama of William Butler Yeats* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 1.

Many studies of the relationship between Shakespeare and Yeats concentrate on political, cultural and emotional factors related to the conflict between the colonizer and colonized. The goal of this thesis is to move the discussion of the two writers towards a consideration of their relationship as dramatists. However, as a starting point, and in order to give adequate context to the concerns of the present thesis, it will be useful to enumerate some of the achievements of existing studies.

Yeats was an Irish writer and leader of the Irish Literary movement which sought to achieve Irish cultural independence of British influence. He was also a co-founder of the Irish Literary Theatre built with Lady Gregory in 1899, for the performance of Celtic and Irish plays. Yeats expressed the suffering caused by the conflict between his love of the Irish nation and of the English language and literature:

> No people hate as we do in whom that 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, and that I owe my soul to Shakespeare, to Spenser and 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.[11]

Despite owing his soul in part to Shakespeare, Yeats felt capable at times of hating England, and of despising his own English tongue. Loving his heritage, he felt obliged to hate it, too. The love and hatred which occurred simultaneously in Yeats's mind caused the pain of a divided self.

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[11] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 519.

In his essay 'W.B. Yeats and Shakespearean Character' Allison claims that 'Irish nationalist readers have sometimes had a particularly complicated relationship with Shakespeare'.[12] In order to support his argument Allison gives a pertinent quotation written by the anonymous editor of a Dublin edition of *Hamlet*, which is cited by David Johnson in his *Shakespeare and South Africa*:

> To bend Ireland to her will, Elizabeth maintained throughout her reign an enormous army, sometimes numbering 20,000 soldiers and more, engaged in active service against our chieftains and ravaging our country of its growing crops. The magnitude of this effort may be judged by the fact that for many years the English Parliament devoted no less than three-fourths of the entire Government revenues of England, recorded as £340,000 out of £450,000, to the prosecution of the Irish wars.[13]

The following quotation is extracted from a Dublin edition of *Hamlet*, published in 1920, shortly before Irish independence. Its writer is described as 'An Examiner under the Board of Intermediate Education'. Johnson points out that though the Examiner placed the play in an imperialist context, he 'none the less retains a profound admiration for Shakespeare'.[14] He draws the following conclusion from the Examiner's conflicting attitudes:

> The apparent contradiction between hating England but venerating Shakespeare is meditated by two arguments: that Shakespeare is a universal genius, and that he in fact displays in his plays a rather more Irish than English temper. The latter is established by proving that Hamlet's name is in fact Gaelic and not Danish in origin [.][15]

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[12] Jonathan Allison, p. 114.
[13] Ibid., p. 114 and David Johnson's *Shakespeare and South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 78.
[14] David Johnson, p. 78.
[15] Ibid., p. 79.

The Celtic tendency in Shakespeare is related in more detail by Philip Edwards who describes the relationship between Shakespeare and Yeats in his argument that 'Yeats's Shakespeare is an honorary Celt'.[16] Edwards concentrates on the relationship between evaluations of Shakespeare and national separatism in the Ireland of the late nineteenth century. Recalling Matthew Arnold's division between the Celtic and Saxon as opposing factors in his essay 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', Yeats found more Celtic than Saxon spirit in Shakespeare.

Arnold argued that the Celtic nature, if it was to be characterised by a single term, should be defined as 'sentimental', adding that 'it may be seen in passionate, penetrating melancholy; but its essence is to aspire ardently after life, light, and emotion, to be expansive, adventurous, and gay.'[17] He defined the term 'sentimental' as '*always ready to react against the despotism of fact*'[18] and claimed that Celtic ineffectualness and failure were spiritually greater than the successfulness of Saxon materialism.[19] But as Edwards points out, Arnold's idea was criticised by John V. Kelleher. In his essay 'Matthew Arnold and the Celtic Revival', Kelleher argued that Arnold's knowledge of the spirit of Celtic literature was 'neither wide nor trustworthy', citing George Bernard Shaw's comment that 'every characteristic Arnold thought of as typically Celtic is typically English, and

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[16] Philip Edwards, *Threshold of A Nation: A Study in English and Irish Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 207.
[17] Matthew Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature' in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R.H. Super, III (New York: Ann Arbor, 1962), p. 343.
[18] Ibid., p. 344.
[19] Philip Edwards, p. 207.

of course, vice versa.' [20] Nonetheless Edwards argues that 'be that as it may, it was accepted that the Celtic spirit was utterly different from the Saxon spirit, and that the mark of the Celtic spirit was a simple, dreamy heroism of olden times doomed to defeat by its worldly, prosperous, practical modern foe.' [21] In his account, Yeats's interpretation of Shakespeare's historical plays in 'At Stratford-on-Avon' is based on the Arnoldian binary opposition of the spiritual and sensitive Celt, to the materialistic and successful Anglo-Saxon. Declan Kiberd also supports the same opinion in his *Inventing Ireland*. He offers a historical background to Yeats's reading of Shakespeare. He claims that at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the young Irish people read Shakespeare in order 'to explore, and explain, even to justify, themselves'.[22] He argues that 'in Yeats's reading, *Richard the Second* was, with Arnoldian infections, the story of England despoiling Ireland' and makes clear that 'his was a Celtic Shakespeare who loved Richard's doomed complexity and despised the usurper's basely political wiles.'[23]

Yet Yeats was driven by another political stimulus to support Shakespeare's interpretation of Richard II's life in addition to Celtic spirit: Professor Edward Dowden of Trinity College in Dublin. Dowden was a leader of the efficiency-worshipping literary critics of the Victorian age.

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[20] John V. Kelleher, in *Perspectives of Criticism*, ed. by Harry Levin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 205, 199. In the same essay Kelleher also argues that 'Yeats and his followers did not know much about Celtic literature, either.' Nonetheless he admits that Arnold's estimate of Celtic literature is influential and concludes that 'whether or not one agrees with his estimate of Celtic literature, one's own estimate is bound to be affected by his, as it is affected also by Yeats's.' pp. 205, 218.

[21] Philip Edwards, p. 207.

[22] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 265.

[23] Ibid., p. 269.

Above all he was a determined Unionist and disapproved of Irish cultural nationalism and disregarded Irish writing and the Gaelic movement.[24] He heroicised Bolingbroke and belittled Richard in his influential book, *Shakespeare: A Critical Study of his Mind and Art* (1875). This was first attacked by Yeats's father, who was Dowden's friend, but who later turned his back on him because of their differing opinions about their ideas of *Richard II*. Therefore Yeats's idea of *Richard II* expressed in his essay is a family one. He says that 'I think the best of these Essays is that on Shakespeare. It is a family exasperation with the Dowden point of view, which rather filled Dublin in my youth. There is a good deal of my father in it, though nothing is just as he would have put it.'[25] As such, Yeats's rereading of Shakespeare involved political and family antagonism against Dowden, and brought out an 'iconoclastic'[26] action which subverted a long established opinion in Dublin.

However, C.H. Herford's article on the Norwegian national theatre which Yeats reprinted in the very first number of *Beltaine, The Organ of the Irish Literary Theatre*, in May 1899, hints at the anticipation of Yeats's divorce from nationalism. The article was on Ibsen's eventual alienation from the nationalist cause:

> Nationalism in art is a cry of inspiring power in the early stages of artistic growth; it rallies the scattered forces of imagination, disciplines vagrant and chaotic enthusiasms, brings the neglected ore of tradition under an eager scrutiny which detects and disengages its hidden gold. But when all this is done, the artist who

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[24] For more information, see Terence Brown, 'Edward Dowden: Irish Victorian' in *Ireland's Literature* (Mullingar: Lilliput, 1988), pp. 29-48.
[25] W.B. Yeats, *Memoirs*, ed. by Donoghue (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 233, n. 3.
[26] Declan Kiberd, p. 269.

> has an individual message will impress his own meaning and his own *cachet* upon the instruments of expression which the fire of national enthusiasm has forged ready to his hand. The Shakespeare of *Richard III* and *Henry V* passed into the Shakespeare of *Hamlet* and *Lear*.

Edwards argues that Yeats knew beforehand of his own alienation, pointing out the fact that he chose the article for publication in 1899.[27] Yeats was capable of distinguishing national art from propaganda, and had aspired to a theatre appropriate to his idea of drama. He wrote in his letter to Lady Gregory (1919), which was published in 'The Irish Dramatic Movement: A People's Theatre':

> I want to create for myself an unpopular theatre and an audience like a secret society where admission is by favour and never to many [...] I desire a mysterious art, always reminding and half-reminding those who understand it of dearly loved things, doing its work by suggestion, not by direct statement, a complexity of rhythm, colour, gesture, not space-pervading like the intellect, but a memory and prophecy [...] I seek, not a theatre but the theatre's anti-self, an art that can appease all within us that becomes uneasy as the curtain falls and the house breaks into applause.[28]

In his note Yeats made clear that the title 'A People's Theatre' was not quite the same thing as 'A Popular Theatre'.[29] He explained the difference in a later part of the letter:

> The Popular Theatre should grow always more objective; more and more a reflection of the general mind; more and more a discovery of the simple emotions that make all men kin, clearing itself the while of sentimentality, the wreckage of an obsolete

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[27] Joep Leerssen argues that 'from 1905 onwards, Yeats became ever more obviously antinationalist'. See 'The theatre of William Butler Yeats' in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama*, ed. by Shaun Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 55.
[28] W.B. Yeats, *Explorations* (London: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 254-5, 7.
[29] Ibid., p. 244.

> popular culture, seeking always not to feel and to imagine but to understand and to see.[30]

Kiberd argues that what Yeats pursued was the archetypal art that transcends nationalism:

> Both Yeats and Synge were reaching back beyond the imperial mission to a pre-modern, carnivalesque vitality, to those elements which peoples shared before the fall into imperialism and nationalism – elements which survived in Shakespeare's plays, and which seemed to intersect, in suggestive ways, with the folk life of rural Ireland.[31]

Yeats's desire for a primitive art is revealed in his essay 'The Celtic Element in Literature'. He started with his approval of Arnold's analysis of Celtic characteristics, saying that Arnold more elaborately described the 'passion for Nature, this imaginativeness, this melancholy'[32] that Ernest Renan found as Celtic characteristics. However he argued that Renan and Arnold's argument should be restated.[33] From the 'passionate, turbulent reaction against the despotism of fact', which Arnold identified as the Celtic spirit, Yeats says, comes 'that melancholy which made all ancient peoples delight in tales that end in death and parting, as modern peoples delight in tales that end in marriage bells'.[34] But the melancholy is derived from man's encounter with Nature, his fate of being born and of dying. Yeats changes the word 'Celtic' into 'primitive', saying that 'Matthew

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[30] *Explorations*, p. 257.
[31] Declan Kiberd, p. 274.
[32] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 173.
[33] John V. Kelleher argues that Yeats 'disagreed with Arnold on perhaps the most important detail of Arnold's description of Celtic literature.' See 'Arnold and the Celtic Revival' in *Perspectives of Criticism*, p. 214.
[34] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 182.

Arnold quotes the lamentation of Llywarch Hen as a type of the Celtic melancholy, but I prefer to quote it as a type of the primitive melancholy.'[35]

There is another preference of Yeats for the word 'Celt':

> Matthew Arnold asks how much of the Celt must one imagine in the ideal man of genius. I prefer to say, how much of the ancient hunters and fishers and of the ecstatic dancers among hills and woods must one imagine in the ideal man of genius? Certainly a thirst for unbounded emotion and a wild melancholy are troublesome things in the world, and do not make its life more easy or orderly, but it may be the arts are founded on the life beyond the world, and that they must cry in the ears of our penury until the world has been consumed and become a vision.[36]

Yeats intended to universalise the Celtic spirit into the primitive, shared by all old folk literature. From this perspective, his inclination to the Celtic element is not so much the product of political tendency as his idea of art. Yeats argued that 'literature dwindles to a mere chronicle of circumstance, or passionless fantasies, and passionless meditations, unless it is constantly flooded with the passions and beliefs of ancient times'.[37] Yeats of course maintained the superior influence of the Celtic upon European literature: he claimed that Shakespeare's Mab and Puck are vestiges of Celtic legend in literature.

Nevertheless his artistic argument does not seem to be politically antagonistic to the Anglo-Saxon. Rather it transcends the Celtic superiority to the Saxon spirit and demonstrates the genius of the Celtic in the whole of Europe. His essay ends:

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[35] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 183.
[36] Ibid., p. 184.
[37] Ibid., p. 185.

> The arts by brooding upon their own intensity have become religious, and are seeking, as I think Verhaeren has said, to create a sacred book. They must, as religious thought has always done, utter themselves through legends; and the Slavonic and Finnish legends tell of strange woods and seas, and the Scandinavian legends are held by a great master, and tell also of strange woods and seas, and the Welsh legends are held by almost as many great masters as the Greek legends, while the Irish legends move among known woods and seas, and have so much of a new beauty that they may well give the opening century its most memorable symbols.[38]

Yeats's interest in Celtic legend focuses on the most memorable symbols it offers to his literature. In other words, his interest is in the art, but not in the political binary.

Yeats's regard for Shakespeare as a playwright is well demonstrated in Peter Ure's 'W.B. Yeats and the Shakespearian moment'. Ure concentrates on Yeats's experience of Shakespeare 'as a lens to bring into focus some portions of his dramatic theory', demonstrating 'how these relate to his accomplishments as a playwright'.[39] He summarises their relationship with his remark that 'Yeats uses Shakespeare as a stick with which to beat the naturalists in his long campaign against the naturalistic theatre.'[40] Ure's essay guided this thesis to focus upon the theatrical ideals shared by Shakespeare and Yeats. For the field of performance of Yeats's plays, Richard Allen Cave's 'Introduction' and 'Notes' to *W.B. Yeats: Selected Plays*[41] are invaluable. Leonard E. Nathan's *The Tragic Drama of William Bulter Yeats* offered a cognizance of the transition and development of

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[38] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 187.
[39] Peter Ure., p. 205.
[40] Ibid., p. 208.
[41] *W.B. Yeats: Selected Plays*, ed. by Richard Allen Cave (London: Penguin, 1997).

Yeats's plays. This thesis on Shakespeare's impact and influence upon Yeats emerged through these brilliant discoveries and arguments. However they serve only as a starting point to this thesis, lending a means by which to approach Shakespeare and Yeats's plays. Because there is considerable controversy in the analysis of Shakespeare, and because I am engaged, to a significant extent, in a study of Yeats's Shakespeare, I have attempted to assimilate from various sources a normative critical response to his plays against which Yeats's own plays can be compared. Nonetheless, important points of disagreement and their outcomes for the present thesis are acknowledged where necessary. The comparison of dramaturgy, theatrical device and setting which Shakespeare and Yeats share is a central part of this thesis. In addition there are some references to Yeats's poems where they assist our understanding of theoretical concerns of his that also impacted upon the dramatic work.

Chapters One and Two explore two crucial symbolic properties, the 'thresholds and masks' on which Yeats imposed significant symbolic meanings. The threshold is developed as an effective dramatic tool to symbolise the soul in a liminal state, while the mask functions as a concrete object to represent the Anti-Self. Both the threshold and the mask serve as dramatic techniques to embody the spiritual struggle that Yeats always sought to present on the stage. These chapters show how the symbolic tools are influenced by Shakespeare and employed in Shakespeare's plays, so that they indicate some ways in which both Shakespeare and Yeats may be regarded as symbolist playwrights. Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire* is

explored to show how Yeats incorporates the psychological conflict he witnessed in the graveside scene in *Hamlet* with the theatrical device of actual thresholds. *King Richard III* and *The Winter's Tale* are discussed as further evidence of actual and symbolic thresholds in Shakespeare. *Antony and Cleopatra* is compared with *Deirdre* to explore the two heroines' attitudes on the threshold of death. The idea of the Yeatisan mask and its system are explained through consideration of *Much Ado About Nothing*, *King Lear*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Hamlet* as well as *At the Hawk's Well* and *The Dreaming of the Bones*, in which Yeats used actual masks. Edgar in *King Lear* is distinguished as a figure well fitted to the system of Yeats's mask.

Chapter Three discusses the device of the play-within-a-play, which violates the realistic dramatist's major aim of achieving verisimilitude in the hope of persuading the audience that the illusion they are seeing is not an illusion. This chapter not only confirms the nature of Shakespeare and Yeats's symbolic tendencies through this device but also proves how flexible both Shakespeare and Yeats were in transforming the device according to their purposes. The ideas the two playwrights tried to deliver through the device are crucial elements of my discussion. A comparative analysis of *Hamlet* and *The Only Jealousy of Emer* is made to demonstrate that both Shakespeare and Yeats used the device as a tool for finding another self. *The Tempest* and *The Words upon the Window-Pane* are discussed to prove that the play-within-a-play is an effective device to present the supernatural on the stage.

Chapter Four surveys the two dramatists' use of interlocking dramatic devices, with particular reference to the correlation of subjectivity and objectivity. Respectively they represent the aspect of the moon, which creates 'vague, many-imaged things', and the nature of the sun, which produces 'simple unmysterious things'. Yeats explains the relationship between the sun and the moon as that between the main plot of a play and its subplot in his essay 'Emotion of Multitude'. I will explore this through a comparative analysis of *King Lear* and Yeats's *On Baile's Strand*. 'Shakespeare's Myth', posing subjective and objective men against one another, is also discussed in consideration of Yeats's claims for the superiority of subjectivity to objectivity. In drama it is manifested as the technique of placing two characters with opposing personalities against one another in an interlocking relationship of contrast. Yeats's view of Shakespeare's historical plays is discussed to prove the creation and mechanism of 'Shakespeare's Myth'. Yeats's argument for the superiority of subjectivity results in his use of the subjective figure, the Fool, who is fully explored in Chapter Five. The similarities and differences between Shakespeare's and Yeats's fools are given and their dramatic functions are discussed in an attempt at a redefinition of the fool. Yeats's fools as described in *The Hour-Glass* and *The Herne's Egg* are compared with Shakespeare's fools in *As You Like It, Twelfth Night* and *King Lear* to show how the fools in the plays prove themselves as 'the wisest of all'.

Chapter Six explores tragic joy, which is frequently discussed by critics when the influence of Shakespeare upon Yeats is dealt with. This chapter

discusses Shakespeare's and Yeats's views about death through exploring tragic joy and traces what tragic joy is, how it works in their plays, and how it is appreciated by the audience. The movement to death is explored through the cases of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra and Yeats's Deirdre, Congal and Cuchulain. Nietzsche's writings are discussed as an important source for Yeats's conceptualisation of tragic joy.

CHAPTER ONE

Souls Lingering on the 'Threshold of Sanctity'

1) The concept of the threshold

In his *Autobiographies*, Yeats offers his response to the graveside scene in *Hamlet*. He used the term 'threshold' in expressing Hamlet's psychological conflict:

> I felt in *Hamlet*, as so often in Shakespeare, that I am in the presence of a soul lingering on the storm-beaten threshold of sanctity. Has not that threshold always been terrible, even crime-haunted?[42]

Yeats's account of the grave scene gives an insight into his understanding of Hamlet's situation and suffering. He looks upon Hamlet as crossing the 'storm-beaten threshold of sanctity' in his pursuit of revenge. The term 'threshold' possessed quite a significant symbolic meaning for Yeats. The word is linked etymologically to the term 'liminal', which is drawn from the Latin *limen*, meaning a 'boundary or threshold'.

The word 'liminal' was used in the field of psychology in 1884 and the *OED* takes an example from James Sully's *Outlines of Psychology*:

> **1884** J. SULLY *Outlines Psychol.* v. 114 Every stimulus must reach a certain intensity before any appreciable sensation results. This point is known as the threshold or liminal intensity.

[42] *Autobiographies*, p. 521.

This idea used in the field of psychology was introduced to the area of anthropology in 1909 by Arnold van Gennep in his *Les Rites de Passage*.[43] He argues that a ritual, especially a rite of passage, is subdivided into three phases: 'preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation)'.[44] Liminality corresponds to the quality of the second phase of the ritual. Victor Turner, who is estimated as 'one of van Gennep's most influential interpreters',[45] depicts the liminal quality through the definition of the term *limen*:

> A *limen* is a threshold, but at least in the case of protracted initiation rites or major seasonal festivals, it is a very long threshold, a corridor almost, or a tunnel which may, indeed, become a pilgrim's road or passing from dynamics to statics, may cease to be a mere transition and become a set way of life, a state, that of the anchorite, or monk.[46]

Turner defines the state and process of mid-transition as "liminality" and those undergoing it as "liminaries". He explains their transitional state:

> [liminaries] are betwixt-and-between established states of political-jural structure. They evade ordinary cognitive classification, too, for they are neither-this-nor-that, here-nor-there, one-thing-not-the-other.[47]

As such, liminality accompanies the 'symbolic domain'[48] of an ambiguous or unsettled state. Richard Allen Cave argues that liminality is a prime subject of the symbolist dramatists and points out that Yeats was in part

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[43] Arnold van Gennep's *Les Rites de Passage* was translated into English by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee as *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960).
[44] Ibid., p. 11.
[45] Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre: Performance and liminality in early modern drama* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 39.
[46] Victor Turner, 'Variations on a Theme of Liminality' in *Secular Ritual*, eds. by Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff (The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1977), p. 37.
[47] Ibid., p. 37.
[48] Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 232.

influenced by Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian symbolist playwright, who used doors as symbolic tools.[49]

Yeats as a symbolist dramatist employed actual thresholds such as doorways and window-pieces on the stage in his early plays. His focus on the threshold reminded the audience of the fact that beyond it a different world from the realistic one might exist. The different world could be a 'supernatural', 'metaphysical' or 'mysterious' one. As Cave argues, this association with the mysterious contrasts Irish culture with that of colonial England by identifying the former with the otherworldly, mystical and spiritual.[50] The heterogeneous world invades into this world through a door a little ajar, inevitably resulting in a liminal conflict. This process of invasion will be explored through *The Land of Heart's Desire*, one of Yeats's early plays.

As recently as 2004, Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann published a book, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre: Performance and liminaltiy in early modern drama* on the concept of liminality in Shakespeare. In this study they explore how prologues function as thresholds. They argue that

> In ushering between stage and audience the prologue inhabited and defined a *threshold*, a liminal space between the actual and the poetical that characterised the 'playing holidays' (*1 Henry IV* [1597], 1.2.204) of dramatic fiction in the early modern playhouse. At the outset of dramatic performances, the prologue ushered its early modern audience over an imaginary threshold – a threshold both of and for the imagination as well as

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[49] Richard Allen Cave, 'On the siting of doors and windows: aesthetics, ideology and Irish stage design' in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama*, p. 97.
[50] Ibid., p. 99.

> one both of and for the specifically dramatic, theatrical uses of the 'wooden O'. [51]

The prologue functions as a threshold and also serves to lead the audience to cross 'an imaginary threshold' to the world of the play. This idea offers a fresh perspective by means of which Shakespeare's plays can be reanalysed. In addition to prologues, Shakespeare used a variety of dramatic techniques relating to the effect of the threshold. I will demonstrate this through an analysis of *King Richard III*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Winter's Tale*.

2) Thresholds between worlds

The Land of Heart's Desire (1894) effectively reproduces the tension between early Christian life and a mysterious pagan world by means of a threshold in spite of its seemingly realistic setting. It presents a peasant cottage with a table and hearth and a little decoration. But it transpires that realistic decorations such as a crucifix on the wall and a bough of quicken-wood at the open door incorporate symbolic significances. They represent heterogeneous worlds: that is, the crucifix represents the preoccupations of Christianity and, particularly here, dull Christian life, demanding strict duty and responsibility. 'The quicken-wood' is, on the other hand, a bough of mountain ash which Mary hangs upon the door post according to ancient custom to bring good luck to the household, and represents pagan images which contrast with the Christian crucifix. The quicken wood is taken away

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[51] Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, p. 37.

by 'a girl child strangely dressed, dressed, perhaps in faery green',[52] coming out of the wood. The Faery child represents the pagan world 'outside the realm of orthodoxy'.[53] To put it another way, the two worlds embody 'the opposing "philosophic" positions of the play'.[54] This pagan world is approaching Mary and the collision of the two worlds is expected. As such, the two pieces of decorations symbolically suggest the major theme of the play.

However, it is the very doorway as metaphysical threshold that highlights the two opposing worlds and leads the audience to recognise the difference between the two. The stage direction says:

> *There is an open door facing the audience to the left, and to the left of this a bench. Through the door one can see the forest. It is night, but the moon or a late sunset glimmers through the trees and carries the eye far off into a vague, mysterious world.*[55]

Through the open door, 'the forest' can be seen and with the help of the moon or a late sunset glimmering through the tree, a 'vague, mysterious world' is created. This stage construction helps the audience to realise that the world outside the threshold is different from the realistic world on the stage. In other words, the world within the threshold presents an objective and practical world, whereas the world outside the threshold is the fairyland. The world is the

Land of Heart's Desire,

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[52] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1960), p. 186. All future references to Yeats's plays will be to this edition, citing line number parenthetically.
[53] Leonard E. Nathan, p. 36.
[54] Ibid., p. 36. Nathan actually argues that Father Hart and the Faery Child embody the opposing "philosophic" positions of the play: he, the responsible man of staid orthodoxy and she, the wild, irresponsible creature of a power outside the realm of orthodoxy.
[55] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 180.

> Where beauty has no ebb, decay no flood,
> But joy is wisdom, time an endless song. (373-5)

The world outside the threshold is a fantastic fairyland which contrasts with Mary's realistic life. As such, two different worlds are economically described on the stage by using the symbolic tool, thresholds.

In *Samhain:1904* (First Principles), Yeats argues that 'we have no longer in any country a literature as great as the literature of the old world because the newspapers, all kinds of second-rate books, the preoccupation of men with all kinds of practical changes, have driven the living imagination out of the world'.[56] He takes the setting of *King Richard III* as an example of the literature of the old world which stirs our imagination: 'Who today could set Richmond's and Richard's tents side by side on the battlefield [?]'[57] He adds that 'the old writers were content if their inventions had but an emotional and moral consistency, and created out of themselves a fantastic, energetic, extravagant art'.[58] He again mentions the tent setting in *Discoveries* and this time with more confidence:

> I always find it quite natural, so little does logic in the mere circumstance matter in the finest art, that Richard's and Richmond's tents should be side by side.[59]

Peter Ure argues that Yeats used this setting as 'the same example of Shakespeare's bold use of convention and disregard of the timider realisms.'[60] But, as he points out,[61] F.R. Benson did not pitch the tents side

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[56] *Explorations*, p. 148.
[57] Ibid., p. 149.
[58] Ibid., p. 150.
[59] Ibid., p. 280.
[60] Peter Ure, 'W.B. Yeats and the Shakespearian moment' in *Yeats and Anglo-Irish Literature*, p. 209.

by side in his production at Stratford in 1901, which functioned as a crucial stimulus to Yeats's creation of the essay 'At Stratford-on-Avon'. Yeats comments on Benson's setting in the essay:

> Mr. Benson did not venture to play the scene in *Richard III* where the ghosts walk as Shakespeare wrote it, but had his scenery been as simple as Mr. Gordon Craig's purple back-cloth that made Dido and Aeneas seem wandering on the edge of eternity, he would have found nothing absurd in pitching the tents of Richard and Richmond side by side. Goethe has said, 'Art is art, because it is not natural!' It brings us near to the archetypal idea themselves, and away from nature, which is but their looking-glass. [62]

Shakespeare's dramaturgy brings the threshold Yeats normally places at the sides of the stage in the form of doors and windows to the middle of the stage. The space between the two tents serves as a physical threshold with the result that two contrasting situations are presented over the line of demarcation. At the battle scene (5.3) of *Richard III*, [63] according to Richard's command 'Here pitch our tent, even here in Bosworth field' (5.3.1), his followers raise his tent. But in practice his tent is '*on one side of the stage*'. Following Richard who exits to 'survey the vantage of the ground' (15) after his tent is ready, Richmond enters and his tent is pitched '*on the other side of the stage*'. Thus the two tents whose leaders will fight against each other the following morning are situated side by side.

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[61] Peter Ure mentions the ironic fact and concludes that 'Yeats was looking at the text, not as what he actually saw on the still unreformed stage.' See 'W.B. Yeats and the Shakespearian moment', p. 209.

[62] *Essays and Introductions*, pp. 101-2.

[63] William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. by Antony Hammond (London: Methuen, 1981). All future references will be to this edition, citing line Act, scene and line numbers parenthetically.

The two tents symbolise not only two different characters but also two opposing worlds. Richard is a destroying tyrant, whereas Richmond is an ideal king. As E.M.W. Tillyard argues, the two dramatic personae function as symbolic figures who represent 'the forces of heaven' and those of hell respectively.[64] These contrasting aspects are distinguished by the shifting of perspective back and forth over the threshold between the two tents. Both the leaders are preparing for the next day's battle, but their attitudes are different. Richard is nervous, impatient and alone even though he is in power. On the other hand Richmond is gracious, friendly and loved.

The ghosts of those Richard has murdered stress the striking heterogeneity of the two leaders' futures. When Richard and Richmond sleep in their respective tents, the eleven 'souls whose bodies Richard murder'd' (231) come across the stage. They give Richard 'a fearful dream' (213), whereas Richmond has 'The sweetest sleep and fairest-boding dreams' (228). Each ghost condemns Richard bitterly for his or her death, tells him that he will be killed in battle the next morning, and cast out the curse, 'despair and die' (127). The ghosts then move away and speak to the sleeping Richmond, telling him that they are on Richmond's side and that Richmond will rule England and will be the father of a race of kings. They promise Richmond will 'Live and flourish' (131). As a result of placing two tents side by side on stage the contrast between Richard's and Richmond's tents is vividly presented. Richard's tent symbolises 'hell', 'despair' and 'death', while Richmond's represents 'heaven', 'life' and 'flourishing'.

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[64] E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1944), p. 214.

The dramatic division effectively produces two conflicting worlds. But the heroes in the two worlds neither cross the threshold nor linger around it even though the eleven ghosts serve to lead the audience across the threshold. A comparable liminal state is found in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* in which Antony's conflict is expressed by means of two symbolic places: Rome and Egypt. Maurice Charney identifies the two places as 'symbolic locales' which 'represent crucial moral choices'.[65] Rome, expressed mainly by Caesar, symbolises Antony's part as a political warrior, while Egypt, represented by Cleopatra, represents Antony's part as a sensual lover. As such, Rome and Egypt function as two conflicting options one of which Antony is forced to choose at the cost of the other.

The dramatic construction of constant shifts of location heightens Antony's liminal state. In Alexandria, Antony feels guilty about neglecting his political obligations and struggles to escape Cleopatra's magnetism: 'These strong Egyptian fetters I must break, / Or lose myself in dotage' (1.2.113-4).[66] But in Rome, where he chooses to meet his public duty (repudiating the sensual Egyptian side), he is not satisfied because, even though he recovers the Roman side of his nature, the other side of his nature is denied. He cannot be happy in either place because the two locales symbolise two aspects of Antony's identity. He is wandering between the two opposing aspects. In the process, Antony, who 'Was borne so like a soldier' (1.4.71), loses his heroic aspect as a descendent of Hercules. Anne Barton describes

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[65] Maurice Charney, *Shakespeare's Roman Plays* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 93.

[66] William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. by John Wilders (London: Arden, 2005), p. 30. All future references will be to this edition, citing Act, scene and line numbers parenthetically.

Antony's dilemma in terms of the journey between Rome and Egypt:

> The entire tragedy, after all, has been focussed on Antony far more than Cleopatra. He has been the character standing, like his ancestor Heracles, at the cross-roads, with an important decision to make. The journeys have been his, while she remained in Egypt, and these journeys have not been simply geographical, but the forays of a divided mind. Rome or Egypt, virtue or vice, the active life or one of pleasure, the Antony of the past or the sybarite of the present: between these antinomies his mind has swung, and the movement has to a large extent been the movement of the play.[67]

Antony's liminal situation parallels that of Mary in *The Land of Heart's Desire*, where she is compelled to choose between two different worlds. While lingering on the threshold, Mary cannot settle down in her reality and her unstable state is revealed by her relationships with other characters on the stage. In the first part of the play, while the others, Maurteen, Shawn, Bridget and Father Hart, sit together around the table, Mary stands alone by the door:

> *Maurteen Bruin, Shawn Bruin, and Bridget Bruin sit in the alcove at the table or about the fire [...] and near them sits an old priest, Father Hart [...] Mary Bruin stands by the door reading a book. If she looks up she can see through the door into the wood.* [68]

This arrangement indicates that Mary does not belong to their physical world completely. The fact that she is reading a book designates the emergence of her imagination into consciousness.[69] This recalls Hamlet, who enters reading when he is in the process of deciding whether or not to

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[67] Anne Barton, *Essays, Mainly Shakespearean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 122.
[68] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, pp. 180-1.
[69] Barton R. Friedman suggests that the book functions as 'an entrée into the imagination'. See *Adventures in the Deeps of the Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 20.

avenge his father: ('But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading' (2.2.168)).[70] In other words, it is the act of reading that isolates Mary from her family because she is absorbed in the world of imagination that the book guides. That is, she is preparing to advance into a world different from her current reality. To Mary, it is a fairyland and to Hamlet, his revenge. The book is an instrument by which they glimpse other worlds beyond the threshold that they will eventually reach. Reading is also the heroes' trial or preparation for passing the threshold. Therefore reading is a symbolic tool to represent the liminal states of Hamlet and Mary.

Like Mary, Perdita, the young heroine of *The Winter's Tale*, is a liminal character. Perdita is distinguished as a crucial figure who collapses the line of demarcation which divides two different worlds. *The Winter's Tale* is abundant in imaginary thresholds between opposing worlds, even though it does not employ visible thresholds like doors and windowpieces. First of all, there is a structural threshold between a tragic winter in a Sicilian palace and a comic spring in pastoral Bohemia. In the first part of the play, the dreary tragedy caused by Leontes' violent jealousy wields its power relentlessly, whereas the warm comedy produced by pastoral people preparing for the sheep-shearing feast is a central feature of Bohemia as portrayed in the rest of the play before the last act. As such, the atmosphere of Leontes' palace in the earlier part of the play clearly contrasts with rural Bohemia.

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[70] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Harold Jenkins (London: Arden, 1982). All future references will be to this edition, citing Act, scene, and line numbers parenthetically.

In addition to this threshold, the play involves other thresholds. There is a generational threshold between the adult world of Leontes, Hermione and Polixenes and the young generation of Perdita and Florizel; a threshold of social status in the contrast between the royal family and the pastoral people; and an artistic threshold of the personified Time. Furthermore, the 'Delphic Oracle' who announces Leontes' guilt and predicts his future is an example of a spiritual threshold with the false ghost of Hermione in Antigonus' dream. These thresholds serve to divide or distinguish two opposing worlds.

More importantly, there is a specific scene in the play marking the point of structural threshold on which Shakespeare focuses the transition from winter to spring. It occurs in Act 3, scene 3, where conflicting features are revealed in succession with the result that one factor overlaps with another and is in turn moved into a new world. In the Sicilia of the first part of the play, Leontes' murderous jealousy destroys all human relationships: his friendship with Polixenes, his marital relationship with Hermione and his paternity of an infant baby. To make matters worse, Leontes' evil causes his son, Mamillius' death, even though it is unintended. All living organisms seem to die. As a matter of fact, and contrary to Paulina's announcement, Hermione does not die and the lost infant is found. But, regardless of the truth, until the second scene of Act 3, Leontes and the audience believe that Hermione is dead and it seems impossible that the lost baby might be restored. According to the Oracle, Leontes shall 'live

without an heir, if that which is lost be not found' (3.2.135).[71] Therefore the play is possessed with a tragic mood generated by a royal adult's evil. Paulina defines Leontes' world:

> O thou tyrant!
> Do not repent these things, for they are heavier
> Than all thy woes can stir: therefore betake thee
> To nothing but despair. A thousand knees
> Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,
> Upon a barren mountain, and still winter
> In storm perpetual, could not move the gods
> To look that way thou wert. (3.2.207-13)

The location of the following scene is, on the other hand, on the coast of Bohemia instead of Sicilia. But Antigonus, known from the Sicilian scenes, still appears with one of the mariners to desert the newly born baby on Leontes' order. Before he leaves the baby, he talks about his dream of Hermione, who says:

> Good Antigonus,
> Since fate, against thy better disposition,
> Hath made thy person for the thrower-out
> Of my poor babe, according to thine oath,
> Places remotes enough are in Bohemia,
> There weep, and leave it crying: and, for the babe
> Is counted lost for ever, Perdita,
> I prithee, call't. For this ungentle business,
> Put on thee by my lord, thou ne'er shalt see
> Thy wife Paulina more. (3.3.27-36)

According to Carol Thomas Neely, in Antigonus' dream vision Hermione 'narrates the conclusion of the first part of the play'.[72] Antigonus misunderstands his dream as evidence of Hermione's guilt and death: 'I do

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[71] William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, ed. by J.H.P. Pafford (London: Arden, 2005). All future references will be to this edition, citing Act, scene and line numbers parenthetically.

[72] Carol Thomas Neely, "*The Winter's Tale*: Women and Issue" in *Shakespeare: The Last Plays*, ed. by Kiernan Ryan (London: Longman, 1999), p. 175.

believe / Hermione hath suffer'd death' (3.3.41-2). Hermione, the direct victim of Leontes' evil, dies in Antigonus' sight, and Antigonus himself, who was involved with 'the thrower-out / Of my poor babe', is killed by the bear pursuing him. This is the apparent conclusion to Leontes' winter story.

However, as soon as Antigonus exits pursued by the bear, the old Shepherd appears in a contrasting way to the 'strained, impossible world'[73] formed by Antigonus' vision of Hermione ('with shrieks, / She melted into air' (3.3.36-7)). The Shepherd's first lines represent common humanity:

> I would there were no age between ten and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting[.] (3.3.59-63)

There is a considerable distance between Antigonus' vision and the Shepherd's common life. It is the bear pursuing Antigonus that links the two far-fetched worlds.[74] Shakespeare's dramatic skill shows the transition from winter to spring. E.M.W. Tillyard argues that this abrupt transition is an important technique used to throw 'a bridge across the two halves of the play'.[75] In this sense, it can be said that the scene in Act 3 is set on the threshold of two worlds. In other words, the scene functions, like Yeats's

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[73] E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Last Plays* (London: Chotto and Windus, 1938), p. 77.
[74] Nevill Coghill provides a similar opinion of this scene, especially emphasising the function of the bear: 'the terrible and the grotesque come near to each other in a *frisson* of horror instantly succeeded by a shout of laughter; and so this bear, this unique and perfect link between the two halves of the play, slips into place and holds.' See "Six Points of Stage-craft in *The Winter's Tale*," in *Shakespeare Survey*, 11 (1958), p. 35.
[75] E.M.W. Tillyard claims that 'it is worth noting, in parenthesis, that the above abrupt transition not only expresses the sense of different worlds but has an important technical work to do, that of throwing a bridge across the two halves of the play.' See *Shakespeare's Last Plays*, p. 77. Robert Grams Hunter also defines the incident as 'a shifting of dramatic gears'. See *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965). As such, it becomes clearer that Shakespeare uses this scene as a structural threshold.

doorways or windowpieces, as a threshold. The world beyond this structural threshold is quite different from that before it. This is emphasised in the Shepherd's lines: 'thou met'st with things / dying, I with things new-born' (3.3.112-3). While the Shepherd finds the deserted infant Perdita, the Clown, his son, sees Antigonus being eaten by the bear inland and the mariners shipwrecked at sea. Leontes' winter withdraws with Antigonus' death and a warm spring comes with Perdita. The dramaturgy makes it seem natural that recreation should be presented after destruction in the country scene.

Hence the country setting is 'the cleanest and most elegant symbol of new life'.[76] But, despite the symbolic significance of the pastoral, Shakespeare does not present a pastoral realm wholly cut off from the world before the threshold. Rather it has some relation with the world over the threshold. The threshold serves to highlight the connections between the two worlds as much as it identifies what sets them apart. For instance, pastoral Bohemia conceives old horrors transmuted. In particular, Autolycus' song reveals that there are many hangovers from Sicilia in Bohemia:

> *When daffodils begin to peer,*
> *With heigh! the doxy over the dale,*
> *Why then comes in the sweet o' the year,*
> *For the red blood reigns in the winter's pale.* (4.3.1-4)

'Red blood' represents Leontes' tyranny which converts Sicilia into 'pale' winter. His song recapitulates the tragic past. The 'doxy' in the song is 'rogues' slang for 'a female beggar or beggar's woman'[77] and 'my aunt' is

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[76] E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Last Plays*, p. 43.
[77] *The Winter's Tale*, p. 80.

a whore.[78] Kenneth Muir claims that the song does not ignore 'the seamy side of life'.[79] More concrete evidence shows that the whore in the play is Hermione because she is a whore to Leontes irrespective of the truth: 'My wife's a hobby-horse ['loose woman']' (1.2.276).[80] It also implies Perdita since to Polixenes she is a whore enticing his son: 'the angle that plucks our son thither' (4.2.47). The 'red blood' begun by Leontes still 'reigns' even in this pastoral setting. Moreover, according to Carol Thomas Neely, Autolycus functions 'as [the] parodic double of Leontes'.[81] He is a rogue who cozens others out of their money even though his role is changed into a comic one. In other words, he is a comic tyrant in the pastoral scene and thus it can be said that the pastoral scene reflects the tragedy of Sicilia.

The vestiges of the cold winter are also found in Perdita, who symbolises spring. In the play Perdita is dressed like the goddess Flora, though her festive garb is worn for the sheep-shearing feast. Florizel describes her attire:

> These your unusual weeds, to each part of you
> Do give a life: no shepherdess, but Flora
> Peering in April's front. This your sheep-shearing
> Is as a meeting of the petty gods,
> And you the queen on 't. (4.4.1-5)

'Flora is the Roman equivalent of the Queen of the May'[82] with the consequence that Perdita symbolises Spring. When she comes to Leontes' palace with Florizel in Act 5, scene 1, Leontes says 'Welcome hither, / As

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[78] See Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Comic Sequence* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1979), p.174.
[79] Ibid., p. 174.
[80] *The Winter's Tale*, pp. 20-1.
[81] Carol Thomas Neely, p. 180.
[82] Kenneth Muir, p. 174.

is the spring to th' earth' (5.1.150-1). Nevertheless she delivers the characteristics of cold winter as well. In distributing flowers to others, she mentions not only 'some flowers o' th' spring' (4.4.113) but also 'blasts of January' (4.4.111) and 'pale primroses / That die unmarried' (4.4.122-3). She suggests that love is closely associated with death:

> No, like a bank, for love to lie and play on:
> Not like a corpse; or if – not to be buried,
> But quick, and in mine arms (4.4.130-2)

These lines refer to the custom of strewing both bridal bed and graves with flowers.[83] This signifies that Perdita is not a simple heroine of romance but a mature figure who knows the dark side of life.

Yet, in spite of her darker aspects, Perdita functions as a figure who eventually melts the snows of winter. She is a regained daughter as well as a lost infant with the result that Leontes' sterility is transformed into fertility (the Oracle predicts that Leontes shall live without an heir, if he cannot find Perdita). Perdita is not only a shepherdess but also a princess. She has two social statuses at the same time. By her duality, the shepherd and his son come to be joined with the royal family:

> I was a gentleman born before my father; for the king's son took me by the hand, and called me brother; and then the two kings called my father brother; and then the princess, my sister, called my father father; and so we wept; and there was the first gentleman-like tears that ever we shed. (5.2.139-45)

In this respect, Perdita inhabits the boundary between the two social positions. Furthermore, Perdita converts Hermione's status as a work of art

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[83] See note to the lines, 'there was a custom of strewing the bridal bed with flowers as well as the grave' (*Hamlet*, 5.1.239-40). *The Winter's Tale*, p. 97.

into a human one because it is the very hope of Perdita's recovery that makes her continue to live for sixteen years: 'I / Knowing by Paulina that the Oracle / Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserv'd / Myself to see the issue' (5.3.126-8) and now she knows of Perdita's restoration. It is time for her to throw away the statue and start a new life as a real person. The theme of the play, that things which now seem dead may yet come back to life, is concentrated on Hermione in this scene.

In addition to the significant role which destroys the wall between the two different worlds, Perdita performs the part of liminary. Above all her distinctive beauty and elegant airs distinguish her in the pastoral community. When Polixenes sees Perdita, he says:

> This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever
> Ran on the green-sward: nothing she does or seems
> But smacks of something greater than herself,
> Too noble for this place. (4.4.156-9)

Perdita's unusual beauty and nobility alienate her from the other pastorals just as Mary is distinguished by her imagination, which drives her to pass the threshold into a mysterious world. Perdita's abnormal dignity anticipates the recovery of her real identity because her appearing 'too noble for this place' is a consequence of her real identity. According to Bertrand Evans, Perdita touches her real identity in ignorance:[84] 'Methinks I play as I have seen them do / In Whitsun pastorals: sure this robe of mine / Does change my disposition' (4.4.133-5). Perdita thinks that she is simply playing the part of queen, but ironically she is playing her true role. Her dignity cannot be hidden in spite of her ignorance of her real status. It is her

[84] Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960), p. 301.

uniqueness that restores her royal status beyond the threshold of her pastoral position.

Unlike Perdita, whose uniqueness sets her apart in a positive way, Mary's abnormal behaviour provokes the other characters to conflict. Bridget, her mother-in-law, complains about Mary's neglect of her duties as a housewife. The other characters try to protect Mary from Bridget's bitter tongue. However, they do not understand Mary's situation either, and try to give her comfort from their own points of view. Maurteen, who is a typical peasant and puts value only upon the material comforts his labour has obtained, appeases Mary with his wealth:

> Come, sit beside me, colleen,
> And put away your dreams of discontent,
> For I would have you light up my last days,
> Like the good glow of the turf; and when I die
> You'll be the wealthiest hereabout, for, colleen,
> I have a stocking full of yellow guineas
> Hidden away where nobody can find it. (137-42)

Maurteen tries to make Mary sit beside others at the fire, promising his 'stocking full of yellow guineas' because he believes his worldly success can secure 'the best of life' (160). Father Hart thinks that Mary's reading fills her head with 'foolish dreams' (43) and says that the tale of Princess Edain in fairyland is by 'some wrecked angel' disturbing 'God's peace':

> Put it away, my colleen;
> [...]
> For it was some wrecked angel, blind with tears,
> Who flattered Edain's heart with merry words. (60, 66-7)

In a sense, Father Hart's remark is accurate because it is certain that the book stirs Mary's imagination and results in her isolation from her real life in the same way that the revelation of the Ghost shook Hamlet.

Nonetheless, it is not easy to identify the nature of the Ghost in *Hamlet* because, depending on the point of view taken, opposing interpretations are possible. For example, from the point of view of Christianity, Old Hamlet's ghost is 'Th'extravagant and erring spirit [that] hies / To his confine' (1.1.155-6) on the crowing of the cock. He is 'Doomed for a certain term to walk the night, / And for the day confined to fast in fires, / Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature /Are burnt and purged away' (1.5.10-3). For this reason, it is difficult to judge that the revelation of the ghost is good. Above all, the prescription of revenge is against the Christian imperative to forbid private vengeance ('Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord'), so that the ghost can be defined as a dark spirit. However, despite this fact, there are contrasting interpretations in the play. According to the conversation between Marcellus and Horatio, the ghost is sent by Heaven because 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark' (1.4.90). Moreover, after being informed of his uncle's villainy by the ghost, Hamlet calls the ghost 'host of heaven' (1.5.92) because the ghost reveals the truth of what has happened in the play and demands rectification of a tainted world. A.C. Bradley argues:

> He [the Ghost of old Hamlet] is no apparition but the representative of that hidden ultimate power, the messenger of divine justice set upon the expiation of offence which it appeared impossible for a man to discover and avenge, a reminder or a symbol of the connexion of the limited world of ordinary experience with the vaster life of which it is but a partial appearance.[85]

From this perspective, the spirit is good in nature with a basic quality of his great majesty. Nevertheless, it is also true that the ghost triggers the painful

[85] A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1904), p. 22.

suffering in Hamlet that will eventually result in his death. At the beginning of his encounter with the spirit, Hamlet believed the ghost was 'my prophetic soul' (1.5.40) because it exposed an already suspected truth. But soon he realises that the revelation will be an enormous burden: ('O, cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!' (1.5.188-9)) and while delaying his duty of revenge, he wonders whether 'The spirit that I have seen / May be a devil' (2.2.597-8). G. Wilson Knight identifies the spirit as 'the devil of the knowledge of death, which possesses Hamlet and drives him from misery and pain to increasing bitterness, cynicism, murder, and madness'.[86] In this respect, the ghost is a 'wrecked angel' who shatters a person's serene life.

Father Hart as well as Maurteen thinks that if Mary stops reading, she can live a normal life and that time will help her, a new-married bride, to adjust:

> My colleen, I have seen some other girls
> Restless and ill at ease, but years went by
> And they grew like their neighbours and were glad
> In minding children, working at the churn,
> And gossiping of weddings and of wakes;
> (For life moves out of a red flare of dreams
> Into a common light of common hours,
> Until old age bring the red flare again.) (68-75)

Mary's choice is between childish innocence and adult responsibility, and in this respect the play is also about this rite of passage. Father Hart suggests to Mary a common housewife's life: looking after children and

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[86] G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (London: Methuen, 1930), p. 39. Derek Traversi also has the same idea, saying that 'The Ghost, in fact, acts upon Hamlet as a disturbing influence, imposing upon him a clear-cut filial obligation, to which all that is positive in his being responds, at the same time that it confirms the presence around him of sinister realities which he feels, even as he repudiates them, to be obscurely related to stresses in his own nature. In this way, far from leading to resolution through the action proposed by the original story, its message plunges the hero and his surroundings into obscurity and doubt. See *An Approach to Shakespeare* 2 (London: Hollis & Carter, 1969), p. 45.

'working at the churn'. Father Hart forces Mary to live as a common housewife but she cannot lead such a life because it is not what her heart desires. Here we are reminded of the fact that Perdita, 'The queen of curds of cream' (4.4.161) is finally transformed into the only heir of the Sicilian palace in spite of the sixteen years during which she lived as a shepherdess.

Contrary to other characters, Shawn seems to understand Mary's unusual nature: 'Do not blame me; I often lie awake / Thinking that all things trouble your bright head' (197-8), but his love is for Mary's physical body and youth:

> How beautiful it is – your broad pale forehead
> Under a cloudy blossoming of hair!
> Sit down beside me here – these are too old,
> And have forgotten they were ever young. (199-202)

In addition, his love is not strong enough to offer Mary freedom. Mary, impressed by Shawn's love, '*would put her arms about him, but looks shyly at the priest and lets her arms fall*'.[87] The world Shawn offers does not allow Mary's freedom. She cannot hug her husband without reserve in the house. Shawn is also at the mercy of the preoccupations of Christianity, like the others, so that he says to Mary 'the indissoluble sacrament / Has mixed your heart that was most proud and cold / With my heart for ever' (226-8). Though he pretends to understand Mary's dreams, he regards Mary's heart as 'most proud and cold'.

Shawn may be compared with Florizel. As Shawn adores Mary, so Florizel does Perdita:

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[87] *The Variorum Edition of the Play of W.B. Yeats*, p. 193.

What you do,
Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,
I'd have you do it ever: when you sing,
I'd have you buy and sell so, so give alms,
Pray so, and, for the ord'ring your affairs,
To sing them too: when you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' th' sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that, move still, still so,
And own no other function. Each your doing,
So singular in each particular,
Crowns what you are doing, in the present deeds,
That all your acts are queens. (4.4.135-46)

Shawn loves Mary's appearance (her forehead and hair). Similarly Florizel focuses on Perdita's external behaviour. Shawn does not understand Mary's imaginative world and Florizel does not recognize Perdita's real identity even though he has a glimpse of it. Yet, compared with Shawn, Florizel is a more potent figure. Florizel offers positive confidence to Perdita who worries about their difference of rank: ('Apprehend / Nothing but jollity. The gods themselves, / Humbling their deities to love, have taken / The shapes of beasts upon them' (4.4.24-7)). Florizel is also willing to desert his status as 'a sceptre's heir' (4.4.420) in order to choose Perdita. As a matter of fact, it is Florizel's decision that takes Perdita to her home in Sicilia: Perdita does not show any initiative herself in the formation of the decision. Florizel's resolute and brave attitude contrasts with Shawn's. Nonetheless both of them are instrumental figures to stand against the two heroines. Perdita's beauty is proved by Florizel whose chivalry and self-sacrifice are crucial factors in the preservation of their love. As Tillyard points out, compared with Perdita, he is 'a rather flat character'.[88] Shawn is also a typical figure who does not doubt his Christian life in spite of its monotony,

[88] E.M.W. Tillyard argues that 'Florizel, who is kept a rather flat character the more to show up Perdita, one would call a type rather a symbol'. See *Shakespeare's Last plays*, p. 44.

and it seems to be natural that imaginative Mary cannot be satisfied with her relationship with him. In this sense, Shawn is a supporting figure to emphasise Mary's unusual personality. Like Bridget, who represents 'A tongue that is more bitter than the tide' (194), Maurteen's 'tongue that is too crafty and too wise' (192) and Father Hart's 'tongue that is too godly and too grave' (193), Shawn presents 'a kind tongue too full of drowsy love, / Of drowsy love and [her] captivity' (195-6). As a result Mary longs for the supernatural world where she hopes she can achieve self-fulfilment.

Mary, who is in a liminal state, steadfastly pays more attention to the world outside the threshold. She gives away milk to somebody outside beckoning her and offers fire to 'a little queer old man' (167) [one of the people of fairyland] in spite of the other folk's belief that such behaviour, especially on May Eve, will bring evil on the house which gives milk and fire. The other characters continue to display some remnants of pagan belief, in spite of their Christianity, but in them the belief is misplaced, and manifested primarily as superstition and fear. In contrast Mary has an unquestioning faith during her supernatural encounters. Her attitude provokes the others, in particular Bridget, who says, 'She is not a fitting wife for any man' (175). Mary's conflict with the others becomes more and more aggravated, and finally it proves impossible for Mary to continue living in the physical world. She says:

> Come, faeries, take me out of this dull house!
> Let me have all the freedom I have lost;
> Work when I will and idle when I will!
> Faeries, come take me out of this dull world,
> For I would ride with you upon the wind, (183-7)

When the antagonism reaches its climax, a voice singing in the wood is heard. This song alleviates the others' fear of the mysterious world opposing their Christian life. Maurteen brings in the Faery Child, hoping she will make all others as happy as she makes him. The Child steadily and coaxingly gains control of the entire stage-space. She lets the cross-grained Bridget offer 'milk' and 'fire', and Father Hart take the crucifix from the wall, which is 'the last vestige of safety or protection'.[89] The Child arranges everything to place the house in her power and at last reveals her actual nature.

The Faery Child has some resemblance to Perdita. Both of them are 'changelings' and inhabit a pastoral setting: Perdita is a country maiden and The Child is 'of the faery people' (348), one of whom is 'Princess Edain' who on a May Eve, went to the Land of Faery and is 'still there, busied with a dance / Deep in the dew shadow of a wood' (52-3). This has a similarity with Florizel's reaction to Perdita's dancing: 'when you dance, I wish you / A wave o' th' sea. That you might ever do / Nothing but that,' (4.4.40-2). Florizel pictures Perdita's dancing as part of nature, and therefore perpetual, like the dance of Princess Edain. Like Perdita, the daughter of the king of Sicilia, the Child is 'a high-born child' (272) and her pretty appearance and coaxing attitude make all others happy in the same way that Perdita's beauty and virtue melts the ice of winter. Moreover they have another thing in common in that their real identities are not revealed from the beginning. The Faery Child conceals her real nature

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[89] Richard Taylor, *A Reader's Guide to the plays of W.B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 31.

deliberately in order to remove the barriers to her paganism until she can put the house in her power. Perdita, on the other hand, does not know who she is. As Bertrand Evans argues, Perdita is different from the heroines of Shakespeare's other comedies such as Julia, Rosalind, Portia, Viola, and Helena, whose identities were their best secrets and who 'held a leverage that meant, in varying degree, control of their worlds'.[90] Accordingly, the Child resembles these other heroines more than Perdita.

The Child lures Mary to fairyland, saying,

> For if you hear [Father Hart] you grow like the rest;
> Bear children, cook, and bend above the churn,
> And wrangle over butter, fowl, and eggs,
> Until at last, grown old and bitter of tongue,
> You're crouching there and shivering at the grave' (383-7).

Responding to the Child, Father Hart says that he can lead Mary on the way to Heaven. But the Child proposes to her a more attractive world:

> But I can lead you, newly-married bride,
> Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
> Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
> Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue,
> And where kind tongues bring no captivity;
> For we are but obedient to the thoughts
> That drift into the mind at a wink of the eye. (389-95)

The fairyland to which the Child promises to take Mary recalls the tale of Princess Edain. The land is the very world Mary has dreamt of since she read the book written by Maurteen's grandfather, and that Mary's heart longs for, though she does not comprehend the wish completely while reading the book. In the end, her soul's choice is inclined to fairyland.

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[90] Bertrand Evans, p. 299.

In this respect, the doorway as threshold incorporates Mary's psychological change. Barton Friedman argues that 'the Child's passage from the night outside to the light inside projects the emergence of Mary's wish into consciousness'.[91] Just as the actual doorway is an entrance to the fairyland to Mary, so it becomes a gateway to self-fulfilment in her mind. As such, it is difficult or unnecessary to judge the value of the world beyond the threshold. The world approaches us like fate. Even though Yeats's heroine chooses the mysterious world, this does not necessarily mean that Yeats puts more value on the world outside the threshold. According to Richard Ellmann, when Yeats wrote this play, he is said to have thought much about Maud Gonne, and that what had caused her to quarrel with him must be her longing 'for some impossible life, for some unwearying land like that of the heroine of my play'.[92] As in the case of Hamlet, who passes the 'crime-haunted' threshold, there still remains a possibility for ethical judgement of Mary's decision to leave her family behind.

However Yeats argues that a tragedy is 'a moment of intense life' and art should transcend moral judgements. He takes Shakespeare's characters as examples:

> This character who delights us may commit murder like Macbeth, or fly the battle for his sweetheart as did Antony, or betray his country like Coriolanus, and yet we will rejoice in every happiness that comes to him and sorrow at his death as if it were our own.[93]

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[91] Barton R. Friedman, p. 19.
[92] Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), p. 111.
[93] *Explorations*, p. 154.

Yeats claims that when we see Shakespeare's characters 'we are caught up into another code, we are in the presence of a higher court'[94] even though we still know what crime is. The reason is that

> The subject of all art is passion, and a passion can only be contemplated when separated by itself, purified of all but itself, and aroused into a perfect intensity by opposition with some other passion, or it may be with the law, that is the expression of the whole whether of Church or Nation or external nature. Had Coriolanus not been a lawbreaker, neither he nor we had ever discovered, it may be, that noble pride of his, and if we had not seen Cleopatra through the eyes of so many lovers, would we have known that soul of hers to be all flame, and wept at the quenching of it? If we were not certain of law we would not feel the struggle, the drama, but the subject of art is not law, which is a kind of death, but the praise of life, and it has no commandments that are not positive. [95]

Coriolanus was a lawbreaker, but otherwise his passion, 'that noble pride of his', would not have been revealed. To Yeats, passion is the subject of all art, which must treat 'the praise of life'; whereas law is 'a kind of death'. Cleopatra deserves to be a tragic heroine because her soul was 'all flame', as proved 'through the eyes of so many lovers'. Enobarbus evaluates Cleopatra's passion with his comment that 'her passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love. We cannot call her winds and waters sighs and tears; they are greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report' (1.2.153-6). In this sense, *The Land of Heart's Desire* is Yeats's endeavour to depict people whose souls are 'all flame' in pursuit of different worlds from their reality, which can act as a comfort to them.

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[94] *Explorations*, p. 154.
[95] Ibid., pp. 155-6.

3) Tragic heroism and the threshold of death in *Deirdre* and *Antony and Cleopatra*

Death is the last threshold all human beings will inevitably cross. The tragic hero marks the moment of passing the threshold by means of his heroic transformation. Shakespeare's Cleopatra and Yeats's Deirdre are liminaries lingering on the threshold of death. In particular they prove their heroic qualities by choosing suicide as a way of crossing the threshold.

Deirdre (1907) has an affinity with *The Land of Heart's Desire* in the sense that it deals with the heroine's process of crossing the threshold of a gate into a different world from that she is in. Yet *Deirdre* is distinguished from the earlier play through an increased emphasis upon the heroine's psychology. The major influence upon Mary, the heroine of *The Land of Heart's Desire*, in passing the threshold, is the Faery Child who tempts Mary to an attractive world. In addition, from the beginning of the play, Mary already feels boredom with her life: her reality cannot be compared with the fairyland. Hence Mary chooses the fairyland without a serious conflict or mental change. However, crossing the threshold does not seem as easy to Deirdre because it can be achieved only by her own effort and above all by means of her suicide. Unlike Mary, Deirdre is not fed up with her life. Instead, she wishes to lead a happy life with her lover, Naoise, finishing her wandering life as a result of Conchubar's forgiveness. But her reality betrays her wish: her death is waiting for her. Mary also eventually dies as a consequence of choosing the fairyland, but the important point is

that she does not recognise the fact that her choice entails her death. Deirdre, on the other hand, sharply perceives it. Therefore greater heroism is needed. She is forced by circumstance to be different from common people. As a result she undergoes the process of transformation into a tragic heroine. This transformation happens suddenly, just before passing the threshold, opening a risk that Deirdre's character seems illogical.[96] For this reason Harold Bloom criticises *Deirdre*, maintaining that 'Deirdre is scarcely a memorable personality'.[97] Yet, contrary to Bloom's negative opinion, Yeats himself thought he had made a great play out of *Deirdre*, which he thought 'most powerful and even sensational'.[98] John Rees Moors explains Deirdre's contradictory character:

> Deirdre is the most psychologically complex of Yeats's heroines [...] exactly because her struggle to *be* a heroine is the essential action of the play.[99]

In other words, the transformation of a young girl into a heroine is the centre of the play and the climax is reached when the heroine 'passes over into immortality'.[100] This is 'the essential action of the play'. Accordingly, Deirdre's abrupt transcendence is an integral part of the play and her apparent change after transcendence highlights the outcome. As Peter Ure maintains, 'in *Deirdre* everything concentrates on the way the single heroic

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[96]Leonard E. Nathan claims that Deirdre is 'the most complex figure that Yeats had up to this time created'. See *The Tragic Drama of William Butler Yeats*, p. 41. Richard Taylor also claims that she is 'as much a complex human being as an archetypal figure and her heroic nature is shown to be in conflict with her human passion'. See *A Reader's Guide to the plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 53.

[97] Harold Bloom points out the fact that Deirdre's deliberate changes of mood, as she fights for her own kind of honourable death, could not deceive Naoise or Conchubar if either of her admirers were more than cardboard. See *Yeats* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 158.

[98] *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, ed. by Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p. 482.

[99] John Rees Moore, *Masks of Love and Death* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 142.

[100] Ibid., p. 142.

individual confronts her destiny'.[101] As such, the activity of Deirdre's soul is the central action of the play: the spiritual struggle within 'the deeps of the mind' seen in *The Land of Heart's Desire* is more profoundly treated.

The threshold of death that Deirdre should cross is concretised by physical thresholds like doorways, as they function in *The Land of Heart's Desire*: the world outside the threshold is the one that the heroine should eventually accept. Just as the world is a fairyland to Mary in *The Land of Heart's Desire*, to Deirdre it is her imminent death that she should choose in order to become a tragic heroine. Doorways underline her transformation because the threshold serves as a line of demarcation marking Deirdre's changing personality. As in *The Land of Heart's Desire*, the stage directions of the play contain significant meanings. For example, the stage directions at the beginning of the play read:

> *A Guest-house in a wood. It is a rough house of timber; through the doors and some of the windows one can see the great spaces of the wood [...] There is a door to right and left, and through the side windows one can see anybody who approaches either door, a moment before he enters.* [102]

The stage is divided by the thresholds of the windows and doors. On one side is the interior space of King Conchubar's guest house and on the other are 'the great spaces of the wood' viewed through the doors and some of the windows. The space within the threshold is where the actual action takes place and to which the audience's attention is naturally drawn. But the stage construction of the play allows another focus for the audience's interest

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[101] Peter Ure, *Yeats the Playwright* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 47.
[102] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 345.

because it was devised to let them see 'anybody who approaches either door, a moment before he enters'.

In the space inside the threshold, after the three Musicians' exposition of the relationships between Deirdre, Conchubar and Naoise, the actual action of the play on the stage begins with the entrance of Fergus who is an old friend of Conchubar's. Fergus is surprised at the fact that there has been no messenger from Conchubar to say that he forgives Deirdre, who betrayed his love and ran away with Naoise, a young king, 'a month or so before the marriage-day' (21). In addition to the lack of a welcoming messenger from the king, there are further symbols in the play implying the king's betrayal, such as the flagon that is empty but for cobwebs, the mouldy bread and the chess-board. In particular, the chessboard is 'the board / Where Lugaidh Redstripe and that wife of his, / Who has a seamew's body half the year, / Played at the chess upon the night they died' (180-2). It is 'a tale of treachery, / A broken promise and a journey's end' (183-4). However, in spite of such ominous intimations, Fergus, who does not doubt Conchuhar's promise, is proud of his own 'good deed' (76) of bringing about a reconciliation between Conchubar and the young lovers. Although the Musicians adumbrate doubts of the integrity of the king's forgiveness, Fergus ignores them and says:

> Then you should know that all things change in the world,
> And hatred turns to love and love to hate,
> And even kings forgive. (53-5)

Fergus is a figure who cannot believe bad things about anyone and has too optimistic a point of view about the world.[103] In his world:

> I have believed the best of every man,
> And find that to believe it is enough
> To make a bad man show him at his best,
> Or even a good man swing his lantern higher. (223-6)

Fergus's 'naiveté'[104] is what leads him to ignore the signs which imply Conchubar's betrayal. Yet, against Fergus's naivety, the possibility that reality could be different from perception pervades the play. The Musicians repeatedly question the king's word; especially the First musician's repetition of the same sentence, 'yet old men are jealous' (64), forms a portentous shadow.

While the disagreement between the Musicians and Fergus about the king's forgiveness is building inside the threshold, an action that accelerates the sinister mood occurs outside the threshold: through the doors and windows 'dark-faced men with strange, barbaric dress and arms' are seen to pass. This happens shortly before Fergus finishes his cheerfully optimistic lines:

> Fergus [*coming from door*]. Sing the more sweetly
> Because, though age is arid as a bone,
> This man has flowered. I've need of music, too;
> If this grey head would suffer no reproach,
> I'd dance and sing-
>
> [*Dark-faced men with strange, barbaric dress and arms begin to pass by the doors and windows. They pass one by one and in silence.*]
>
> and dance till the hour ran out,
> Because I have accomplished this good deed. (71-6)

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[103] Barton R. Friedman argues that 'the reason why Fergus proves receptive to and impervious to the truths embedded in the Musicians' poetry is that he lacks a vision of evil'. See *Adventures in the Deeps of the Mind*, p. 41.
[104] Ibid., p. 47.

The 'dark-faced men' seen outside the threshold are a mockery of Fergus's 'good deed' and it is a cold indication to the audience that the truth of the play differs from Fergus's naïve faith. The Musicians add more weight to this truth. The First Musician says that the dark-faced men are 'such men as kings will gather for a murderous task' (83-4). They are the last to be welcomed into the house, but they 'have been about the house all day' (79). The audience can watch the dark-faced men in person and predict what is happening to Deirdre and Naoise: the High king's villainous plotting and the lovers' death. In other words, the audience are constantly able to notice death hanging around Deirdre and Naoise.

The truth is detected by Deirdre who is sensitive enough to perceive the ominous result. She is concerned about whether the king's promises are 'sound and wholesome', and confesses her apprehension while Fergus and Naoise are absent to see if any welcoming messenger is on his way:

> There was a man that loved me. He was old;
> I could not love him. Now I can but fear.
> He has made promises, and brought me home;
> But though I turn it over in my thoughts,
> I cannot tell if they are sound and wholesome,
> Or hackles on the hook. (235-40)

Deirdre instinctively discerns that the king's word could be 'hackles on the hook'. Fergus shouts, 'Peace, peace; the messenger is at the door' (372) and Naoise feels guilty for doubting the king even for a short time on seeing a dark-faced Messenger coming to the threshold. But Deirdre stresses that 'The message is not finished' (380). Ultimately the truth comes out:

> *Messenger.* Deirdre and Fergus, son of Rogh, are summoned;

But not the traitor that bore off the Queen.
It is enough that the King pardon her,
And call her to his table and his bed. (384-7)

The king does not forgive Deirdre and Naoise but wants to recover her as his queen. The king's actual intention does not appear in the first part of the message, but Fergus and Naoise are too quickly relieved, whereas Deirdre is prudent, persuading Fergus and Naoise to listen to the messenger until the end. Her acute perception distinguishes her. As has been mentioned above, this technique is used to make everything concentrate on the heroine.

Antony and Cleopatra does not use an actual threshold such as that used in *Deirdre* to symbolise Cleopatra's death. Nonetheless the moment of her crossing of the threshold of death is obviously described as in the case of Deirdre. Her abrupt transformation into tragic heroine is reiterated in *Deirdre*.

Cleopatra is depicted as a less than tragic heroine for the most part of the play. She is identified as a 'gypsy' (1.1.10), a 'strumpet' (1.1.13), and a 'Triple-turned whore' (4.12.13). Proving her infamy she manipulates her situation to draw Antony's attention. She orders her attendant, Alexas to:

See where he is, who's with him, what he does.
I did not send you. If you find him sad,
Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report
That I am sudden sick. Quick, and return (1.3.3-6)

Cleopatra's craftiness in controlling Antony by provoking him is attacked by Charmian who says 'if you did love him dearly, / You do not hold the method to enforce / The like from him' (1.3.7-9). But Cleopatra insists that

it is the only way to seize Antony's love: 'Thou teachest like a fool: the way to lose him' (1.3.11). Besides, in the battle of Actium, she flees in the middle of the fight. Her unthoughtful behaviour causes Antony to go after her because he says 'My heart was to thy rudder tied by th'strings / And thou shouldst tow me after' (3.11.57-8). Cleopatra realises her fault: 'Forgive my fearful sails! I little thought / You would have followed' (3.11.55-6). But this gives a crucial shame to Antony as a soldier and makes his followers abandon him. In addition her feigned death after Antony's final defeat offers a direct motive for Antony's determination to death ('I will o'ertake thee, Cleopatra, and / Weep for my pardon' (4.14.45-6)) even though it is her trick to elude Antony's wrath:

> Mardian, go tell him I have slain myself.
> Say that the last I spoke was 'Antony',
> And word it, prithee, piteously. Hence, Mardian,
> And bring me how he takes my death. (4.13.7-10)

However, Cleopatra, the Egyptian whore, is transfigured into tragic heroine. After Antony's death, she prepares for suicide with a cold heroic attitude: 'what's brave, what's noble, / Let's do't after the high Roman fashion / And make death proud to take us' (4.5.90-2). But her first attempt at suicide is prevented by Proculeius, one of the followers of Caesar. After this first failure, Cleopatra seeks another chance to commit suicide, thinking of Antony. She transforms Antony into a transcendent being in her dream:

> His legs bestrid the ocean; his reared arm
> Crested the world; his voice was propertied
> As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;
> But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
> He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,
> There was no winter in't; an autumn it was
> That grew the more by reaping. His delights

Were dolphin-like: they showed his back above
The element they lived in. In his livery
Walked crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
As plates dropped from his pocket. (5.2.81-90)

This mention of her dream might be Cleopatra's trick to tease out Caesar's intention from Dolabella by moving him, but it offers certain evidence that Antony restores his grand figure as a descendent of Heracles in her vision.

Nonetheless, even after she determines to follow Antony, she is still aware of Caesar's real intention and tries to find it out through Dolabella. Besides, Caesar's proposal seems good enough to hide his real plan to make Cleopatra a sign of his triumph: 'For her life in Rome / Would be eternal in our triumph' (5.2.65-6):

Cleopatra
Not what you have reserved nor what acknowledged
Put we I'the' roll of conquest. Still be't yours;
Bestow it at your pleasure, and believe
Caesar's no merchant to make prize with you
Of things that merchants sold. Therefore be cheered;
Make nor your thought your prisons. No, dear queen,
For we intend so to dispose you as
Yourself shall give us counsel. Feed and sleep.
Our care and pity is so much upon you
That we remain your friend; and so, adieu. (5.2.178-88)

Cleopatra is agitated by Caesar's offer: 'He words me, girls, he words me, that I should not / Be noble to myself' (5.2.190-1). Cleopatra regards suicide as a noble act. But she undergoes conflict, 'lingering on the threshold' until Dolabella reveals Caesar's plan:

I tell you this: Caesar through Syria
Intends his journey, and within three days
You with your children will he send before. (5.2.197)

Cleopatra realises that to prolong her life means to accept humiliation. At last she accepts her death. Just before she admits her death as an

unavoidable fate, she undergoes a transformation. Shakespeare stresses the change with a half line:

> Why, that's the way
> To fool their preparation and to conquer
> Their most absurd intents.
>
> *Enter* Charmian
>
> Now, Charmian!
> Show me, my women, like a queen. Go fetch
> My best attires. (5.2.223-7)

Cleopatra perceives that her suicide is the only way she can mock Caesar's plan, and gain a final victory over him. Therefore, she is not sad any more. Rather she can be joyful. After her first half line, her second half line, 'Now, Charmian!', produces a totally different atmosphere from the previous one. She orders her women to get her dress as if she is preparing for participation in a celebration of triumph. The short time between the half lines represents Cleopatra's transfiguration.

Cleopatra, who is transformed into a tragic heroine, prepares for death. The scene in which Cleopatra jokes with the clown who brings the asp reveals her attitude as a tragic heroine, which is connected with 'tragic ecstasy' [105] as known by Yeats. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter SIX, 'Tragic Joy'.

Deirdre has many similarities with Cleopatra. The first is that Deirdre also acts at first more like a common woman than a tragic heroine, even though her sensitiveness in perceiving Conchubar's betrayal is witnessed. It is true that Deirdre's transcendent power is presumed on account of the mystery of

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[105] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 239.

her origin, which the First Musician recounts. When Conchubar found Deirdre in a house upon a hillside in the wood, she was with an old witch to nurse her: 'And nobody to say if she were human, / Or of the gods, or anything at all / Of who she was or why she was hidden there' (14-6). From this perspective, it is guessed that Deirdre has an abnormal ability to be a transcendent being because there is a possibility that she may be the offspring of supernatural beings. However, for most of the play, Deirdre's behaviour is not enough to make her a tragic heroine. For example, when Naoise suggests that they play chess while waiting for their imminent deaths as Lugaidh Redstripe and his wife had, at first Deirdre tries to join him, accepting her fate calmly, but soon gives up, confessing:

> I cannot go on playing like that woman
> That had but the cold blood of the sea in her veins. (486-7)

She is not so much heroic as human or feminine, remembering only 'that first night in the woods when [she] lay all night on leaves' with Naoise. She asks him to bend and kiss her 'for it may be the last before our death':

> Do you remember that first night in the woods
> We lay all night on leaves, and looking up,
> When the first grey of the dawn awoke the birds,
> Saw leaves above us? You thought that I still slept,
> And bending down to kiss me on the eyes,
> Found they were open. Bend and kiss me now,
> For it may be the last before our death.
> And when that's over, we'll be different;
> Imperishable things, a cloud or a fire.
> And I know nothing but this body, nothing
> But that old vehement, bewildering kiss. (489-99)

Even though Deirdre has a perception of the 'imperishable things' that she and Naoise may reach through death, she describes herself as a passionate or sensual woman who knows 'nothing but this body, nothing / But that old vehement, bewildering kiss.'

However Deirdre, who is all woman, faces up to an opportunity to transform herself into a transcendent being. As in the case of Cleopatra the change starts with her lover's death. In this respect the two heroines' apparently impertinent qualities function to emphasise their heroic transformations. In the case of Deirdre, Conchubar, the very object of her fear, urges her transformation; Caesar is involved in Cleopatra's heroic death. Before the fearful object passes the threshold, Deirdre is only a weak woman, but 'when [the threshold] ultimately admits the object of her dread, her enemy, the jealous king Conchubar, she is compelled to transcend herself and accomplish the suicide that has long been prophesied as her end'.[106] The moment of her transformation is highlighted by a theatrical pause.[107]

Although Deirdre prepares for her death with a knife snatched from the Musician, in the same way that Cleopatra first tries to commit suicide with a dagger, she still hopes she can beg Conchubar's pardon. But contrary to her expectation, Naoise is murdered, unseen by her. On discovering Naoise's death, she despairs and says, 'O, do not touch me. Let me go to him'(658). She wants to follow her lover but after this, the pause falls to signal her transcendence. After this pause, Deirdre becomes a different

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[106] *W.B. Yeats: Selected Plays*, p. xvii.

[107] Cave gives a note to this pause, 'This is a momentous silence, the more telling theatrically the longer the actress playing Deirdre can sustain it. When she turns next to Conchubar, she has measured out the situation, assessed the strength and scope of her adversary's will power, devised a strategy to combat him and totally transformed herself in order to achieve it. The moment is Yeats's first experiment with the concept of the mask: assuming a persona that is the exact antithesis of one's self so as to come to terms with and vindicate one's innermost truth. It is a brilliant *coup-de-theatre*, which requires the full resources of an actress's technical skill and panache if it is to be convincing, since Deirdre is given no soliloquy or aside to explain her decision. Subtly the ensuing action will intimate her purpose. See *W.B. Yeats: Selected Plays*, p. 312.

person from the one she was before it began. She has suffered from fear all the time but in her mind she at last admits her death and then she is changed because she has passed the threshold full of all fear.

According to Lennox Robinson, 'Yeats used to say about Deirdre's performance –"Red-heat up to Naoise's death, white-heat after he is dead"'.[108] It is true that Naoise's death plays a central role in her change, but the pause is an obvious boundary line marking the change:

> O, do not touch me. Let me go to him.
> [*Pause*]
> King Conchubar is right. My husband's dead.
> A single woman is of no account,
> Lacking array of servants, linen cupboards,
> The bacon hanging – and King Conchubar's house
> All ready, too – I'll to King Conchubar's house.
> It is but wisdom to do willingly
> What has to be. (658-65)

As such, the pause plays a central part in announcing Deirdre's transformation. Yeats emphasises the effect that the Shakespearean half-line produces by means of a pause. Thus the short intervals produced respectively by a pause and a half line stress the two heroines' heroic transformations.

Cleopatra and Deirdre have another thing in common in that they both have a recognition that their lives are stories that will be remembered after their deaths. Cleopatra detects the story that Caesar, her antagonist, will make up about her and her lover, Antony:

> The quick comedians
> Extemporally will stage us and present

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[108] Lennox Robinson, *Scattering Branches* (New York: Macmillan, 1940), p. 96.

> Our Alexandrian revels; Antony
> Shall be brought drunken forth; and I shall see
> Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
> I'th' posture of a whore. (5.2.215-20)

Cleopatra recognises that Caesar's intention is to reduce the story of her love for Antony to 'examples of rulers who threw away for lust'.[109] She mocks Caesar by committing suicide and thus transforms her story into a heroic one. Caesar admits Cleopatra's death as her victory: 'Bravest at the last, / She levelled at our purposes and, being royal, / Took her own way' (5.2.334-6). She is no longer a 'whore', her royalty being admitted by Caesar. After her death, Dolabella also makes clear Caesar's plan is off the mark: 'Caesar, thy thoughts / Touch their effects in this. Thyself art coming / To see performed the dreaded act which thou / So sought'st to hinder' (5.2.329-31). Caesar confesses his failure and regards her death as her own way to keep her royalty. He orders that Cleopatra be 'buried by her Antony' (5.2.357). At last, the story of Antony and Cleopatra can be a love story of tragic heroes instead of a lust story of a voluptuous fool and a whore.

Like Cleopatra, on realising her lover's death, Deirdre becomes cold, and to achieve her aim and die following Naoise, she disguises herself and pretends to accept Conchubar, because she knows that otherwise she cannot achieve her end. Deirdre hides her heat with coldness so that she, and not Conchubar, can be the author of her fate. Embarrassed by her suddenly calm attitude, Conchubar doubts her, but Deirdre drives him to accept her

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[109] Franklin Miller Dickey argues that 'traditionally Antony and Cleopatra are examples of rulers who threw away a kingdom for lust, and this is how, despite the pity and terror, which Shakespeare makes us feel, they appear in his play'. See *Not Wisely But Too Well: Shakespeare's Love Tragedies* (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1957), p. 179.

request, using her cunning laugh and mean mockery. Finally she accomplishes her aim. At last, the mission to 'have Deirdre's story right' (535) is fulfilled. In the opening phase of the play, when the First Musician, a wanderer, tells of a story from 'the roads of the world' (52), the tale of Deirdre, Naoise, and Conchubar, the Second Musician responds:

> The tale were well enough
> Had it a finish. (25-6)

In other words, *Deirdre* is a play which describes the process of making the ending of the tale of 'that famous queen / Who has been wandering with her lover Naoise / Somewhere beyond the edges of the world with King Conchubar' (9-10). This certainly parallels the final scene of *Hamlet*. Hamlet curses his fate to be born 'to set it right' (1.5.189) and is struggling, postponing its acceptance like Deirdre. But when he accepts his fate by completing his revenge and facing his own death, he asks Horatio 'to tell [his] story' (5.2.3) to the world. Anne Barton argues that *Hamlet* is what 'Hamlet himself gestures towards in his last moments, when he addresses 'You that look pale and tremble at this chance, / That are but mutes or audience to this act' (5.2.328-9).[110]

Deirdre is conscious of her own fate, and is therefore aware that there can be only one story appropriate for her, and dismisses anything that does not fit with this perception of her life. Rejecting the First Musician's advice that she should use her 'woman's wile' (525) to placate Conchubar instead of killing herself, Deirdre says:

> Women, if I die,

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[110] See the introduction to *Hamlet*, ed. by T.J.B. Spencer (London: Penguin, 1980), p. 54.

If Naoise die this night, how will you praise?
What words seek out? for that will stand to you;
For being but dead we shall have many friends.
All through your wanderings, the doors of kings
Shall be thrown wider open, the door man's hearth
Heaped with new turf, because you are wearing this
[*Gives Musician a bracelet.*]
To show that you have Deirdre's story right. (529-35)

The consummation of love through death deserves the Musicians' praise, and it is also 'to have Deirdre's story right'. Furthermore Deirdre will have 'many friends'. As Friedman suggests, the friends indicate the audience of Yeats's plays.[111] To Yeats, Deirdre's transformation into a tragic heroine deserves his audience's approval. When Deirdre goes behind the curtain, the First Musician sings, 'They are gone, they are gone. The proud / may lie by the proud' (735). Deirdre and Naoise, who choose death, are 'the proud'. Deirdre, who has spent much time lingering on the threshold before eventually becoming proud, ends up crossing the threshold. Deirdre's suicide gives her enemy fatal despair. Conchubar groans: 'No, no; I'll not believe it. She is not dead – / She cannot have escaped a second time!' (747-8). In this way, Deirdre's suicide is a triumph over her enemy as Cleopatra's is. The two heroines' triumphs are distinguished, in contrast with their lovers' miserable endings. Naoise is murdered after becoming entangled in a net like a bird or fish by Conchubar's men and eventually murdered. Antony confronts his death in an abject and ridiculous way even though he wishes for it to take place in 'the high Roman fashion' (4.5.91).

[111] Barton R. Friedman argues that 'the friends' of Deirdre and Naoise are ultimately the audience at Yeats's play and I agree with him. See *Adventures in the Deeps of the Mind*, p. 61.

Cleopatra and Deirdre are lingering on the threshold of their death. After a long period of wandering, they ultimately cross that threshold. Shortly before doing so, they undergo a similar experience: the transformation into tragic heroine. Yeats concentrates such a transformation on Deirdre by simplifying Naoise's change, whereas Shakespeare separates Cleopatra's death from Antony's by arranging that her death takes place in the next act.[112] Antony also experiences a transformation into tragic hero before his death as will be discussed in Chapter SIX. Nevertheless Cleopatra's transformation of her death into a victory is potent enough for her to be identified as a tragic heroine, in spite of her impertinent behaviour in the earlier part of the play.

The threshold incorporates a transitional significance, which is associated with ambiguity or ambivalence. But it also anticipates the beginning of a new world. Because of its transitional nature the threshold turns out two different states, situations or worlds: one is the past and the other something to come. Shakespeare invests in imaginary thresholds, while Yeats uses both imaginary and actual thresholds to emphasise their symbolic significance. Furthermore, the concept of the threshold is used as a tool to incorporate tragic heroes' psychological conflicts. Thus the threshold becomes an effective concept to treat 'the soul', which, according to Yeats, is a constant subject of drama. He writes:

> The dramatists lived in a disorderly world, reproached by many, persecuted even, but following their imagination wherever it led them. Their imagination,

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[112] Anne Barton argues Antony and Cleopatra's separate death scenes constitute 'the divided catastrophe' and regards Antony's death as the first catastrophe and Cleopatra's as the second one. See *Essays, Mainly Shakespearean*, p. 133.

> driven hither and thither by beauty and sympathy, put on something of the nature of eternity. Their subject was always the soul, the whimsical, self-awakening, self-exciting, self-appeasing soul. They celebrated its heroical, passionate will going by its own path to immortal and invisible things.[113]

Yeats also defines Symbolism as '[a] movement which never mentions an external thing except to express the state of the soul'. [114] Yeats's description of Hamlet as 'a soul lingering on the storm-beaten threshold of sanctity' is derived from his idea of symbolist theatre and Hamlet is the very soul whose 'heroical, passionate will [goes] by its own path to immortal and invisible things'. Yeats's exploration of the soul anticipated his encounter with a more concrete theatrical property, 'the mask', which will be explored in the next chapter.

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[113] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 370.
[114] *Uncollected Prose by W.B. Yeats*, Vol. II, eds. by J.P. Frayne and C. Jackson (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 52.

CHAPTER TWO

'The Energy to assume the Mask of Some Other Self'

Yeats's efforts to express the spiritual struggle within 'the deeps of the mind' on the stage continued. In his earlier plays these struggles were mainly expressed by actual thresholds used as lines of demarcation between heterogeneous aspects of life. The thresholds gradually changed from concrete stage constructions to symbolic concepts representing tragic heroes' psychological conflicts of choice. The Japanese 'Noh' mask offered Yeats an opportunity to develop his thoughts about thresholds in a new direction. He created his own distinctive mask embodying the image which offers a tragic hero a role-play by which to discover his Anti-Self. The concept of the mask replaced the threshold of the earlier plays in the sense that it also served to give the tragic hero the recognition of some alternative course of life. Thus his exploration of the conflict of the soul took on more developed shapes.

The focus of this chapter will be 'the energy to assume the mask of some other self'[115] through an analysis of *At the Hawk's Well* and *The Dreaming of the Bones* in terms of the ideas Yeats discusses in *A Vision*. These plays will be considered alongside Shakespeare's plays *Much Ado About Nothing*, *King Lear*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Hamlet* in order to demonstrate how the reach of Yeats's theory of the mask can be extended, but also to show how it was grounded in specifically theatrical problems relating to

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[115] *Autobiographies*, p. 503.

how psychologically sophisticated characters could be represented on the stage. Shakespeare's uses of masks are considerably more varied than Yeats's. In many cases they serve the purely functional purpose of disguising a character. Yet at times, for example in the case of Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing*, the mask worn gives some psychological insight into its wearer by framing otherwise concealed aspect of his personality. This relationship between wearer and mask is comparable the one between self and anti-self that Yeats sought to highlight by using masks in his plays. Although Hamlet does not wear a mask, he nonetheless undergoes the psychological process of confronting the anti-self of which physical masks, in other plays, are the representation. *Hamlet* is therefore considered as a valuable instance of what Yeats sought to render symbolically through his use of masks.

The Japanese 'Noh' theatre offered enormous imaginative resources to Yeats in his search for forms appropriate to his idea of drama. On his first encounter with Noh theatre, Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory [*March 26, 1916*] that 'I believe I have at last found a dramatic form that suits me'.[116] Yeats describes the impact of the Noh theatre in his essay 'Certain Noble Plays of Japan':

> With the help of Japanese plays 'translated by Ernest Fenollosa and finished by Ezra Pound', I have invented a form of drama, distinguished, indirect, and symbolic [...] an aristocratic form.[117]

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[116] *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, ed. by Allen Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p. 610.

[117] Yeats's introduction to *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*: From the manuscripts of Ernest Fenollosa, chosen and finished by Ezra Pound, with an Introduction by William Butler Yeats (Dundrum: The Cuala Press, 1916), p. II

Noh theatre resembles classical lyric drama. It is an exceedingly slow and deliberate style of dance-drama performed on a bare stage. In the theatre the principal actor (*sh'te*) is almost invariably masked. Those who assist him in the main role are known as *sh'te-tsure*[118] and wear masks only when impersonating female characters,[119] all the roles being played by men. Noh masks are so small as to cover only the area of the face itself.[120] Yeats makes use of most of the Noh conventions including bare stages, choric attendants, masks, and dance in his plays. Of those the most important property for Yeats is the mask, a device to which he attaches a philosophical importance that goes beyond dramatic function.

Yeats expresses the effect that a mask can produce on the imagination in his introduction to *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*:

> A mask will enable me to substitute for the face of some common-place player, or for that face repainted to suit his own vulgar fancy, the fine invention of a sculptor, and to bring the audience close enough to the play to hear every inflection of the voice. A mask never seems but a dirty face, and no matter how close you go is yet a work of art; nor shall we lose by stilling the movement of the features, for deep feeling is expressed by a movement of the whole body.[121]

Yeats seeks in the mask a means to stirring the audience's imagination, exceeding naturalistic detail. Compared with realistic props, a mask is a symbolic artefact because it covers a real face. It suggests anti-human or superhuman characteristics, but at the same time delivers some essential

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[118] *Sh'te-tsure* is the *sh'te*'s follower and different from *waki*, the second actor. See *Japanese Theatre* by Faubion Bowers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1959), p. 18. For example, in *Nishikigi*, the *sh'te-tsure* is the *sh'te*'s lover who wishes to be united in marriage in the world of spirits by the priest (*waki*)'s prayer.
[119] Peter Arnott, *The Theatres of Japan* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 87.
[120] Faubion Bowers, *Japanese Theatre*, p. 14.
[121] *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*, p. vii.

quality of life as a result of concreting or stylising nature. The audience is offered the 'deep feeling' of a movement of the whole body instead of being distracted by a realistic face. In other words, the audience is led to 'some more powerful life',[122] which Yeats believes drama should pursue.

Yeats's letter to the editor of the *Daily Chronicle* [*27 January 1899*] proves that he had already been informed of the symbolic function of masks before his encounter with Noh theatre:

> We have forgotten that the Drama began in the chanted ode, and that whenever it has been great it has been written certainly to delight our eyes, but to delight our ears more than our eyes. Greek actors with masks upon their faces, and their stature increased by artifice, must have been content to delight the eyes with but an austere and monotonous beauty, and Elizabethan actors who had to speak so much that would seem irrelevant poetry to modern audiences must have thought oratory a principal part of acting.[123]

Yeats points out the fact that the unrealistic masks of Greek actors, while in themselves 'monotonous and austere', served to heighten the audience's enjoyment of the aural delight produced by 'the chanted ode'. Here Yeats also detects the anti-naturalistic tendency of Elizabethan actors who 'had to speak so much that would seem irrelevant poetry to modern audiences'. He emphasises the symbolic effect, the intrinsic function of drama, against the naturalistic detail, popular amongst his contemporaries.

Yeats's letter to the editor of the *United Irishman* [*c. 21 April 1902*] confirms that he was striving for a symbolic theatre in direct reaction to the

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[122] *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*, p. v.
[123] *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats* Vol. 2, eds. by Warwick Gould, John Kelly and Deirdre Toomey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 349.

realistic tendency in vogue at that time. He says, 'I would try and make a theatre where realism would be impossible' and mentions that all the great poetic dramatists of the world could not but take on symbolism because they wrote 'for a theatre that was half platform, half stage, and for actors that were, at least, as much orators as actors'.[124] Moreover, his letter to Frank Fay [*4 November, 1905*] reveals that he perceived the symbolic effects that Shakespeare's plays retain. He expresses his disappointment at a production of *The Merchant of Venice* which he believed was ruined by realistic stage management. He wrote:

> I went to *The Merchant of Venice* the other night and disliked the stage management even more than I expected. I found that as usual for a Shakespeare play nothing moved me except the scenes of prolonged crisis. The Trial scene was moving, but owing to the stage management the rest was broken up. Shakespeare had certainly intended those short scenes of his to be played one after the other as quickly as possible and there is no reason that they should not, if played in this way, keep the sense of crisis almost as living as in the long scenes. The stage management, however, never lost an opportunity of increasing the breaking up caused by changes of scene by bringing in gondolas, crowds, and masqueraders etc.[125]

Shakespeare's Globe theatre was an amphitheatre with 'a large platform stage projecting into the yard',[126] the latter being unroofed. Shakespeare's short scenes 'to be played one after the other as quickly as possible', Yeats argues, were achieved by 'a continuation of traditional platform stage conventions'.[127] In addition, mainly through the actors' words, the platform

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[124] *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. 2, p. 179.
[125] *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, p. 465.
[126] John Cranford Adams, *The Globe Playhouse: Its Design and Equipment* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1943), p. 90.
[127] Robert Weimann, 'Shakespeare's Theatre: Tradition and Experiment' in *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945-2000*, ed. by Russ McDonald (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 517.

designated particular places like Hamlet's Elsinore, and converted the daylight coming through the open roof into midnight darkness at the beginning of the play (*Hamlet*, 1.1). Andrew Gurr's *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642* clearly points out the symbolic effects which Shakespeare's theatre indispensably made use of:

> Hamlet in 1600 walked under the sky in an open amphitheatre, on a platform that felt out-of-doors in comparison with modern theatres but indifferently represented indoors or out to the Elizabethans.[128]

The prologue to *King Henry V* is an example of how Shakespeare's theatre stirs the audience's imagination. The prologue apologises for the fact that the play cannot bring forth 'So great an object' as Henry V's campaign in France on their stage:

> But pardon, gentles all,
> That flat unraised spirits that hath dar'd
> On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
> So great an object: can this cockpit hold
> The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram
> Within this wooden O the very casques
> That did affright the air at Agincourt?
> O, pardon! since a crooked figure may
> Attest in little place a millon[.][129]

As a solution it is proposed that 'this great accompt' instead should fall 'on your imaginary work':

> Suppose within the girdle of these walls
> Are now confin'd two mighty monarchies,
> Whose high upreared and abutting fronts
> The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder:
> Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;
> Into a thousand parts divide one man,

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[128] Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 1.

[129] William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. by J.H. Walter (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 6. All future references will be to this edition, citing Act, scene and line numbers parenthetically.

And make imaginary puissance;
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' th' receiving earth;
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times,
Turning th' accomplishment of many years
Into an hour-glass: for the which supply,
Admit me Chorus to this history;
Who prologue-like your humble patience pray,
Gentle to hear, kindly to judge, our play.[130]

The prologue incorporates the way the audience use their imagination by embodying words associated with the imaginative such as 'Suppose', 'Think' and 'imaginary'. It invites the audience to construct a mental picture of the events portrayed on the stage. The repetition of 'your thoughts' places emphasis on the audience's engagement with the play. In the end it forces the audience to 'Admit me Chorus to this history'.

Yeats believed Shakespeare's dramaturgy was more powerful in stimulating the audience's imagination than naturalistic writers' because he was informed that the ancient theatre 'can be made by unrolling a carpet or marking out a place with a stick, or setting a screen against the wall'.[131] Besides, as Richard Ellmann claimed, the idea of Shakespeare Yeats inherited from his father was as a symbolic dramatist who 'had discovered that the important part of life was the necessity of being true to thine own self'',[132] as opposed to being true to an external reality. Yeats's goal was to create a play that stirs our imagination because he believed it would allow us to obtain a truth in 'the deeps of the mind', whereas the realistic theatre diminishes our imagination by means of its theatrical effects. Because of

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[130] *King Henry V*, p. 7.
[131] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 415.
[132] Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*, p. 17.

this, Yeats did not use any special lighting or realistic scenery so that the actors' strangeness would be highlighted. Yeats elaborates on the effect he desired in 'Certain Noble Plays of Japan':

> In the studio and in the drawing-room alone, where the lighting was the light we are accustomed to, did I see him as the tragic image that has stirred my imagination. There, where no studied lighting, no stage-picture made an artificial world, he was able, as he rose from the floor, where he had been sitting cross-legged, or as he threw out an arm, to recede from us into some more powerful life. Because that separation was achieved by human means alone, he receded but to inhabit as it were the deeps of the mind. One realised anew, at every separating strangeness, that the measure of all arts' greatness can be but in their intimacy.[133]

His notes to *At the Hawk's Well* (1917) also remark upon the power of the 'imagination kept living by the arts':

> Painted scenery, after all, is unnecessary to my friends and to my self, for our imagination kept living by the arts can imagine a mountain covered with thorn-trees in a drawing-room without any great trouble, and we have many quarrels with even good scene-painting.[134]

In the same notes, Yeats argues that the mask would be 'a stirring adventure for a poet and an artist working together to create once more heroic or grotesque types that, keeping always an appropriate distance from life, would seem images of those profound emotions that exist only in solitude and in silence'.[135]

The Noh theatre played a crucial role in the invention of Yeats's distinctive theatre because the Noh mask possesses a unique characteristic: the fact that it is normally permitted only to the principal actor. A hero's mask

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[133] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 224.
[134] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 416.
[135] Ibid., p. 416.

symbolises his complete character, in comparison with the unmasked *waki* who lacks full definition.[136] This feature of the Noh mask is added to the Greek mask in Yeats's plays. Furthermore, Yeats attaches to it the philosophy he expounds in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1917) and *A Vision* (1925, 1937). In his letter to J.B. Yeats, his father, Yeats introduced *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* as 'a little philosophical book' acting as a 'prose backing' to his poetry:

> I have finished a little philosophical book – 60 pages in print perhaps – *An Alphabet*. It is in two parts: *Anima Hominis* and *Anima Mundi* and is a kind of prose backing to my poetry.[137]

Yeats collected his ideas, which had previously been scattered in other writings, in this book. *A Vision*, written through the inspiration of an invisible instructor, adds a more developed and elaborated system to his ideas.

As he wrote in the letter to his father, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* reveals the aesthetic theory supporting his work. '*Ego Dominus Tuus*', functioning as a prologue to *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, is a poem which recapitulates the prose. It is made up of a dialogue between *Hic* and *Ille*. *Hic* defends the objective, arguing 'I would seek myself and not an image',[138] while *Ille* dismisses the objective as 'our modern hope',[139] resulting in criticism or half creation instead of full creation. The terms 'objective' and 'subjective' are replaced by 'primary' and 'antithetical' in *A Vision*. The full creation is

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[136] Peter Arnott, p. 258.
[137] *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, pp. 624-5. *An Alphabet* was later changed into *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, which is from *A Tenedo tacitae per amica silentia lunae* (Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book II, 255) Yeats quoted in the essay.
[138] W.B. Yeats, *Mythologies* (London: Macmillan, 1959), p. 321.
[139] *Mythologies*, p. 321.

achieved by 'an image', which leads a man to his own opposite. *Ille* explains the correlation:

> By the help of an image
> I call to my own opposite, summon all
> That I have handled least, least looked upon.[140]

A man is able to achieve his own opposite or Anti-self by means of an image or mask, which assists him in transcending the limitation of his self. In other words, the image offers him the opportunity of wearing a mask and playing a new role as an actor, assigned a role in a play.

Yeats finds a more detailed example of this process in *Commedia dell'Arte*, or the improvised drama of Italy in *A Vision*:

> 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. 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. But this is *antithetical* man. For *primary* man I go to the *Commedia dell' Arte* in the decline. The *Will* is weak and cannot create a role, and so, if it transforms itself, does so after an accepted pattern, some traditional clown or pantaloon.[141]

This example is given to explain Yeats's 'Great Wheel' as an individual life. But there is nothing more appropriate to describe the process of the antithetical man gaining his creative power. The division of the soul into 'Self' and 'Anti-Self' in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* is into Four Faculties, or two pairs of contraries in The Great Wheel: *Will* and *Mask*; *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*. The *Creative Mind*, 'the dialogue and details of the plot'

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[140] *Mythologies*, p. 321.
[141] *A Vision*, p. 84.

and *Body of Fate*, 'an inherited scenario', are described as 'thought and its object, or the Knower and the Known',[142] while *Will*, 'a natural ego' and *Mask*, 'a role as unlike as possible to the natural ego', are categorised as 'the will and its object, or the Is and the Ought'.[143] In improvised drama *antithetical* man can discover or reveal his Anti-Self as a result of 'extreme effort', to the extent that 'his muscles are as it were all taut and all his energies active'. On the other hand, *primary* man cannot create a role because 'the *Will* is weak' and can at most transform the role by copying an accepted pattern. The *primary* man is identified as 'a sentimentalist' in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*. Yeats claims:

> Nor has any poet I have read of or heard of or met with been a sentimentalist. The other self, the anti-self or the antithetical self, as one may choose to name it, comes but to those who are no longer deceived, whose passion is reality. The sentimentalists are 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.[144]

The sentimentalist's 'gentle, sensitive mind' degrades modern art according to Yeats. He writes in '*Ego Dominus Tuus*':

> That is our modern hope, and by its light
> We have lit upon the gentle, sensitive mind
> And lost the old nonchalance of the hand;
> Whether we have chosen chisel, pen or brush,
> We are but critics, or but half create,
> Timid, entangled, empty and abashed,
> Lacking the countenance of our friends. [145]

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[142] *A Vision*, p. 73.
[143] Ibid., p. 73.
[144] *Mythologies*, p. 331.
[145] Ibid., p. 321.

Yeats puts Shakespeare with Dante as examples of creative men who have the ability to assume a mask. Yeats maintains that Shakespeare realises his antithetical self solely through his work:

> There is a shadow of type on type, for in all great poetical styles there is saint or hero, but when it is all over Dante can return to his chambering and Shakespeare to his 'pottle-pot'. They sought no impossible perfection but when they handled paper or parchment.[146]

In *A Vision*, Yeats offers a more detailed account of Shakespeare's antithetical quality. Yeats assigns Shakespeare to Phase 20 on the Great Wheel and regards him as the supreme figure of the phase. But Rupin Desai argues that Phase 20 is, for Shakespeare, 'a location that [Yeats] seems to have decided on after some uncertainty'.[147] He writes:

> In 'The Tragic Generation,' when Yeats hinted that Shakespeare was a Phase 16 man, he was exploring in relatively unfamiliar territory; in *A Vision*, three years later, when he firmly assigns Shakespeare to Phase 20, he is more confident, more bold in drawing with its intricate mechanism.[148]

As Desai points out, Yeats suggested that Shakespeare belongs to Phase 16 in 'The Tragic Generation':

> The mid-Renaissance could but approximate to the full moon, 'For there's no human life at the full or the dark', but we may attribute to the next three nights of the moon the men of Shakespeare, of Titian, of Strozzi, and of Van Dyck, and watch them grow more reasonable, more orderly, less turbulent, as the nights pass [.][149]

However it is not obvious whether Yeats connected the next three nights of the moon with the late Renaissance or the personal phases of the four artists.

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[146] *Mythologies*, p. 333.
[147] Rupin W. Desai, *Yeats's Shakespeare* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. xix.
[148] Ibid., p. 91.
[149] *Autobiographies*, p. 293.

Nevertheless the phase of Shakespeare is changed to Phase 20 in *A Vision*, whereas Oscar Wilde's phase remains the same (Phase 19) in both accounts. According to Desai, Yeats's confusion about Shakespeare's phase arises from his theory of the Mask: that is, he looked upon the phase of Shakespeare's period as that of Shakespeare himself, because he did not yet realise that Shakespeare created great art through his Mask when he wrote the essay. [150]

The theory of the Mask seems to be completely established in *A Vision*, where Yeats was able to distinguish Shakespeare the individual's phase from that of his period and as a result maintain Shakespeare's greatness through his Mask transcending his personality:

> Shakespeare, the other supreme figure of the phase, was – if we may judge by the few biographical facts, and by such adjectives as 'sweet' and 'gentle' applied to him by his contemporaries – a man whose actual personality seemed faint and passionless. Unlike Ben Jonson he fought no duels; he kept out of quarrels in a quarrelsome age; not even complaining when somebody pirated his sonnets; he dominated no Mermaid Tavern, but – through *Mask* and Image, reflected in a multiplying mirror – he created the most passionate art that exists. He was the greatest of modern poets, partly because entirely true to phase, creating always from *Mask* and *Creative Mind*, never from situation alone, never from Body of Fate alone.[151]

As such, Shakespeare is a good example of the *antithetical* man. But Yeats admits the difficulty of accepting a mask even though he denounces the *primary* man as a sentimentalist. He says that 'the poet finds and makes his mask in disappointment, the hero in defeat'.[152] Yeats makes a comparison

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[150] Rupin W. Desai, p. 92.
[151] *A Vision*, p. 153.
[152] *Mythologies*, p. 337.

with the saint in order to explain the tough predicament of the poet or hero who seeks for his Anti-Self:

> The desire that is satisfied is not a great desire, nor has the shoulder used all its might that an unbreakable gate has never strained. The saint alone is not deceived, neither thrusting with his shoulder nor holding out unsatisfied hands. He would climb without wandering to the antithetical self of the world.[153]

The saint reaches 'the antithetical self' like the poet or the hero, but by a different process. The saint accepts his opposite by turning away from the world and thus 'wears his mask as he finds it', while the poet and hero change the lineaments of their masks because 'a hero loves the world till it break him and the poet till it has broken faith'.[154] As such, the process of a hero's or poet's assuming of the mask of 'some other self' requires 'heroism',[155] coping with 'defeat', or 'disappointment'. Nonetheless, it is the source of 'all happiness'. Yeats explains:

> I think that all happiness depends on the energy to assume the mask of some other self; that all joyous or creative life is a rebirth as something not oneself, something which has no memory and is created in a moment and perpetually renewed. We put on a grotesque or solemn painted face to hide us from the terrors of judgement, invent an imaginative Saturnalia where one forgets reality, a game like that of a child, where one loses the infinite pain of self-realisation.[156]

'Putting on a grotesque or solemn painted fate', a poet is free from 'the terrors of judgement' and then leads a 'joyous or creative life'.

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[153] *Mythologies*, p. 337.
[154] Ibid., p. 337.
[155] Ibid., p. 335.
[156] *Autobiographies*, pp. 503-4.

The mask entails a relation to the supernatural. In the process of a hero's acceptance of his mask, 'touching it a little here and there', he confronts 'a visionary world' with the help of a 'Daimon':

> I thought the hero found hanging upon some oak of Dodona an ancient mask, where perhaps there lingered something of Egypt, and that he changed it to his fancy, touching it a little here and there, gilding the eyebrow or putting a gilt line where the cheek-bone comes; that when at last he looked out of its eyes he knew another's breath came and went within his breath upon the carven lips, and that his eyes were upon the instant fixed upon a visionary world: how else could the god have come to us in the forest?[157]

Yeats defines 'another's breath' as 'Daimon', but as he mentions in a note, he could not make a clear distinction between the permanent Daimon and the impermanent, who may be 'an illustrious dead man',[158] in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*. The full definition of Daimon is given in *A Vision*. Yeats's Daimon started with the accepted sense of 'an evil spirit' as opposed to 'divinity'[159] in *Mythologies* and was developed into the self beyond time and change, the permanent 'ghostly self',[160] or the spirit of a dead person who would ally himself to an incarnate spirit as nearly as possible his opposite. As such, 'Daimon' incorporates all meanings of the word 'demon': 'in ancient Greek mythology (= δαίμων): a supernatural being of a nature intermediate between that of gods and men; an inferior divinity, spirit, genius (including the souls or ghosts of deceased persons, *esp.* deified heroes)'.[161] Yeats himself used 'demon' and 'daemon' as well as 'Daimon' in his work. But Daimon became his preferred choice, especially

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[157] *Mythologies*, p. 335.
[158] Ibid., p. 335.
[159] Ibid., p. 286.
[160] *A Vision*, p. 193.
[161] See *OED*

when referring to the supernatural being who leads a man to his own opposite.

In *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, Yeats claims that 'the Daimon, by using his mediatorial shades, brings man again and again to the place of choice'.[162] The 'mediatorial shades' are a third phase of being called 'the condition of air' between the human and supernatural reality, or 'the terrestrial and the condition of fire'. In this phase 'images have but a borrowed life, that of memory or that reflected upon them'.[163] However, the place of shades is given a more detailed description to explain the connection between the Antithetical self and the world of the dead in *The Soul in Judgement*, Book III of *A Vision*. It will be necessary to give some elaboration of Yeats's system of thought in *A Vision* as it relates to his understanding of the philosophical function of masks before proceeding to discuss how these ideas informed his understanding of drama.

In *The Soul in Judgement*, Yeats subdivides the state of the soul into three stages: 'that of waking, that of dreaming, [and] that of dreamless sleep'.[164] He defines 'a fourth state' as one where the soul is 'united to the blessed dead'. The fourth state is 'reached not in dreamless sleep but in contemplation and in wakefulness' and it is 'pure light to those that reach it'.[165] The period between death and birth is divided into six states: *The Vision of the Blood Kindred*, the *Meditation*, the *Shifting*, the *Marriage* or

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[162] *Mythologies*, p. 361.
[163] Ibid., p. 356.
[164] Yeats's description of the soul is from *Upanishads* (any of a class of Sanskrit sacred books).
[165] *A Vision*, p. 222.

the *Beatitude*, the *Purification*, and the *Foreknowledge*. The *Meditation*, the second state, includes the three phases *Dreaming Back*, the *Return*, and the *Phantasmagoria*.[166]

Yeats mentions the influence of the visions of Purgatory upon European literature in his essay 'The Celtic Element in Literature':

> Ernest Renan has told how the visions of Purgatory seen by pilgrims to Lough Derg – once visions of the pagan underworld, as the boat made out of a hollow tree that bore the pilgrim to the holy island were alone enough to prove – gave European thought new symbols of a more abundant penitence; and had so great an influence that he has written, 'It cannot be doubted for a moment that to the number of poetical themes Europe owes to the genius of the Celt is to be added the framework of the *Divine Comedy*'.[167]

In this essay Yeats argues that 'the passions and beliefs of ancient times'[168] are of continuing importance because they offer memorable symbols to

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[166] The following is a summary of the six stages as characterised by Yeats. 1. *The Vision of the Blood Kindred*, at the first stage after death, is 'a synthesis, before disappearance, of all the impulses and images which constitute the *Husk*'.
2. The *Meditation* – 'the "emotion of sanctity" on the Great Wheel; the *Spirit and Celestial body appear.*'
i) *Dreaming Back* –where 'the *Spirit* is compelled to live over and over again the events that had most moved it'.
ii) The *Return* – where 'the *Spirit* must live through past events in the order of their occurrence, because it is compelled by the *Celestial Body* to trace every passionate event to its cause until all are related and understood, turned into knowledge, made a part of itself'.
iii) The *Phantasmagoria* – which exists to exhaust, not nature, not pain and pleasure, but emotion, and is the work of *Teaching Spirits*.
3. The *Shifting* – where 'the *Spirit* is purified of good and evil as a result of knowing the other half of experience. 'This state is described as a true life, as distinguished from the preceding states; the soul is free in the sense that it is subject to necessary truth alone, the *Celestial Body* is described as present in person instead of through 'Messengers'.
4. The *Marriage* or the *Beatitude* – which is the state of perfect definition of form since 'good and evil vanish into the whole'. It is the equivalent of Phrase 15.
5. The *Purification* – where 'a new *Husk* and *Passionate Body* take the place of the old; made from the old, yet, as it were, pure'. The soul is ready to reach perfection before the movement to rebirth begins.
6. The *Foreknowledge* – which 'must substitute the next incarnation, as Fate has decreed it, for that form of perfection. The *Spirit* cannot be reborn until the vision of that life is completed and accepted'. See *A Vision*, pp. 219-40.
[167] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 185.
[168] Ibid., p. 185.

European literature. Purgatory in particular occupies a prominent imaginative space in the plays of Shakespeare. Even though it was written during the Protestant rein of Elizabeth I, Hamlet evidences a Catholic way of thinking about Purgatory; while a Protestant view is displayed by Horatio, who considers the ghost of Old Hamlet to be an evil spirit usurping the body of the dead king. The ghost of Old Hamlet plays a crucial role in stimulating Hamlet to the discovery of his anti-self. In this respect the play is in accordance with Yeats's belief that the supernatural has an important part in the process of uncovering the anti-self.

In his essay 'Accommodating the Dead: *Hamlet* and the Ends of Revenge' Michael Neill asserts that *Hamlet* was written in response to a Protestant society where Purgatory was no longer supposed to exist.[169] He argues:

> Under the new Protestant dispensation there remained no institutionalised way of appeasing the indignation of the dead, whose stored-up malice might threaten the wholesale destruction of society.[170]

In contrast Peter Levi places the discussion of Purgatory within a different context, arguing that in *Hamlet* its import is derived from medieval superstition:

> [*Hamlet*'s] state of purgatory is deeply rooted in medieval superstition rather than in Catholic dogma, and it is obvious enough that the underworld of such thoughts and imaginations was in common between Shakespeare and his audience: it takes longer than a generation to extinguish fires like those; they may burn on for hundreds of years after the dogma is gone which once supported them.[171]

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[169] Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy*, p. 256.
[170] Ibid., p. 245.
[171] Peter Levi, *The Life and Times of William Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 220.

Levi's argument has an affinity with Yeats's opinion that Purgatory is a significant symbol established in European thought since ancient times. In his article 'The Message of the Folk-lorist', which is 'actually an enlarged review of T.F. Thistelton Dyer's The Ghost World, London, 1893',[172] Yeats defines Shakespeare as one of the 'folk-lorists with musical tongues' such as Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Dante, Goethe and Keats.[173] He adds that 'in the folk-lore of almost every country, the ghosts revisit the earth as moths or butterflies, as doves or ravens, or in some other representative shape'.[174] Yeats's remark agrees with Levi's argument that notions of purgatorial are derived from medieval superstition. In addition it confirms Yeats's own view that Purgatory is a symbol which had a great influence upon European people. It can therefore be said that regardless of his practical religion, Shakespeare used the visions of Purgatory that he considered to be familiar in the imaginations of his audience and himself. In the same article Yeats writes that 'the greatest poets of every nation have drawn from stories like this, symbols and events to express the most lyrical, the most subjective moods'.[175]

The supernatural elements of *Hamlet* can be analysed according to Yeats's account of Purgatory. At the start of the play, the ghost of Hamlet's father is in the process of *Meditation*, of the six states between death and birth. The ghost identifies himself:

I am thy father's spirit,

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[172] *Uncollected Prose by W.B. Yeats*, Vol. I, ed. by John P. Frayne (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 283.
[173] Ibid., p. 284.
[174] Ibid., p. 286.
[175] Ibid., p. 287.

> Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
> And for the day confin'd to fast in fires,
> Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
> Are burnt and purg'd away. (1.5.9-13)

The soul of Hamlet's father is in the state of a soul that is 'dreaming', or *Dreaming Back.* In this phase, the soul is 'compelled to live over and over again the events that had most moved it'.[176] 'Only after long and perhaps painful dreams of the past', the *Purification* by which 'the Spirit finds the Celestial Body' is possible.[177] If death is violent or tragic, it takes longer to achieve *Purification.* The spirit of Old Hamlet, whose death is tragic, wanders about the place of his past to fulfil his dream of revenge. In *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, Yeats cites this scene to support his idea of the world of the dead, saying 'when Hamlet refused the bare bodkin because of what dreams may come, it was from no mere literary fancy'.[178] As mentioned above, according to Yeats, if death is tragic, the soul remains in the phase of *Dreaming Back* longer and more painfully.

On the other hand, the spirit of Old Hamlet might be considered to be in the state of *Shiftings*, after *Meditation*, because it takes a form which 'was most familiar to others during its life'. In Yeats's account, the soul has a form according to its status in the afterlife:

> In the *Meditation* it wears the form it had immediately before death; in the *Dreaming Back* and the *Phantasmagoria*, should it appear to the living, it has the form of the dream, in the *Return* the form worn during the event explored, in the *Shiftings* whatever form was most familiar to others during its life; in the

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[176] *A Vision*, p. 226.
[177] Ibid., p. 224.
[178] *Mythologies*, p. 354.

> *Purification* whatever form it fancies, for it is now the Shape-changer of legend.[179]

The ghost of Old Hamlet described by Horatio wears 'the very armour he had on / When he the ambitious Norway combated' (1.1.60-1). The form is the very image suited to deliver Old Hamlet's 'valiant' quality. Horatio wonders why the spirit takes this form. It is an image in the past and according to the revelation of the ghost, Old Hamlet died while 'sleeping in my orchard'(1.5.35). It is unlikely that he was wearing the armour at that time. Stephen Greenblatt discusses the same question in the essay 'The Questionable Shape' in his *Hamlet in Purgatory*:[180]

> If an apparition appeared more than once, as the dreaded sight does in *Hamlet*, any alteration in its appearance might provide some guidance. The second apparition was often marked by a costume change: the spirit, which at first appeared in the clothing of everyday life and with the age and features that the mortal body possessed at the time of death, might now be clad in white. It would declare in this way that it had been cleansed of its mortal stains, with the aid of the suffrages offered by the faithful, and was now bound for Heaven.[181]

The quotation above classifies the costumes of an apparition into two kinds: the clothing of everyday life and a white costume symbolising purification. Although Yeats's account of how the costumes of ghosts change after death, in accordance with the stages of *Meditation* and *Shiftings*, is at variance with Greenblatt's analysis, according to both, the fact that the Ghost of Old Hamlet appears in his armour is a signal that he has not yet been cleansed

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[179] *A Vision*, pp. 235-6.
[180] His knowledge about this quotation is based on Jaques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) and Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghost in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, trans. by Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). See *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 303.
[181] Stephen Greenblatt, p. 209.

of his mortal stains. Seen on the same grounds, the ghost of Banquo (3.4) in *Macbeth* would be likely to take 'the form it had immediately before death' because it appears to Macbeth shortly after the Murderer's news of Banquo's death.

Furthermore the 'daemon' used to describe Antony's spirit in *Antony and Cleopatra* is the equivalent of an angel-like spirit if understood according to Yeats's description:

> Therefore, O Antony, stay not by his side.
> Thy daemon –that thy spirit which keeps thee- is
> Noble, courageous, high unmatchable,
> Where Caesar's is not. But near him, thy angel
> Becomes afeard, as being o'erpowered; therefore
> Make space enough between you. (2.3.16-22)

In his essay 'Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolate Places', Yeats identifies 'angels', borrowing from Swedenborg's account: 'all angels were once men [...] and it is therefore men who have entered into what he calls the Celestial State and become angels'.[182] If applied to the six states between death and birth, the 'daemon' is a spirit that enters 'the Celestial State' after undergoing the six states after death.

According to Yeats it takes time for the soul to pass through the six periods between death and birth. In Yeats's plays the soul that is in the state of *Purification*, 'the Shape-changer of legend', is mainly found because Shape-changing was thought in Irish lore to be the property of supernatural beings. For example, the Faery Child in *The Land of Heart's Desire* takes

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[182] *Explorations*, p. 34.

the shape of a 'girl child strangely dressed, perhaps in faery green' [183] even though she is 'much older than the eagle-cock / And he is the oldest thing under the moon' (345-7). The soul in a state of *Purification* in *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902) shows the process of changing its shape. It takes the shape of an old woman in the play and transforms Michael's consciousness, driving him to join the army even though he is supposed to marry the next day. The old woman's identity as 'Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan' (278-9) is revealed at the end by Patrick, who says that he saw 'a young girl' (347) with 'the walk of a queen' (348) instead of an old woman. It should be noted that the shape-changing of Cathleen ni Houlihan also serves to deliver a nationalist message about the renewal of Ireland by patriotic sacrifice. As Robert Welch argues

> [the play] drew upon a symbol or an archetype in Gaelic and nationalist tradition: that of Ireland imaged as an old woman who can be made young again by sacrifice and devotion to the cause of Irish freedom.[184]

Just as the ghost of Old Hamlet appears to Hamlet and the Faery Child to Mary, the souls in Purgatory desire to visit the living because in doing so they can fulfil 'the completion of some syntheses left unfinished in its past'[185] through the living, as Yeats postulates in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*:

> The dead, as the passionate necessity wears out, come into a measure of freedom and may turn the impulse of events, started while living, in some new direction, but they cannot originate except through the living.[186]

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[183] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 186.
[184] Robert Welch, *The Abbey Theatre 1899-1999: Form and Pressure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 16.
[185] *A Vision*, p. 233.
[186] *Mythologies*, p. 355.

This accounts for the fact that the ghosts of Diarmuid and Dervorgilla[187] in *The Dreaming of the Bones* (1919) are dreaming for seven years, looking for a human agent to forgive their sins. Yeats adds to the importance of the world of the dead because 'the dead living in their memories are the source of all that we call instinct, and it is their love and their desire, all unknowing, that make us drive beyond our reason, or in defiance of our interest it may be'.[188] Using the souls in Purgatory, 'the Daimon comes not as like to like but seeking its own opposite'.[189] The union of man and Daimon is achieved by man's discovery of his mask:

> [...] for man and Daimon feed the hunger in one another's hearts. Because the ghost is simple, the man heterogeneous and confused, they are but knit together when the man has found a mask whose lineaments permit the expression of all the man most lacks, and it may be dreads, and of that only. [190]

When a man finds his mask with the help of the Daimon that leads him to his own opposite, he can be integrated with his Daimon and as a result discover his Anti-Self. Yeats defines this state as 'Unity of Being',[191] the equivalent of Phase 15 on the Great Wheel, which is the state of 'Complete Subjectivity'.[192]

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[187] Dervorgilla, daughter of the King of Meath, wife of O'Rourke, King of Breffny, was taken away, willingly or unwillingly, by Diarmuid MacMurrough, King of Leinster, in the year 1152. O'Rourke and his friends invaded Leinster in revenge, and in the wars which followed, Diarmuid, driven from Ireland, appealed for help to Henry II of England, and was given an army under Strongbow, to whom Diarmuid promised Leinster as reward. It is so the English were first brought into Ireland. Dervorgilla, having outlived O'Rourke and Diarmuid, and Henry and Strongbow, is said to have died at the Abbey of Mellifont, near Drogheda, in the year 1193, aged 85. See *W.B. Yeats: Selected Plays*, ed. by Richard Allen Cave, p. 322.

[188] *Mythologies*, p. 359.

[189] Ibid., p. 335.

[190] Ibid., p. 335.

[191] *A Vision*, p. 82.

[192] Ibid., p. 81.

Phase 15 is 'an ideal or supernatural incarnation'[193] and compared to that of 'a perfectly proportioned human body':

> All unity is from the Mask, and the antithetical Mask is described in the automatic script as a 'form created by passion to unite us to ourselves', the self so sought is that Unity of Being compared by Dante in the *Convito* to that of 'a perfectly proportioned human body'.[194]

However, a Daimon will not necessarily lead man in the right way. According to Yeats, 'the Daimon delivers and deceives us',[195] with the consequence that the confrontation with the Daimon can prove to be delivery or despair. In this respect Yeats claims that a Daimon represents our destiny, and our life is a struggle with the Daimon.[196] The wearing of the mask is, according to Yeats, 'active virtue', as opposed to the passive acceptance of a code. Yeats says:

> 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. Active virtue, as distinguished from the passive acceptance of a code, is therefore theatrical, consciously dramatic, the wearing of a mask.[197]

Consequently to wear a mask is to try to play the role of 'something not one's self' or 'the second self', and accordingly is looked upon as 'active virtue, as distinguished from the passive acceptance of a code'.

The notion of transcending 'the passive acceptance of a code' recalls Schopenhauer's evaluation of Shakespeare in 'Ideas Concerning the Intellect' which was read by Yeats. The editors of Yeats's letters note:

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[193] *A Vision*, p. 82.
[194] Ibid., p. 82.
[195] *Mythologies*, p. 336.
[196] Ibid., p. 337.
[197] Ibid., p. 334.

> WBY may have been thinking in particular of [Schopenhauer's] 'Ideas Concerning the Intellect', in which he deplores those artists who are infected by the 'consciousness of the times', and argues that it is 'only the absolutely genuine poet or thinker who rises superior to all such influences', citing as an example Shakespeare, who 'wished to show in the mirror of poetry *men*, not moral caricatures; and so everyone recognises them in the mirror and his works live today and for all time.[198]

In light of this, Yeats's encounter with Noh theatre should be construed not as a divorce from Shakespeare but as the development of Yeats's response to him.

Yeats's choice of the mask from Noh conventions is for the purpose of expressing the hero's discovery of his Anti-Self. One such example is Hamlet's painful course towards crossing the 'threshold of sanctity', which Yeats observed in the graveside scene of *Hamlet*. To quote once more the account Yeats gives in his *Autobiographies*:

> I felt in *Hamlet*, as so often in Shakespeare, that I am in the presence of a soul lingering on the storm-beaten threshold of sanctity. Has not that threshold always been terrible, even crime-haunted?[199]

Yeats's understanding of Hamlet's conflict results in his use of the term 'threshold', and further, his staging of actual thresholds in order to emphasise 'something not one's self' or 'the second self' that the tragic hero should eventually assume. It is the anti-self or otherness that Yeats concentrates on the mask, which he describes as existing outside the threshold in *The Land of Heart's Desire* and *Deirdre*. It can thus be said

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[198] *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. 3, eds. by John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard (Oxford: Clarence Press, 1994), p. 133. Also, see *Parerga and Paralipomena*, trans. by E.F.J. Payne (Oxford: Clarence Press, 1974), pp. 66-7.
[199] *Autobiographies*, p. 521.

that Yeats's conception of the mask is part of the same development that begins with the threshold on which Hamlet is seen to be lingering. Both playwrights, as antithetical dramatists willing to assume the mask of some other self, use not only physical masks but also symbolic ones in their plays, even though it is true that Yeats places a greater emphasis on physical masks than Shakespeare. As Yeats's physical thresholds are gradually changed into symbolic thresholds, so his masks are shifted from literal pieces of costume into abstract symbols representing the dramatic role of the *antithetical* self.

Shakespeare's literal masks are, for example, shown in two scenes of *Much Ado About Nothing*: Act 2, scene 1, and Act 5, scene 4. The major function of the masks used in the scenes is to conceal the identities of the dramatic personae, but the former scene is distinguished from the latter because some dramatic characters experience a conflict between their identity and their mask. The first scene in which masks are used presents a masquerade scene comparable to Act 1, scene 5 of *Romeo and Juliet*. Owing to their masks, the dramatic personae enjoy the freedom to behave without 'the terrors of judgement', as Yeats explains in his *Autobiographies*.[200] With the help of his grotesque visor, Don Pedro (who takes Claudio's part) woos Hero for Claudio, who is not brave enough to propose himself. In particular through Margaret and Ursula, Hero's serving women, masks serve to collapse the gaps between the sexes and social groups. Margaret exchanges

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[200] *Autobiographies*, pp. 503-4.

a flirtatious conversation with Balthasar, an attendant to Don Pedro, and Ursula teases Antonio while in disguise, even though he is of higher status.

Nevertheless, a mask is a new role to be played and thus requires of the wearer behaviour appropriate to that mask. This is why Benedick has no choice but to suffer the effect of Beatrice's bitter tongue when she criticises him, pretending not to recognise him in his disguise. This is also true of Claudio. His disguise as Benedick is taken advantage of by Don John, illegitimate brother to Don Pedro. Even though he was informed of Claudio's identity by his companion, Borachio ('And that is Claudio; I know him by his bearing.' (2.1.144-5)),[201] Don John calls Claudio Benedick and allusively delivers the news that Don Pedro is enamoured with Hero. The villain, who has recently failed to revolt against Don Pedro, desires to thwart Don Pedro's plan for marriage between Claudio and Hero as a kind of vengeance. His intrigue succeeds in frustrating Claudio, who soliloquises:

> Thus answer I in the name of Benedick,
> But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio. (2.1.157-8)

Claudio's lines clearly express the conflict between his identity and his mask. Though he is only wearing a mask for the revelling, it offers him another role to which he should be faithful. But his true identity continues to reveal itself from behind the mask, and his failure to completely absorb himself in the new role causes him pain. Claudio's ears are hurt by the ill news because he hears it 'with the ears of Claudio', and not those of his

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[201] William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, ed. by Claire McEachern (London: Aden, 2006). All future references will be to this edition, citing line Act, scene and line numbers parenthetically.

mask, Benedick. As such, the mask does not simply conceal the wearer's identity, but also requires that his behaviour be compatible with the mask he wears.

On the other hand, the masks in Act 5, scene 4 simply serve to hide identity. The masks worn by the four women are intended to impose a penance on Claudio, who accused Hero of infidelity by foolish credulity and resulted in her supposed death. As revenge on Claudio, Leonato, Hero's father, orders Claudio to announce Hero's innocence, to sing an epitaph at her tomb, and then to marry his brother's daughter. Until it has been proved that Claudio accepts this penance with sincerity, Leonato conceals the fact that Hero is alive by masking her with Beatrice, Margaret and Ursula. Despite Claudio's request, 'let me see your face' (5.4.54-5), Leonato does not sway:

> No, that you shall not till you take her hand
> Before this friar and swear to marry her. (5.4.56-7)

It is only when Claudio makes a binding pledge of marriage that Hero reveals her identity by taking off her mask. The masks in this scene are employed purely to test Claudio and thus do not exceed the function of disguise.

In contrast Don Pedro's mask involves a significant function connected with the whole play as well as with the masquerade scene, in that his mask symbolises his determined role in the play. Don Pedro is the Prince of Aragon. He acts as an omnipotent ruler in the play world. First of all, he acts like a love-god for the young lovers. For Claudio, who is not brave enough to confess his love for Hero, he promises to

> assume thy part in some disguise
> And tell fair Hero I am Claudio;
> And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart
> And take her hearing prisoner with the force
> And strong encounter of my amorous tale.
> Then after, to her father will I break,
> And the conclusion is: she shall be thine. (1.1.301-8)

Don Pedro's power is such that he can make love grow in Hero's heart not for himself, but for Claudio, and can draw the permission for marriage, not to himself, but to Claudio from her father.

The result of Don Pedro's metamorphosis into Claudio is a success despite Don John's plot to make Claudio believe Pedro wooed Hero for himself. Leonato also admits the fact that it is Don Pedro that achieves this marriage: 'His grace hath made the match' (2.1.268). The god of love makes another plan, taking advantage of the interval before Hero's marriage to Claudio. This plan is to make a match between Benedick and Beatrice, who seem to hate each other and deny the convention of marriage. Pedro teaches Hero 'how to humour [her] cousin that she shall fall in love with Benedick' (2.1.351-2), and asks Claudio and Leonato for help with which he 'will so practice on Benedick that, in spite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice' (2.1.353-5). He announces they can be love-gods who exceed even Cupid:

> If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer; his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love-gods. Go in with me and I will tell you my drift. (2.1.355-8)

Don Pedro's privileged power is already implied through the mask he wears during the masquerade. He introduces his mask to Hero: 'My visor is Philemon's roof: within the house is Jove' (2.1.85-6). His mask is

grotesque and ugly like the humble cottage roof, but contains Jove, king of the gods, within it. The mask housing Jove determines his role from the beginning of the play. In this sense, Don Pedro's mask is closer to Yeats's conception in that it represents the given role the wearer should play.

The first play to incorporate the new ideas Yeats developed about the function of masks is *At the Hawk's Well* (1917), although he had used physical masks before this in the two plays *On Baile's Strand* (1904) and *The Hour-Glass* (1914) to fulfil a symbolic function. For instance, in *On Baile's Strand*, the Blind Man's and the Fool's features are '*made grotesque and extravagant by masks*'[202] with the result that their distorted aspects present a striking contrast to the heroic stature of Conchubar and Cuchulain. In *The Hour-Glass*, the Angel's mask serves to distinguish the supernatural from the natural, whereas Teigue's 'makes him less a human being than a principle of the mind'.[203] As such, Yeats had already used masks as an effective stage tool to represent the symbolic roles of the mask-wearers instead of their personal aspects. But it is in *At the Hawk's Well* that Yeats first made a substantial use of masks in accordance with his own new and unique conception of their function. It is also the first play in which masks are worn by the major characters.

In *At the Hawk's Well* Yeats gives a mask not only to the hero, the Young Man (Cuchulain) but also to the Old Man, the equivalent of the second actor (*waki*) in Noh theatre, in this respect deviating from the Noh

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[202] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 459.
[203] Ibid., p. 645.

convention whereby the mask is assigned only to the principle actor (*sh'te*). Their masks symbolise the roles they should assume in the play, each of the masks bearing a different significance. As Yeats mentions in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, the mask is 'all the man most lacks' to be complete and 'maybe dreads'. Above all the Old Man's mask demonstrates all he fears. The Musicians' song alludes to the Old Man's desolate fate:

> What were his life soon done!
> Would he lose by that or win?
> A mother that saw her son
> Doubled over a specked shin,
> Cross-grained with ninety years,
> Would cry, 'How little worth
> Were all my hopes and fears
> And the hard pain of his birth!' (9-16)

The Old Man's life is composed only of useless efforts: though the Old Man has the fifty-year-knowledge of the well of immortality, the hazel which symbolises his wisdom is 'long stripped by the wind' (3). He seems 'as dried up as the leaves and sticks, / As though [he] had no part in life' (181-2).

The beginning of the play is the Musicians' explanation of its background in the Old Man's futile life that withered while he waited for the miraculous flood to take place. This is the Old Man's life, but also the Young Man's possible life should he fail to find and accept his predetermined fate. In other words, the Old Man's fate is the aspect of his life the Young Man fears. As such, the mask the Old Man wears represents the fear of the Young Man as well as that of the Old Man.

The Young Man's mask symbolises his heroic destiny and expresses all that he lacks to be a hero. Young Cuchulain's role in this play is a heroic phase, as expressed by his mask and costume. The Old Man, when he sees Cuchulain, says:

> [...] If I may judge by the gold
> On head and feet and glittering in your coat,
> You are not of those who hate the living world. (81-3)

But the incongruity between Cuchulain's appearance and his behaviour causes the Old Man to suspect his ability as a hero. Nevertheless Cuchulain's approach to the well foreshadows his predestined life:

> A rumour has led me,
> A story told over the wine towards dawn.
> I rose from table, found a boat, spread sail,
> And with a lucky wind under the sail
> Crossed waves that have seemed charmed, and found this shore. (89-93)

Contrary to his fate young Cuchulain, before his transformation into a hero, is not sufficient to meet his destiny. He desires the immortal water without thinking of its price. The Old Man blames his attitude on the 'folly of youth' (110) and says of his own desperate fifty-year-life:

> I came like you
> When young in body and in mind, and blown
> By what had seemed to me a lucky sail.
> The well was dry, I sat upon its edge,
> I waited the miraculous flood, I waited
> While the years passed and withered me away.
> I have snared the birds for food and eaten grass
> And drunk the rain, and neither in dark nor shine
> Wandered too far away to have heard the plash,
> And yet the dancers have deceived me. Thrice
> I have awakened from a sudden sleep
> To find the stones were wet. (128-39)

Like Cuchulain the Old Man also came to this shore by what he believed to be 'a lucky sail'. He was as young as Cuchulain and confident of 'the

miraculous flood'. But reality betrayed his confidence and demanded a bestial life trapped in a prison called the well of immortality. The railing on the dancers who have deceived him at the moment of the plash fills the Old Man's miserable mind even though 'all others bless' (127) those dancers. His wretched life is predetermined, as his mask represents.

On the other hand, wearing a heroic mask, Cuchulain takes a different course of life to that taken by the Old Man when he is placed in the same situation. When the miraculous flood takes place, the Guardian of the Well's eyes are transmuted by the possession of 'The Woman of the Sidhe herself / The mountain witch' (161). The Old Man dares not see her eyes because 'There falls a curse / On all who have gazed in her unmoistened eyes' (167-8). The curse told by the Old Man is reminiscent of Cuchulain's tragic life as depicted in the Irish heroic saga:

> That curse may be
> Never to win a woman's love and keep it;
> Or always to mix hatred in the love;
> Or it may be that she will kill your children,
> That you will find them, their throats torn and bloody,
> Or you will be so maddened that you kill them
> With your own hand. (173-9)

The Old Man, who '*covers his head*'[204] to avoid the Guardian of the Well, falls asleep, as he has done at every moment of the flow. But Cuchulain is willing to confront the curse, saying 'Why do you fix those eyes of a hawk upon me? / I am not afraid of you, bird, woman, or witch' (209-10). He is transformed into a tragic hero after being possessed by the dance of the Guardian of the Well. The transformation involves his perception of his

[204] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 409.

duty as a hero, and he undertakes his new but predetermined purpose: his encounter with the woman warrior, Aoife, whereas the Old Man's role is one of dissuasion as he exhorts him, 'O, do not go! The mountain is accursed' (246). Cuchulain declares:

> I will face them.
> [*He goes out, no longer as if in a dream, but shouldering his spear and calling*:]
> He comes! Cuchulain, son of Sualtim, comes! (248-9)

In his first encounter with the Old Man, Cuchulain identified himself in the first person: 'I am named Cuchulain, I am Sualtim's son' (84). But after being possessed by the Guardian of the Well, his identification is expressed in the third person ('He comes'). This represents the fact that Cuchulain starts to recognise himself from a different point of view by means of a process of depersonalisation. As a result he accepts the hero's duty that his mask symbolises. With the help of the dancer, who functions as a daimon leading him to his opposite, Cuchulain comes to accept his heroic mask. In this sense the Daimon is his deliverer, whereas it is the Old Man's deceiver. The shadows in the desolate places thus turn out two contrasting shapes of life: Cuchulain's 'pleasant life' (262) which is accompanied by 'a bitter life' (264) because it anticipates his later tragedy, and the Old Man's life which he must spend like an idiot who must 'praise / Dry stones in a well' (271-2) and 'A withered tree' (280). The different facets of life concentrate on their masks.

Yeats continuously employed physical masks to emphasise the fateful role of the mask-wearer in the other three plays comprising *Four Plays for Dancers* that succeeded *At the Hawk's Well*. However, the physical masks

are by degree changed into symbolic masks to represent a different role by which to discover the Anti-Self. *The Player Queen* (1922) is a play Yeats mapped out to incorporate the new being expressed as the 'Antithetical self' into the stage. He revealed his intention in his note to the play:

> I began in, I think, 1907, a verse tragedy, but at that time the thought I have set forth in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* was coming into my head, and I found examples of it everywhere. I wasted the best working months of several years in an attempt to write a poetical play where every character became an example of the finding or not finding of what I have called the Antithetical Self; and because passion and not thought makes tragedy, what I made had neither simplicity nor life.[205]

Yeats assigns the role of the character who finds the 'Antithetical Self' to Decima, the heroine of the play. Yet Decima does not appear wearing the mask symbolising her fate as Cuchulain does in *At the Hawk's Well*. Instead, she discovers her *antithetical* self through a process of role-playing and as a result accepts 'the mask of the sister of Noah'[206] which she has been refusing to wear even though it is her part to play in the playlet.

Decima eventually plays the role of Queen as the result of an urgent accident. The Queen in the play is in danger of being killed by the mob who believe she is a witch. In the critical situation when the mob is coming to kill the Queen, Decima suggests she can die instead of the Queen because Decima has already tried to commit suicide owing to her husband Septimus's betrayal. As such, her determination to die for the Queen is derived from her desperate condition. She says, 'I shall die whatever you

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[205] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 761.
[206] Ibid., p. 734.

do' (645-6) to the Queen who will not 'let another die instead of me' (643). Decima 'puts on the Queen's robe of state and her slippers'[207] and is disguised as the Queen, while the Queen comes to 'lose my name and disappear' (668-9) by wearing 'some kind of nun-like dress'.[208] After the Queen's disappearance, Decima is seated upon the throne and waiting for her death.

Yet, contrary to her expectation, the Bishop announces that 'all misunderstandings are an end, all has been settled by your condescension in bestowing your royal hand upon the Prime Minister' (675-8). Ironically Decima, playing the part of the Queen, is recognised as the real Queen. She also wants to remain as the Queen. The supposed Queen says, 'I am Queen' (691) and takes the Prime Minister as her new man. She tells the story about herself as if it were a stranger's:

> A woman player has left you. Do not mourn her. She was a bad, head-strong, cruel woman, and seeks destruction some-where and with some man she knows nothing of; such a woman they tell me that this mask would well become, this foolish, smiling face! Come, dance. (758-63)

She is not Decima any longer. She is completely absorbed in the part of the Queen. In other words, she is already separated from her identity and is, like Cuchulain in the preceding play, in a state of depersonalisation. Now, from a more objective point of view, she is able to judge Decima and declares that 'the mask of the sister of Noah' is fit for Decima. Yeats proclaims the value of finding our own opposite through Septimus's mouth:

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[207] Ibid., p. 756.
[208] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 756.

'Man is nothing till he is united to an image' (479-80). As a result of her disguise as the Queen, Decima is united to her image, or mask.

Yeats's understanding of the process of discovery of an Anti-Self through disguise can be applied to Edgar in *King Lear*. There are as a matter of fact two disguises in the play: Edgar's and Kent's. Nonetheless it is in Edgar's disguise that a transformation comparable to that undergone by Decima can be witnessed.

Kent's disguise is for the purpose of continuously attending on King Lear after his banishment. Kent changes himself so that he may be suitable for the new part:

> If but as well I other accents borrow,
> That can my speech defuse, my good intent
> May carry through itself to that full issue
> For which I raz'd my likeness. (1.4.1-4)[209]

To fulfil his 'good intent' of serving his master, he 'raz'd [his] likeness' and borrowed 'other accents' to defuse his speech. In addition to these physical disguises of accent and appearance, Kent even tries to change his consciousness. By calling himself 'banished Kent' as if a third party, he escapes from his old identity and confirms the change he has undergone to the audience as well as to himself:

> Now, banish'd Kent,
> If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,
> So may it come, thy master, whom thou lov'st,
> Shall find thee full of labours. (1.4.4-7)

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[209] William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. by Kenneth Muir (London: Routledge, 1989). All future references will be to this edition, citing line Act, scene and line numbers parenthetically.

Kent, transformed into Caius, performs his new role well enough to serve King Lear without betraying his real identity. However, the discovery of 'a new being' through this act of role-playing does not take place in Kent.

Edgar alters in appearance four times until he recovers his real identity. In other words, wearing four different masks, he plays four different roles in addition to his role as Edgar. Before 'The wheel is come full circle' (5.3.173), Edgar encounters the evils of the world he could not perceive before his disguise. These experiences educate him and as a result turn out a new being, mature Edgar. The maturity Edgar gains through his experience of evil is associated with the phase of *Shiftings* in the world of the dead. In *Shiftings* the soul goes through the other half of experience. In other words, 'In so far as [a] man did good without knowing evil, or evil without knowing good, his nature is reversed until that knowledge is obtained'.[210] Good that occurs through ignorance of evil is not a true virtue, and vice versa. For the whole morality of a man the knowledge of both is necessary. This is, Yeats argues, the start of 'true life'.[211]

The process of Edgar's transformation into mature Edgar by means of the experience he gains under disguise recalls young Cuchulain's metamorphosis into a tragic hero as a result of his encounter with spiritual power in *At the Hawk's Well*. Young Cuchulain appears wearing the heroic mask he should eventually accept as his fate, but his attitude, described at the beginning of the play, is that of an impatient youth. On the other hand Edgar does not wear any mask symbolising his fate, but he is also described

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[210] *A Vision*, p. 231.
[211] Ibid., p. 232.

at first as a naïve young man and at the end of the play, when he discovers his new identity, he is no longer the same as he was at the beginning of the play. He is changed into a mature adult who is cognisant of evil and has the ability to cope with it. As such, regardless of whether they are wearing masks, both Edgar and Cuchulain are transfigured into mature adults in the sense that Edgar perceives evil and corrects it and Cuchulain realises and accepts his fate. Edgar and Cuchulain can be act regarded as *antithetical* men because they uncover new beings.

Edgar's flaw is his naivety, which Edmund, his illegitimate brother, takes advantage of. Edmund manipulates Edgar's betrayal of Gloucester, his father, confirming that Edgar is trapped in his intrigue. Edmund calls him

> [...] a brother noble,
> Whose nature is so far from doing harms
> That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
> My practices ride easy. (1.2.176-9)

Naïve Edgar is a prototype of Fergus in *Deirdre*. Fergus brings Deirdre and Naoise to Conchubar's guest house because he believes Conchubar's promise to forgive the young lovers is trustworthy. His naivety is taken advantage of by Conchubar, who wants to recover Deirdre from Naoise, and thus it leads the young lover to death.

Edgar's first disguise takes place in a dangerous situation that is caused by his ignorance of evil. Edmund's intrigue leads Gloucester to believe Edgar is planning parricide. This leads to Edgar's arrest and Gloucester's proclamation that Edmund, and not Edgar, is his heir. In a desperate attempt to save himself, Edgar determines to disguise himself by taking 'the basest

and most poorest shape' (2.3.7) he can imagine. In other words, the role he takes is the farthest one from 'his natural ego or *Will*', so an extreme effort is required of him to make himself fit the part. The fact that the disguise is as a beggar at the lowest position of society implies a significance that goes beyond self protection. It represents the fact that his life began as a naked infant exposed to evil, without the privilege associated with being the Earl of Gloucester's heir. The disguise demands that he give up everything he has been enjoying through his noble social status. He describes the process of assuming the disguise:

> [...] my face I'll grime with filth,
> Blanket my loins, elf all my hairs in knots,
> And with presented nakedness outface
> The winds and persecutions of the sky.
> The country gives me proof and precedent
> Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,
> Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms
> Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary [.] (2.3.9-16)

Edgar is changed into 'poor Tom' (20), one of the 'Bedlam beggars' (14). He practises the Bedlam beggar's whine. He deserts Edgar who is 'nothing' (21) and hopes to save his life as Tom. He is faithful to the role his disguise demands and succeeds in deceiving Gloucester as a 'Madman and beggar' (4.1.30).

Edgar's second disguise occurs after Gloucester becomes blind. He does not need the disguise of poor Tom because Gloucester realises the truth of Edmund's plot:

> I have no way, and therefore want no eyes;
> I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen,
> Our means secure us, and our mere defects
> Prove our commodities. Oh! Dear son Edgar,
> The food of thy abused father's wrath;

Might I but live to see thee in my touch,
I'd say I had eyes again. (4.1.17-23)

Now he needs an other disguise to place himself in a position to positively influence the depressed Gloucester, who plans to commit suicide in response to the shame of his folly. Edgar puts on the second disguise of 'a peasant' (4.4). Gloucester notices his change and says:

Methinks thy voice is alter'd, and thou speak'st
In better phrase and matter than thou didst. (4.4.7-8)

Edgar answers:

You're much deceiv'd; in nothing am I chang'd
But in my garments. (4.4.9-10)

Edgar says he has changed just 'his garments', but despite his denial, his new garments result in a noticeable change. He is not a naked beggar any longer. His status is raised to that of a peasant. His speech is naturally changed from prose to verse. His peasant-garments provide the new role he should play. Just as his clothes are advanced from those of a naked beggar to a peasant's garments, so the growth of his knowledge about the world is developed. He forms an ingenious plan to cure Gloucester's despair: he leads blind Gloucester to flat ground instead of 'the top of that same hill' (4.6.1) where Gloucester wants to kill himself, so that he makes Gloucester think his life has been saved by a miracle when he survives falling from the supposed steep top. Edgar says:

[...] thou happy father,
Think that the clearest Gods, who make them honours
Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee.
(4.6.72-4)

Edgar also fights against Goneril's servant, Oswald, who tries to kill Gloucester to gain the 'proclaim'd prize' (4.6.223). After knocking him down, Edgar identifies Oswald:

> I know thee well: a serviceable villain;
> As duteous to the vices of thy mistress
> As badness would desire. (4.6.249-51)

This implies that Edgar not only recognises evils but also has started to assume the role of judging them.

His third and fourth disguises are needed to play the role in a more active way, compared with the two previous disguises that he used to save his life and guide his father. In Act 5, scene 1, disguised Edgar delivers Albany the letter which on his death Oswald asked him to give Edmund, and discloses the 'machination' (5.1.46) of Goneril and Edmund against Albany. Through this disguise, Edgar manages to stop Goneril's evil. Edgar is transfigured into an armed soldier, and in Act 5 scene 3, he introduces himself as such:

> Know, my name is lost;
> By treason's tooth bare-gnawn, and canket-bit:
> Yet am I noble as the adversary
> I come to cope. (5.3.120-3)

Edgar proclaims Edmund's villainy:

> Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,
> Thy valour and thy heart, thou art a traitor,
> False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,
> Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince,
> And, from th'extremest upward of thy head
> To the descent and dust below thy foot
> A most toad-spotted traitor. (5.3.131-7)

After felling Edmund and exchanging forgiveness with him, Edgar at last uncovers his real identity: 'My name is Edgar, and thy father's son'

(5.3.168). This implies that Edgar needs a disguise to fight against his own brother. After punishing his evil, Edgar becomes once again a brother to Edmund and forgives him.

Yet Edgar's attempts to achieve justice do not cease. He reveals Kent's disguise to Albany:

> Kent, sir, the banish'd Kent; who in disguise
> Follow'd his enemy king, and did him service
> Improper for a slave. (5.3.218-20)

Edgar shows a heroic aspect as well as a growth in intelligence. At the end of the play, the three survivors are Albany, Edgar and Kent. Though Albany asks Kent and Edgar to 'Rule in this realm' (5.3.319), the focus is finally upon young Edgar when Kent rejects Albany's offer. The play ends with Edgar's lines:

> The weight of this sad time we must obey;
> Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
> The oldest hath borne most: we that are young
> Shall never see so much, nor live so long. (5.3.322-5)

Both Edgar and Kent undertake their dramatic disguises with success and in consequence they contribute to build justice and confront evil. However, more value is placed on Edgar because he undergoes the transformation from being naïve youth who 'suspects none' (1.3.178) into a righteous soldier. To describe his transformation in terms of Yeats's *Commedia dell' Arte*, Edgar discovers his new being as an *antithetical* man.

Perdita, the young heroine of *The Winter's Tale* is noteworthy as an extraordinary example of the discovery of a new identity by means of disguise in that the new identity she uncovers is in fact her real identity, which has been hidden from her since infancy. At the outset of Act 4, the identity of which she is conscious is as the daughter of a shepherd who is afraid of the gap between her low status and Florizel's royal position. Forced to be the hostess of the sheep-shearing festival by the Shepherd, Perdita wears the 'unusual weeds' (4.4.1) of Flora, and not her shepherdess's outfit. Her disguise as the queen of the festival seems to 'give a life' (4.4.2) to each part of her. But Perdita herself feels that 'it not becomes me' (4.4.6) because the self that Perdita is aware of is that of a 'poor lowly maid' (4.4.9). Perdita feels very uncomfortable wearing the queen's robe, and her self-consciousness affects her behaviour.[212] The Shepherd urges Perdita to play the role of 'the hostess of the meeting' (4.4.64), but Perdita is reluctant to perform the role: 'It is my father's will I should take on me / The hostess-ship o' th' day' (4.4.71-2).

Despite her anxiety, her time as queen brings an unexpected result. The way she speaks, sings and dances are all becoming of a queen. Florizel says:

> What you do,
> Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,
> I'd have you do it ever: when you sing,
> I'd have you buy and sell so, so give alms,

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[212] Peter B. Murray considers Perdita as an ironic case of absorbed action and explains how Perdita's self-consciousness prevents her from performing her role-playing as a queen. He says that 'in Perdita's benign world of romance the final irony is that her actual social identity, unknown to her, is the queenly one she is reluctant even to play-act because she thinks it is so far above her.' See *Shakespeare's Imagined Persons: The Psychology of Role-Playing and Acting* (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 173-8.

> Pray so, and, for the ord'ring your affairs,
> To sing them too: when you do dance, I wish you
> A wave o' th' sea, that you might ever do
> Nothing but that, move still, still so,
> And own no other function. Each your doing,
> So singular in each particular,
> Crowns what you are doing, in the present deeds,
> That all your acts are queens. (4.4.135-46)

Through role-playing Perdita recovers a new facet of her identity, but ironically this new aspect reflects her real identity. As a matter of fact, Perdita's dignified qualities which derive from her royal status were observed even before she wore the costume. Personified Time introduces Perdita as 'now grown in grace / Equal with wond'ring'. Camillo's report proves that Perdita's nobility is unusual for a shepherd's daughter:

> I have heard, sir, of such a man, who hath a daughter of
> most rare note: the report of her is extended more than
> can be thought to begin from such a cottage. (4.2.41-5)

Moreover, after meeting Perdita, Polixenes, who only fears the shepherd's remarkable daughter will entice his son, admits her noteworthy rareness:

> This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever
> Ran on the green-sward: nothing she does or seems
> But smacks of something greater than herself,
> Too noble for this place. (4.4.156-9)

When she wears the costume and plays the role of a queen, she detects the transformation taking place inside herself:

> Methinks I play as I have seen them do
> In Whitsun pastorals: sure this robe of mine
> Does change my disposition. (4.4.133-5)

Regardless of her real identity, Perdita perceives that her disposition has changed. Her experience is in contrast with Rosalind's in *As You Like It*.

Rosalind disguises herself as a man called 'Ganymede' (1.3.122)[213] lest her 'Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold' (1.3.106) on the way to escape to the Forest of Arden. But she exclaims that her femininity will remain in her heart in spite of her external manhood. In response to Orlando's love poem for her, she says to Celia:

> Good my complexion! Dost thou think, though I am caparisoned like a man, I have a doublet and hose in my disposition? (3.2.189-91)

Contrary to Rosalind, Perdita discovers a new being that is different from the daily self in her consciousness. Therefore, the role-playing serves to lead her to some other self and she has to be estimated as *antithetical* in Yeats's system because she gains a new being as a result of it.

As has been explored so far, the image or mask, and role-playing or disguise, help the dramatic personae to reach their opposites. But they do not always succeed. Yeats describes an unsuccessful or unfinished case in *The Dreaming of the Bones* (1919). The Young Man, the hero of the play, encounters 'images' which help him to summon his Anti-Self in the same way as young Cuchulain, the Guardian of the Well possessed by The Woman of the Sidhe in *At the Hawk's Well*. The images are the ghosts of Diarmuid and Dervorgilla, who are in the state of *Dreaming Back* in the afterlife on account of a sin they committed seven hundred years ago. They need the Young Man's forgiveness because they are only able to be free from the painful penance through the living, in the same way that the

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[213] William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. by Juliet Dusinberre (London: Arden, 2006). All future references will be to this edition, citing line Act, scene and line numbers parenthetically.

ghostly lovers in *Nishikigi*[214] can be united by the Buddhist priest's prayer. The ghostly lovers appear in front of the Young Man, their descendent, and offer him 'a *Mask* or role'. It is 'as unlike as possible to [the] natural ego or will' of the Young Man, who is a Fenian soldier disguised to escape from the British army, because his new role is to forgive the lovers who caused the English to come to Ireland for the first time.

The ghostly lovers, as 'the stage-manager, or Daimon', persistently bring him to 'the place of choice'. They appeal for the Young Man's pity one after the other while hiding their real identities. As Dervorgilla, the Young Girl,[215] keeps silent, Diarmuid the Stranger explains the agony of the dead who stay in purgatory repeating their old lives to appeal to the Young Man:

> In a dream;
> And some for an old scruple must hang spitted
> Upon the swaying tops of lofty trees;
> Some are consumed in fire, some withered up
> By hail and sleet out of the wintry North,
> And some but live through their old lives again. (78-83)

Like the spirit of Old Hamlet, who is 'Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night, / And for the day confin'd to fast in fires, / Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature / Are burnt and purg'd away' (1.5.9-13), the souls in Purgatory 'live through their old lives again' in *Dreaming Back*. Depending on their past lives, the souls undergo different dreams. This can be compared to Hamlet, who is informed that the dead dream after death. In his third soliloquy (3.1.56-90) Hamlet, thinking of suicide, relieves himself

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[214] The 'Nishikigi' are wands used as a love charm. See *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*: From The Manuscripts of Ernest Fenollosa, Chosen and Finished by Ezra Pound, with An Introduction by William Butler Yeats, p. 1.

[215] The Young Girl is equivalent of the *shte-tsure*, while the Stranger corresponds to the *shte* in *Nichikigi*.

with the thought that 'To die' (60) is a simple escape because it is like 'to sleep' (60). But he is afraid of 'what dreams may come' (66) 'in that sleep of death' (66). Hamlet describes the world of the dead he conceives:

> But that the dread of something after death,
> The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
> No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
> And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
> Than fly to others that we know not of. (78-82)

Yet unlike Hamlet, the Young Man in *The Dreaming of the Bones* is not impressed by the story of suffering shades and does not believe in their existence. The story of Donough O'Brien[216] told in the 'Abbey graveyard' (152) awakens his patriotism because he believes 'It was men like Donough who made Ireland weak' (146). He mocks the penance of Donough even though he does not completely believe in the penance of the dead:

> My curse on all that troop, and when I die
> I'll leave my body, if I have any choice,
> Far from his ivy-tod and his owl. (147-9)

Through the Young Girl's appeal to his emotion, he feels sympathy and his attitude seems to change. Yet on realising she is speaking of 'Diarmuid and Dervorgilla / Who brought the Norman in' (228-9), the Young Man goes back to his original attitude and refuses her plea that 'They were not wholly miserable and accursed / If somebody of their race at last would say, "I have forgiven them"' (232-4). He repeats 'O, never, never / Shall Diarmuid and Dervorgilla be forgiven' (234-5). He is confident that 'Our country, if that crime were uncommitted, / Had been most beautiful' (257-8).

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[216] Donough O'Bren was a leader of a group of rebels against the authority of the King of Thomond in the early fourteenth century. Despite the support of Scottish troops, O'Brien was defeated at the Battle of Athenry: he escaped capture but died shortly afterwards (*c.* 1317) near Corcomroe. See *W.B. Yeats: Selected Plays*, ed. by Richard Allen Cave, p. 327.

The Stranger and Young Girl, 'who have lost themselves in a different but still self-created winding of the labyrinth of conscience',[217] go back to the purgatory in which they have been lingering for seven hundred years because of his rejection. The Young Man describes the shades' hopeless despair:

> The dance is changing now. They have dropped their eyes,
> They have covered up their eyes as though their hearts
> Had suddenly been broken. (271-3)

The dreaming ghosts are swept away by 'A cloud' (278) floating up and covering all the mountain-head. But after the Stranger and the Young Girl disappear from the stage, the Young Man confesses:

> I had almost yielded and forgiven it all –
> Terrible the temptation and the place! (281-2)

The Young Man's confession implies the possibility of his pardon and he does not experience the same transformation that happened to Young Cuchulain in *At the Hawk's Well*. On account of that Nathan argues it represents the Young Man's 'inability to assume the tragic mask'.[218] However, the Young Man and Young Cuchulain are not directly comparable, as the latter's transformation affects him only as an individual, while the Young Man's transformation, were it to take place, would have wider consequences for the nation of Ireland as a whole. Nonetheless, the Young Man has been challenged to wear the tragic mask all through the play and the temptation continues even after the end of the play in 'the deeps of the mind' of the audience.

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[217] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 777.
[218] Leonard E. Nathan, p. 211.

As pointed out above, 'extreme effort' is required of the *antithetical* man, to the extent that 'his muscles are as it were all taut and all his energies active'. As such, it is identified as 'active virtue, as distinguished from the passive acceptance of a code' and in other words amounts to heroism. It is Hamlet who undergoes heroism at the expense of all accompanying pain. Yeats gave his distinct interpretation of Hamlet with the phrase that 'Hamlet's hesitations are hesitation of thought'.[219] His interpretation implies that the painful process of Hamlet's recovery of his Anti-Self involves him in extreme imaginative strain. Yeats mentions this in the essay 'The Tragic Theatre', where he argues that Shakespeare 'shows us Hamlet broken away from life by the passionate hesitation of his reverie'.[220] It is in his soliloquies that the collapsing of Hamlet's life through the hesitation of 'his reverie' is most well illustrated.

There are four long soliloquies revealing Hamlet's state of mind. Through them Hamlet expresses his psychological suffering, which is mainly caused by the disparity between what he *is* and what he *ought* to be; Yeats expresses the Is and the Ought as equivalent terms of *Will* and *Mask* in *A Vision.*[221] In other words, Hamlet is possessed of an acute insight into the *Mask* as the role he should play, and this distinguishes him from young Cuchulain, who is just hesitating to put on the mask. According to Yeats's interpretation, Hamlet prefers to be engrossed in the 'reverie' of his mask.

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219 *Explorations*, p. 446.
220 *Essays and Introductions*, p. 242.
221 *A Vision*, p. 73.

His first soliloquy (1.2.129-59) comes before he meets his dead father's spirit and discovers Claudius' fratricide, even though he suspects some dread possibility will arise from his mother's remarriage to his uncle so soon after his father's death. The loss of his father and the embarrassment of his mother's speedy remarriage fall on Hamlet at the same time and change his world into 'an unweeded garden' (135): 'How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable / Seem to me all the uses of this world!' (133-4). But his soliloquy puts more emphasis on his mother's behaviour. He wonders how it can be possible for his mother to forget his father who was 'So excellent a king' (139) like Hyperion, 'so loving to my mother / That he might not beteem the winds of heaven / Visit her face too roughly' (140-2) and marry his father's brother so quickly. The four repetitions of the interval between his father's death and his mother's remarriage in the same soliloquy prove Hamlet's rage against his mother. Hamlet begins with 'two months dead – nay, not so much, not two –' (138) but reduces the period to 'within a month' (145) and then changes it into 'A little month' and repeats 'Within a month' (153). Hamlet's thought eventually reaches the conclusion that it is 'O most wicked speed!' (156) and conceives the possibility of incest. In Hamlet's opinion Gertrude should mourn like Niobe, but she betrays his expectation. In other words Gertrude's behaviour is the opposite to her ideal mask. As a result she has given him a stepfather who is 'no more like father / Than I to Hercules' (152-3). Hamlet takes Hercules for an example in order to stress the absolute inadequacy of Claudius as his father. Yet such an incident as Claudius becoming his father has happened in his reality. Then another seemingly impossible event should happen: that is,

Hamlet should become like Hercules who performed superhuman tasks. Even though Hamlet does not realise it at this moment, he needs to be like Hercules to fulfil the task the ghost of his father imposes on him. In this respect Hamlet's ideal mask, one of his anti-selves, is Hercules, but in this soliloquy he is ironically oblivious of this fact. His ideal facet is to express the inappropriateness of his mother's remarriage, but he suffers as a result of his silence.

After the revelation of the ghost, Hamlet realises the weight of his fate: 'O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right' (1.5.196-7). His second soliloquy in Act 2, scene 2 is full of self-reproaches derived from his inactivity. He recalls the First player who filled his eyes with tears during his speech about Pyrrhus' murder of Priam, thinking of the sorrow of Hecuba at the sight of her husband's death. The player reacts appropriately to the fictional calamity through his passionate conceit. Hamlet comments on the player's art:

> Is it not monstrous that this player here,
> But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
> Could force his soul so to his own conceit
> That from her working all his visage wann'd,
> Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
> A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
> With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!
> For Hecuba! (545-52)

The player sheds tears for Hecuba, who is a fictional person and might be 'nothing'. His art is 'monstrous' to Hamlet who is incapable of reacting properly to his real calamity. Hamlet 'can say nothing – no, not for a king / Upon whose property and most dear life / A damn'd defeat was made' (564-6) even though he should prompt his revenge because he is 'the son of

a dear father murder'd' (579). In this soliloquy all Hamlet lacks and desires is expressed in his criticism of himself as 'A dull and muddy-mettled rascal', 'a coward' and 'A scullion'. The role Hamlet is given by the ghost of his father as Daimon is that of avenger. As in Yeats's *Commedia dell' Arte*, this role is 'as unlike as possible to his natural ego'. The gap between his natural ego and *Mask* drives him to the reverie of pain. As a result, suspending the act of revenge, he ends his soliloquy by deciding to take advantage of the players' art to 'catch the conscience of the King' (601).

It is true that Hamlet ends his second soliloquy without assuming the mask he should take, but it should be noted that he succeeded in putting on the abstract mask of madness at an earlier point. In Act 1, scene 5, after meeting the ghost of his father, Hamlet says to Horatio:

> As I perchance hereafter shall think meet
> To put an antic disposition on[.] (1.5.179-80)

The word 'antic' means 'grotesque' and 'is particularly used of an actor with a false head or grotesque mask'.[222] This corresponds with Yeats's claim that 'we put on a grotesque or solemn painted face to hide us from the terrors of judgement'.[223] Hiding himself under the grotesque disposition with freedom from 'the terrors of judgement', Hamlet plans to unravel Claudius' guilt. His madness can be construed as a symbolic mask constituting an additional role he should play.

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[222] *Hamlet*, ed. by Harold Jenkins, p. 226.
[223] *Autobiographies*, pp. 503-4.

Hamlet's third soliloquy (3.1.56-90) takes place before the play-within-the-play with which Hamlet intends to get more exact evidence of Claudius' crime. The soliloquy shows that Hamlet's suffering has continued and that his life is being destroyed by agony. Hamlet confesses that he might as well end the pain by being overcome by 'a sea of troubles' (59) as suffer 'The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' (58) in his mind. Hamlet's desire is to escape from his anguish even though it will result in his death. His last two lines show how the destruction that falls on his life also encroaches on Ophelia, anticipating his lunatic curse on her: 'The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons / Be all my sins remember'd' (89-90). Hamlet is faithful to the mask of cruel madness rather than that of an active man.

The mask Hamlet desires to wear in his last soliloquy (4.4.31-66) might be that of a solider who can 'go to gain a little patch of ground / That hath in it no profit but the name' (18-9). After meeting Fortinbras' soldier, Hamlet feels spurred to 'dull revenge' (33). His mind moves on the distinction between man and beast. Unlike a beast he is possessed of reason, but he makes it 'musty' as a consequence of leaving it unused, and concludes that 'his thought, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom / And ever three parts coward' (42-3). Hamlet recognises the sharp contrast between the army of soldiers and himself:

> Witness this army of such mass and charge,
> Led by a delicate and tender prince,
> Whose spirit, with divine ambition puff'd,
> Makes mouths at the invisible event,
> Exposing what is mortal and unsure
> To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,
> Even for an eggshell. (47-53)

The perception of opposing attitudes incites Hamlet's determination: 'O, from this time forth / My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth' (64-5). Hamlet is thirsty 'to do' regardless of the outcome: 'Rightly to be great / Is not to stir without great argument, / But greatly to find quarrel in a straw / When honour's at the stake' (52-5).

As Yeats depicts in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, the process of a hero accepting his mask is not simple. Even though 'the hero found hanging upon some oak of Dodona an ancient mask',[224] he did not assume the mask as his on the spot. 'Touching it a little here and there',[225] he was in a state of hesitation. Similarly Hamlet has an acute perception of his mask, but spends considerable time in reverie before resolving that he should wear it. This is what Yeats believes Shakespeare shows us through *Hamlet*. Yeats's understanding of the graveside scene in *Hamlet* is derived from his sympathy with Hamlet's psychological suffering. Yeats looked upon 'the storm-beaten threshold' Hamlet is lingering on as the same one on which the poet is stuck: 'the poet, because he may not stand within the sacred house but lives amid the whirlwinds that beset its threshold, may find his pardon'.[226] The poet is condemned to stand on the critical single strain high in the air, with all senses tense, like Hamlet.

The recognition of the threshold divorces the tragic hero from his reality and drives him to the maze of conflict. Likewise, the perception of the mask offers the tragic hero the insight of the other self in his own self. In other

[224] *Mythologies*, p. 335.
[225] Ibid., p. 335.
[226] Ibid., p. 333.

words he realises he has several selves in his physical body. Though his physical body is one, his mind is divided into unlimited numbers in accordance with his imagination. The other selves in his mind conflict with each other as satellites in the universe do. A tragic hero's psychological suffering is derived from the realisation of this inherent conflict. For Yeats the mask was a crucial symbolic property to represent the conflicts between diverse mental aspects. The device of the play-within-a-play was another theatrical tool capable of embodying a comparable conflict of the soul. I will explore how Yeats utilised the play-within-a-play in his own way through a comparison with Shakespeare's uses of the device in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

The Play-within-a-play: A Device for the Discovery of Another Self

In *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, Yeats's mask meets with the device of the play-within-a-play, one of Shakespeare's most characteristic dramatic set-pieces and a typical anti-realistic means to stimulating the recognition of theatricality. Yeats's mask represents what we ought to become – in other words our anti-self – or that which we have to seek after to become a complete being. The play-within-a-play is connected with the mask in that the former also serves as a tool by means of which the anti-selves of Yeats's characters can be found. This will be explored through a comparative analysis of *Hamlet* and *The Only Jealousy of Emer* in terms of Yeats's system in *A Vision*. The play-within-a-play can act as a highly ritualised model, framed within a more naturalistic context, and this unique advantage is used by Shakespeare and Yeats to present the relationship between ritual and the supernatural on the stage. The ritual function of the play-within-a-play will be examined in *The Tempest* and *The Words upon the Window-Pane*. But before these explorations I will discuss the definition of the play-within-a-play, and the comparable function introductory devices perform in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Full Moon in March*, so as to explain the theatricality of the play-within-a-play and its indispensable message (the duality of appearance and reality).

1) The play-within-a-play and its definition

The play-within-a-play is a theatrical device that generates dramatic self-consciousness as do such narrative framing or distancing devices as prologues and epilogues, inductions, dumbshows, choruses, presenter or commentator figures, and frame narratives.[227] The theatrical self-awareness of the play-within-a-play interrupts dramatic illusion, so that the device of the play-within-a-play is opposed to the naturalistic dramatist's effort to 'make the audience believe in the images it creates on the stage'.[228] Instead it serves to distance the audience from what is seen with the result that it leads the audience to an awareness of the duality of appearance and reality. Yeats, objecting to the naturalistic theatre, argues that the 'illusion' that the realistic theatre seeks to create through naturalistic effects is 'impossible, and should not be attempted'[229] for the reason that 'Art is art because it is not nature':

> Having chosen the distance from naturalism which will keep one's composition from competing with the illusion created by the actor, who belongs to a world with depth as well as height and breadth, one must keep this distancing without flinching.[230]

The play-within-a-play is a form which defines the play within which it occurs, so that it offers 'a double convolution'.[231] As a consequence the

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[227] A.R. Braunmuller, 'The arts of the dramatist' in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, eds. by A.R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 81.
[228] John Louis Styan, *Drama, Stage and Audience* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 180.
[229] *Explorations*, p. 178.
[230] Ibid., p. 178.
[231] Robert J. Nelson, *Play within a Play: The Dramatist's Conception of His Art: Shakespeare to Anouilh* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), p. ix.

device produces two levels arranged hierarchically: primary play and secondary play, or outer play and inner play. The recognition of the relationship of the plays on the two different levels is followed by that of the relationship between the outer play and the reality within which it occurs: life. A.R. Braunmuller explains the correlation:

> Commonly, when the audience witnesses the preparations for a masque or playlet, the subsequent dramaticule (Samuel Beckett's term) appears bracketed or in quotation marks, emphasising its own theatricality, duplicity, insubstantiality, and – by extension – that of the larger play, and – by further extension – that of the audience's own extra-theatrical existence, which might indeed be a theatre of the world or a theatre of God's judgements.

As such, the play-within-a-play ultimately offers the audience 'the *theatrum mundi* concept (the idea that the world's a stage)'[232] as a result of stirring them to think of reality itself as an illusory drama.

The analysis of a play-within-a-play is necessarily concerned with its relationship to its outer play. Manfred Pfister suggests two criteria by which to analyse the play-within-a-play: the relationship between the primary action and the play-within-the-play, and the links between the various figures on these two levels.[233] The first criterion analyses whether the play-within-a-play advances, or concludes the primary action. Analysis of whether the play-within-the-play mirrors or recapitulates the plot of the primary play also belongs to this area. The second criterion analyses the applicability of three possible relations the personae of the inner play might

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[232] Thomas F. Van Laan, *Role-playing in Shakespeare* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), p. ix.
[233] Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, trans. by John Halliday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 224.

have to the wider drama. The first occurs when the actors of the inner play do not appear in the primary plot at all or, if they do, when they remain only in the periphery, as in the case of the players in *Hamlet*. The second case takes place when the actors in the play-within-a-play appear as dramatic personae in the primary plot. The connection between the two levels in such circumstances is more direct (as seen in the mechanical's play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) than in the first case. The last case is when the figures of the play-within-a-play are transformed into figures on the primary level.

In addition to these two criteria, the role of the fictional audience that watch the play-within-a-play should be observed. The fictional spectators sometimes serve as a physical tool to mark 'the double fictionality of the presentation'[234] by being present on stage. Sly and his fellow spectators in *The Taming of the Shrew* correspond to this case because they speak just once to reveal their presence and fall completely silent. But the fictional audience may also assume the important roles of 'commentator figures'[235] in the play. They discuss the meaning of the play-within-the-play, as Hamlet does. Their responses to the play-within-a-play tell us much about the main play, as well as the play-within-a-play because the play-within-a-play is connected with the main play thematically.

The play-within-a-play normally takes the form of a short episode inserted into a more extensive sequence of primary action, which thus carries the

[234] Manfred Pfister, p. 225.
[235] Ibid., p. 225.

predominant focus of the text, as in the cases of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet*. But as in the case of *The Taming of the Shrew*, it is both quantitatively and qualitatively superior to the primary sequences, because they are reduced to acting as a kind of frame – sometimes in the form of a prologue or induction.[236]

Shakespeare used this device in his work to the extent that this form is considered as uniquely Shakespearean, despite the fact that other contemporary dramatists also employed the technique.[237] A play-within-a play, or an approximation of the form, is found in seven of Shakespeare' plays: *The Taming of the Shrew* (1594), *Love's Labour Lost* (1594), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1599), *As You Like It* (1600), *Hamlet* (1601) and *The Tempest* (1611). However, as Robert J. Nelson argues, if the Shakespearean subplot is considered as a kind of play-within-a-play in the sense that it serves as 'an ironic mirror of the main plot,'[238] more plays use this device.

2) Introductory devices and theatricality: *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Full Moon in March*

Both Shakespeare and Yeats used introductory dramatic episodes that were separate from the main play as framing devices that mirror the thematic concerns of the main plot and create an increased awareness of theatricality. *The Taming of the Shrew* involves a distinct play-within-a-play: the main

[236] Manfred Pfister, p. 227.
[237] Robert J. Nelson, p. ix.
[238] Ibid., p. 11.

play is marked as the play-within-the-play by means of the induction device,[239] which is also called a prefatory playlet, which has 'its own cast of characters and an area of activity detached from that of the principal action but thematically related to it.' [240]

In the first scene of the Induction, the Lord decides to play a joke on Christopher Sly, the drunken tinker:

> Sirs, I will practise on this drunken man.
> What think you, if he were convey'd to bed,
> Wrapp'd in sweet clothes, rings put upon his fingers,
> A most delicious banquet by his bed,
> And brave attendants near him when he wakes,
> Would not the beggar then forget himself? (Induction, 1. 33-9)[241]

The Lord wants to enjoy Sly's reaction when he wakes up in completely changed circumstances. In addition, the Lord orders his players to perform a playlet in front of Sly because he thinks it will help his trick. He says to the players:

> Well, you are come to me in happy time,
> The rather for I have some sport in hand
> Wherein your cunning can assist me much.
> There is a lord will hear you play tonight;
> But I am doubtful of your modesties
> Lest over-eyeing of his odd behaviour –
> For yet his honour never heard a play –
> You break into some merry passion
> And so offend him; for I tell you, sirs,
> If you should smile, he grows impatient. (Induction, 1. 88-97)

The scene, in which the Lord commands a performance of the player's play, becomes a pretext for making the following play the play-within-the-

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[239] The Induction was common in plays written in 1590, but Shakespeare used the device only in this play. See *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. by Brian Morris (London: Arden, 2006), p. 153.
[240] Leah Scragg, *Discovering Shakespeare's Meaning* (London: Longman, 1988), p. 88.
[241] William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. by Brian Morris, p. 156. All future references will be to this edition, citing Act, scene and line numbers parenthetically.

play provided for Sly. As Manfred Pfister puts it, though *The Shrew* play is quantitatively and qualitatively superior to the primary sequence, it remains the inset play as a result of the device of the Induction.

The fact that *The Shrew* play is a play-within-the-play is reiterated in the second scene of the Induction. According to the Lord's directions, the messenger informs Sly of the arrival of the players for the purpose of celebrating the recovery of his fifteen-year-long fit of lunacy:

> Your honour's players, hearing your amendment,
> Are come to play a pleasant comedy;
> For so your doctors hold it very meet,
> Seeing too much sadness hath congeal'd your blood,
> And melancholy is the nurse of frenzy.
> Therefore they thought it good you hear a play
> And frame your mind to mirth and merriment,
> Which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life.
> (Induction, 2. 129-36)

Sly responds to the messenger as if he were a lord even though he is still puzzled by the surprising change of situation:

> Marry, I will. Let them play it. Is not a comonty
> A Christmas gambol or a tumbling-trick? (Induction, 2. 137-8)

Sly's lines remind the audience of the fact that he becomes an on-stage viewer. Thus the Induction serves to distance the audience from the central action, and to stimulate its awareness of its theatricality. As Anne Barton says, 'the theatrical nature of the deception practised upon the sleeping beggar is constantly stressed.' [242]

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[242] Anne Barton, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962), p. 105.

Allardyce Nicoll gives a historical account of the induction in his *English Drama: A Modern Viewpoint*. He argues that the framing device is a particular dramatic invention of the Elizabethan period.[243] He also claims that the device is not just a dramatic trick which was popular in that period but something that is in formal accordance with the nature of romantic drama:

> In the first place, we realise that the device itself is thoroughly consonant with the architectural form assumed by the Elizabethan theatre. The actors who, after having taken their parts in the introductory scene, sit down to watch the action within an action, take their places in the gallery alongside members of the public, thus forming a bridge between the auditorium and the stage. And, even more significantly, the device is seen to be admirably concordant with the entire fabric of the romantic drama – deities and creatures of the folk imagination may thus envelope what purports to be the real, or the purportedly real may envelope the fantastic.[244]

Thirdly, he considers the duality of appearance and reality that the device eventually produces:

> When we relate the device itself to the long-enduring disguise element so freely exploited in the interludes, we realise that both, taken in conjunction, combine to produce that constant interplay of appearance and reality which forms the inner core of this imaginative entity.[245]

Moreover, Alexander Leggatt points out that Shakespeare used the device to further the 'process of conditioning'.[246] By showing us the process of

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[243] Allardyce Nicoll, *English Drama: A Modern Viewpoint* (London: George G. Harrap, 1968), p. 51.
[244] Ibid., p. 51.
[245] Ibid., p. 51.
[246] Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (London: Methuen, 1974), p. 46. But Leggatt's argument is based on G.R. Hibbard's. See the introduction of his New Penguin edition of *The Taming of the Shrew* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 9.

Sly's new experience in the Induction, 'Shakespeare reminds us that we, as an audience, undergo such a process when we sit down to watch a play.' [247]

Yeats's *A Full Moon in March* (1935) has an introduction which is comparable to the Induction of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The play starts with the two Attendants' dialogue:

> *First Attendant*. What do we do?
> What part do we take?
> What did he say?
> *Second Attendant*. Join when we like,
> Singing or speaking
> *First Attendant*. Before the curtain rises on the play?
> *Second Attendant*. Before it rises.
> *First Attendant*. What do we sing?
> *Second Attendant*. 'Sing anything, sing any old thing,' said he.
> *First Attendant*. Come then and sing about the dung of swine.
> (1-10)

Their dialogue is reminiscent of the scene in which the characters of the primary plot prepare for the play-within-a-play. Though the introductory speech is made up of the two Attendants' short argument about their roles in the following play, it is enough to detach the audience from the performance that is about to be enacted. As in the case of the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, it implies a narrower border between reality and illusion.

The induction also functions to heighten the theatricality of the play-within-a-play through the way that the characters of the induction figure in the central action. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Sly, the Lord and his servants remain as on-stage spectators and comment on the performance at the end

[247] Alexander Leggatt, p. 46.

of the first scene of Act 1. Though they are silent for the rest of the play (unlike in the original version of the play, which has interludes and a dramatic epilogue), they remain on stage. [248] As a result their physical presence signals the doubled fictionality of the presentation. On the other hand, in *A Full Moon in March*, the figures of the introduction take parts in the main plot: they have transitional states. The Second Attendant takes the role of a Captain of the Guard sitting '*at one side of [the] stage near [the] audience*'[249] as soon as the main play starts. Moreover, when the Queen plays a dancer after exchanging her state with the Swineherd, the First Attendant sings and laughs as the Queen, while the Second Attendant acts as the Swineherd's head which is severed by the Queen. At the end of the play the stage is again occupied by the Attendants in the same way as at the play's start. When the Queen finishes her last dance, which symbolises her union with the Swineherd, they '*close [the] inner curtain, singing, and then stand one on either side while the stage curtain descends*'[250] and prepare for their final lyric, which corresponds to the epilogue. As a consequence the theatricalism of the main action is highly distinguished.

In addition to the emphasis on the theatricality of the play-within-a-play, the induction introduces some of the themes of the main plot. For instance, the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew* projects the theme of

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[248] There are contradictory arguments about the history of the text but Brian Morris says that 'we may reasonably conclude that when Shakespeare completed *The Shrew* it had an induction, a dramatic epilogue, and four or five interludes, and that he intended these to form part of the whole play.' He also argues that the stage direction at the end of Act 1 scene 1, '*They sit and marke*', implies that 'they are to remain on stage'. See *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. by Brian Morris, pp. 39-45 and p. 183.
[249] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 980.
[250] Ibid., p. 989.

transformation, one of the central ideas of the main play. The theme directly appears in the drunken tinker's transformation into a lord. Furthermore, the Lord and his serving man's description of the evocative paintings of figures (Adonis, Cytherea, Io, and Daphne) in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* functions to plant various images of metamorphosis in the audience's imagination even though, as William C. Carroll points out, it is the Lord's plan to 'make Sly more susceptible to the change'.[251] Finally, the appearance of the players emphasises the theme by confronting the audience with the true masters of transformation. This theme is of course witnessed in the central action as well. Lucentio and Tranio exchange places, the lord becoming a servant, and the servant a lord. Hortensio's disguise as Litio is another example of assumed alien roles. But above all the device serves to draw attention to Katherina's transformation into an obedient wife. Carroll compares Katherina's transformation with Sly's, arguing that Sly's is 'a mimetic metamorphosis' because his change is all on the surface, whereas Katherina's is 'total but necessarily incomplete'.[252] Accordingly Carroll admits the possibility of her psychological transformation even though his argument avoids being the extreme of saying that Katherina's psychological change is a total one. Nevertheless her real transformation is one issue that has been the source of continuous disagreement. Holly A. Crocker supports the view that 'Katharine only *acts like* a shrew; she *really is* virtuous' and her submission is to assume 'the

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[251] William C. Carroll, *The Metamorphoses of Shakespearean Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 44.
[252] Ibid., pp. 46-7 and p. 42.

guise of passivity'.[253] Therefore it is not easy to evaluate the extent of her real transformation. Still it can be said that her change of role from shrew to submissive wife is already anticipated in the Induction when the Lord orders his page to act as a very obedient wife in contrast with the wild Hostess.

The function of revealing some of the concerns of the main plot is true of the introduction of Yeats's play. The two attendants' dialogue implies their predetermined fates as actors. They are expected to act according to roles assigned by the director even though they have the freedom to select the song they are to sing. As a result they may alter one specific part of the play, but it is presupposed that their actions will follow a preordained pattern in the given play. This situation reflects Yeats's account of the Great Wheel as an individual life in *A Vision*:

> 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.[254]

As an actor is offered 'an inherited scenario' by his stage-manager, so the Queen and the Swineherd in the main plot are given a preordained destination that they should eventually reach. The destination is introduced in the song of the two Attendants:

> Every loutish lad in love
> Thinks his wisdom great enough,
> *What cares love for this and that?*
> To make all his parish stare,
> As though Pythagoras wandered there.

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[253] Holly A. Crocker, 'Affective Resistance: Performing Passivity and Playing A-Part in *The Taming of the Shrew*' in *Shakespeare Quarterly* (2003), pp. 150, 144.
[254] *A Vision*, p. 84.

Crown of gold or dung of swine.

Should old Pythagoras fall in love
Little may he boast thereof.
[...]
Days go by in foolishness.
O how great their sweetness is!
[...]

Open wide those gleaming eyes,
That can make the loutish wise.
[...]
Make a leader of the schools
Thank the Lord, all men are fools. (11-27)

F.A.C. Wilson argues that this song defines the nature of love, which 'converts all human life into its opposite.'[255] 'Every loutish lad' is antithetically opposite to the philosopher Pythagoras, a relationship that is repeatedly symbolised by the antagonism between the 'dung of swine' and the 'crown of gold' in the refrain. But the two opposing images are transformed into their opposite qualities in love. That is to say, love makes the lout wise and the philosopher a fool. Yeats says:

> Opposites are everywhere face to face, dying each other's life, living each other's death. When a man loves a girl it should be because her face and character offer what he lacks; the more profound his nature the more should he realise his lack and the greater be the difference. It is as though he wanted to take his own death into his arms and beget a stronger life upon that death.[256]

A transfer between opposites is the main plot of the main play, which is implied in the two Attendants' song.

The main theme of the imminent transformation is, as a matter of fact, already anticipated in the title of the play, *A Full Moon in March*. In

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[255] F.A.C. Wilson, *W. B. Yeats and Tradition* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1958), p. 87.
[256] *Explorations*, p. 430.

Yeats's system the full moon is the equivalent of Phase 15, a phase of Complete Subjectivity or beauty, where Unity of Being is achieved, and March is the moment at which one cycle ends or dies and another begins or is created.[257] The play presents the transformation of the Queen, who is representative of subjectivity, as a result of her union with the Swineherd, who symbolises her opposite. In other words it presents the fulfilment of complete being through the interpenetration of opposites. The two Attendants' last song recapitulates:

> *Second Attendant*: What can she lack, whose emblem is the moon?
> *First Attendant*: Her desecration and the lover's night. (190-1)

The focus falls upon the Queen's change even though the Swineherd must gain his opposite in this ritual because it is the Queen who descends. Because of this, Wilson argues that 'Yeats's aim is to stress that "eternity is in love with the productions of time"'.[258]

The induction dissuades the audience from involvement in the inset play and at the same time introduces some of the themes of the play. As a consequence of this dramatic technique the artificiality of the play-within-a-play is called to attention and awareness of the duality of appearance and reality, the inevitable message of the play-within-a-play, is heightened.

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[257] Yeats says that 'At the Ides of March, at the full moon in March, is the Vernal Equinox, symbolical of the first degree of Aries, the first day of our symbolical or ideal year'. See *A Vision*, p. 196.
[258] F.A.C. Wilson, p. 91. His argument is made in the context of his discussion of Yeats's relationship with Blake. See also Blake's 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell', see *William Blake: The Complete poems*, ed. by Alicia Ostriker (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 183.

3) The play-within-a-play and personae: *Hamlet* and

The Only Jealousy of Emer

Unlike the clearly identifiable play-within-a-play which takes place in *Hamlet*, that in *The Only Jealousy of Emer* is unfolded like a vision. Although its status as an inset play is more ambiguous, it possesses a number of structural features which allow it to be analysed as such. For example, it can be deemed to reflect and interpret the main plot, and we are presented with the reactions to it of an on-stage audience.

The Only Jealousy of Emer (1919) is a symbolic dance play inspired by Noh conventions like *At the Hawk's Well* and *The Dreaming of the Bones*. The preceding stage direction is as follows:

> *Enter Musicians, who are dressed and made up as in 'At the Hawk's Well'. They have the same musical instruments, which can either be already upon the stage or be brought in by the First Musician before he stands in the centre with the cloth between his hands or by a player when the cloth has been unfolded. The stage as before can be against the wall of any room, and the same black cloth can be used as in 'At the Hawk's Well'*[259]

This stage direction makes clear that the three musicians' make-up, musical instruments and the cloth used for the song are the same as those used in *At the Hawk's Well* and *The Dreaming of the Bones*. The stage, which 'can be against the wall of any room', a detail highlighting Yeats's symbolic purpose, is another common feature of the three plays. All three plays describe a human being's encounter with immortal beings. Besides Emer's

[259] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 529.

encounter with Bricriu of the Sidhe (the immortal world), the supernatural being echoes Cuchulain's possession by the Guardian of the Well in *At the Hawk's Well*, and the Young Man's confrontation with the ghosts of Diarmuid and Dervorgilla in *The Dreaming of the Bones*. In particular *The Only Jealousy of Emer* includes an episode involving Cuchulain which also takes places in *At the Hawk's Well*, so that the connection of this play with the previous play is obviously established. However, the three plays use masks in distinct ways. For example, in *At the Hawk's Well*, the young Cuchulain is masked because he is a principle actor, as in most Noh theatres. But contrary to Noh conventions, the Old Man, the equivalent of the second actor (*waki*), who is normally unmasked in the Noh tradition, wears a mask that represents all he fears. In *The Dreaming of the Bones*, the Young Man, the hero of the play, is unmasked because his tragic fate is not determined in the play. On the other hand, in *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, all of the characters are masked because they all carry out the dramatic roles their masks represent. Yeats believed that this would be better to serve his aim of creating a symbolic theatre that is 'distant from reality'. In his notes to this play Yeats wrote his impressions of the masks:

> The masks get much of their power from enclosing the whole head; this makes the head out of proportion to the body, and I found some difference of opinion as to whether this was a disadvantage or not in an art so distant from reality; that it was not a disadvantage in the case of the Woman of the Sidhe all were agreed. She was a strange, noble, unforgettable figure.[260]

A yet more distinctive application of masks in this play is that an actor plays two different parts by changing his masks during the course of the

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[260] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 567.

play. For instance, the Figure of Cuchulain portrays two roles, heroic Cuchulain and distorted Bricriu, by means of an exchange of masks. In addition to the effective representation of two roles by one actor, this technique highlights a significant relation between the two roles played as a result of changing masks.

At the beginning of the play, the Figure of Cuchulain lies on the curtained bed, wearing 'his grave-clothes'.[261] By the heroic mask he wears it is already presumed he is 'That amorous, violent man, renowned Cuchulain' (36) before the First Musician's introduction of his identity. The Figure of Cuchulain is 'dead or swooning' (34) with a lunatic sorrow caused by his late realisation that he has killed his son with his own hands. But in the middle of the play the Figure of Cuchulain undertakes a different role by making an unseen change of mask when Emer '*pulls the curtains of the bed so as to hide the sick man's face*'.[262] His new role is 'Bricriu, Maker of discord among gods and men, / Called Bricriu of the Sidhe' (148-50). Bricriu is 'the changeling' (142) who occupies the body of dead Cuchulain. By means of his mask, depicting a distorted face, he reveals his new identity. This metamorphosis is effected simply by the exchange of masks on the stage. The figure of Cuchulain has at once a heroic and a distorted aspect. On Yeats's 'Great Wheel' Cuchulain corresponds to 'the phase of the hero',[263] that is, Phase 12, whereas Bricriu corresponds to 'The Hunchback' of Phase 26[264] in the sense that his withered arm represents the

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[261] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 531.
[262] Ibid., p. 539.
[263] *A Vision*, p. 127.
[264] Ibid., p. 176.

Hunchback's deformity. Phases 26 and 12 are diametrical opposites on the Great Wheel. In other words, the *Mask* of Phase 12 is derived from Phase 26 while the *Mask* of Phase 26 comes from Phase 12. Yeats accounts for this connection in *A Vision*:

> The True *Mask* [of Phase 12], derived from the terrible Phase 26, called the phase of the Hunchback, is the reverse of all that is emotional, being emotionally cold [.][265]

Yeats had some difficulty in deciding on the changeling. In his letter to Lady Gregory, he wrote:

> I want to follow *The Hawk's Well* with a play on *The Only Jealousy of Emer* but I cannot think who should be the changeling put in Cuchulain's place when he is taken to the other world. There would be two masks, changed upon the stage. Who should it be – Cuchulain's grandfather, or some god or devil or woman? [266]

In spite of this difficulty Yeats's choice of Bricriu as Cuchulain's changeling yields productive results. First of all, the choice reflects not only his system of the 'Great Wheel', as has been suggested, but also his theory of the relationship between man and daimon as postulated in his '*Per Amica Silentia Lunae*':

> [...] the Daimon comes not as like to like but seeking its own opposite, for man and Daimon feed the hunger in one another's hearts. [267]

Yeats's theory concentrates on man's instinctive desire to seek 'his opposite or the opposite of his condition'.[268] It is therefore with good reason that daimonic Bricriu occupies the soul of Cuchulain who stands in the

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[265] *A Vision*, p.128.
[266] *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, p. 612.
[267] *Mythologies*, p. 335.
[268] *A Vision*, p.79.

opposing phase, taking advantage of him when Cuchulain's heroic soul is weak.

Yeats's choice of Bricriu as Cuchulain's changeling is effective on a theatrical level because of the shock of Bricriu's distorted mask.[269] Moreover the choice of Bricriu as Cuchulain's changeling implies the possibility of two opposing images of one man, and further recalls Hamlet's comparison of his father and uncle as Hyperion and satyr respectively in his first soliloquy (1.2.129-59). Hamlet uses this comparison to emphasise the difference between his father and uncle because Hyperion is the god of the sun in human form, while a satyr is, like contorted Bricriu, half man and half beast. Despite the enormous difference between Old Hamlet and Claudius as perceived by Hamlet, the fact that they are brothers suggests that their comparison represents the dual nature of man. As Harold Jenkins argues, 'the god and the beast in human nature belong to the same life-tree'.[270] Just as the beastlike brother replaces the godlike brother's place, so distorted Bricriu occupies heroic Cuchulain's body. Hamlet's revenge can rescue Hyperion's world from the satyr, Claudius, who has possessed both queen and country, whereas Emer's renunciation of Cuchulain's love is needed to bring heroic Cuchulain back from Bricriu, as will be shown.

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[269] Richard Allen Cave wrote of the theatrical effect of the choice of Bricriu: 'The choice of Bricriu was felicitous: it is deeply disturbing when his withered arm pulls aside the curtains to reveal him in Cuchulain's bed. The psychic shock occasioned by his grotesque appearance immediately transforms the elegiac mood that has prevailed till now, as his irony begins to challenge Emer's composure and expose it as rooted in a suspect sentimentality. The focus of the action has been brilliantly readjusted on to the psychology of motive'. See *W.B. Yeats: Selected Plays*, p. 336.

[270] *Hamlet*, ed. by Harold Jenkins, p. 129.

The major concerns of both the plays (Hamlet's revenge and Emer's renunciation) cause the production of the plays-within-plays. Hamlet commissions the players' playlet to 'catch the conscience of the King' (2.2.601) because he witnessed the power of the first player's art during the speech about 'Priam's slaughter' (2.2.444). Hamlet comments on the effect of this performance:

> He would drown the stage with tears,
> And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
> Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
> Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
> The very faculties of eyes and ears. (2.2.556-60)

The player's ability to 'Make mad the guilty' plays a crucial role in Hamlet's decision to stage *The Murder of Gonzago*. He soliloquises, 'I'll have these players / Play something like the murder of my father / Before mine uncle' (2.2.590-2). Thus the play-within-the-play is designed to mirror the plot of the primary play. Hamlet intends to 'observe [Claudius'] looks' because he believes Claudius cannot but betray his guilt:

> I have heard
> That guilty creatures sitting at a play
> Have, by the very cunning of the scene,
> Been struck so to the soul that presently
> They have proclaim'd their malefactions.
> For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
> With most miraculous organ. (2.2.584-90)

To present one scene which 'comes near the circumstance' (3.2.76) of his father's death, Hamlet inserts a speech of some 'dozen or sixteen' lines he has written himself and reveals his intention to Horatio:

> There is a play tonight before the King:
> One scene of it comes near the circumstance
> Which I have told thee of my father's death.
> I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,
> Even with the very comment of thy soul
> Observe my uncle. If his occulted guilt

Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damned ghost that we have seen,
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy. (3.2.75-84)

Compared with Hamlet's playlet, the specific goal of which is clearly declared, the purpose of Bricriu's is more accidental and vision-like. Nonetheless it also aims to shake Emer's consciousness as Hamlet's intends to stir Claudius's conscience. Put in Cuchulain's place, Bricriu begins his mission on behalf of the Sidhe. It is to make 'everything [Cuchulain] loves' (151) 'fly away' (152) by showing his distorted face and force Emer to pay the price for Cuchulain's freedom. He explains the bargain of the Sidhe:

When they would free a captive
They take in ransom a less valued thing.
The fisher, when some knowledgeable man
Restores to him his wife, or son, or daughter,
Knows he must lose a boat or net, or it may be
The cow that gives his children milk; and some
Have offered their own lives. (158-64)

His claim to Emer follows:

I do not ask
Your life, or any valuable thing;
You spoke but now of the mere chance that some day
You'd be the apple of his eye again
When old and ailing, but renounce that chance
And he shall live again. (164-9)

As a ransom Bricriu demands Emer's hope that 'someday somewhere / [she and Cuchulain]'ll sit together at the hearth again' (103-4). Hope is one of her 'two joyous thoughts' (hope and memory) (178-9). In her refusing his request, Bricriu shows Emer the Ghost of Cuchulain in purgatory. With his left hand, suggesting a sinister motive, Bricriu, the 'Maker of discord', casts a spell on Emer's sight so that she will only be able to perceive the

spiritual. Bricriu dissolves 'the dark / That hid [Cuchulain] from [Emer's] eyes, but not that other / That's hidden you from his' (189-91). As a result she can see the Ghost of Cuchulain but cannot communicate with him. He is not a heroic figure but only 'a phantom / That can neither touch, nor hear, nor see' (192-3). Hence Emer has no choice but to watch him be tempted by Fand, the Woman of the Sidhe. This situation produces the effect of the play-within-the-play on a dramatic structural level. Emer comes to be the on-stage spectator who watches a vision in which Fand and the Ghost of Cuchulain appear. Bricriu's purpose is to make Emer renounce Cuchulain's love. Emer's reaction to the inner play decides the conclusion of the main play as Claudius' response to the player's inset play influences Hamlet's revenge.

In *Hamlet* there are three important members of the on-stage audience apart from Hamlet, the planner of the inset play. Ophelia, who is ignorant of Claudius' guilt, proves her innocence by wondering about the import of the dumb-show, saying to Hamlet, 'What means this, my lord?' (3.2.134). Like the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, the dumb-show introduces the theme of the player's inset play in advance. Ophelia delivers the message when she says 'Belike this show imports the argument of the play' (136). But she does not imagine the show suggests her king's crime unlike the audience who know that the dumb-show hints at the argument not only of the players' play but also of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* because we are informed of Hamlet's plan. Her innocent reaction makes the audience attend to the responses of Claudius and Gertrude, who are involved in Old

Hamlet's death directly and indirectly. A stronger response is expected from Gertrude because the scene where the queen accepts another lover on the king's death in the dumb-show explicitly mirrors her speedy remarriage after Old Hamlet's death, even though she does not know his death had been caused in the same way as presented in the show. In the subsequent play the player Queen's repeated denial of the possibility of her second marriage must have stimulated Gertrude's conscience because she had herself remarried just after her husband's death. Asked by Hamlet about the play, her reply that 'The lady doth protest too much, methinks' (3.2.225) suggests that she feels conscious of the correlations with her second marriage.

The audience's central attention is called to Claudius, Hamlet's main target in staging the play. His physical reaction of rising from his seat occurs in the utterance of 'upon the talk of the poisoning' (3.2.283) as Hamlet and Horatio perceive it, and not in the dumb-show. This fact has been the source of many contradictory opinions about Claudius' response to the dumb-show. [271] Nevertheless Claudius' response to 'the talk of the poisoning' functions to confirm the truth of the ghost's revelation to the audience as well as Hamlet. Hamlet says to Horatio, 'I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound' (3.2.280). But, on another level, his response heightens the power of art because the players' play, which, according to

[271] As some critics argue, either Claudius could not see the dumb-show or he is strong enough to conceal his emotion despite watching the show. But Harold Jenkins claims that 'it is not an oversight but Shakespeare's dramatic tact that leaves the King out of the dialogue' about the dumb-show and the actor who plays the King 'must remain inscrutable during the show if he wishes to be faithful to Shakespeare. See *Hamlet*, pp. 504.

Hamlet, is 'false fire' (3.2.259), is sufficiently powerful to frighten Claudius.

Emer can be considered Claudius' counterpart in the sense that the play-within-the-play ultimately aims at provoking her response. In the play-within-the-play unfolded by Bricriu, Emer watches Fand's way of love. Fand from 'the Country-under-Wave' (302) dreams herself into 'that shape that he / May glitter in her basket' (203-4). She wants to fish for Cuchulain 'with dreams' (206) in order to achieve completeness. She asks Cuchulain:

> Could you that have loved many a woman
> That did not reach beyond the human,
> Lacking a day to be complete,
> Love one that, through her heart can beat,
> Lacks it but by an hour or so? (234-8)

Fand identifies Cuchulain's lovers as those 'that did not reach beyond the human, / Lacking a day to be complete', and herself as one that 'Lacks it but by an hour or so'. In terms of Yeats's 'Great Wheel', Fand nearly reaches Unity of Being which is one incarnation 'not visible to human eyes nor having human characteristics'.[272] Cuchulain's earthly lovers correspond to 'Phase 14', which Yeats says is 'the greatest beauty visible to human eyes'.[273] Fand desires for Cuchulain to reach the full moon that symbolises the complete incarnation:

> When your mouth and my mouth meet
> All my round shall be complete
> Imagining all its circles run [.](262-4)

But the Ghost of Cuchulain is filled with agony because of his memories:

> Old memories:

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[272] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 566.
[273] Ibid., p. 566.

A woman in her happy youth
Before her man had broken troth,
Dead men and woman. Memories
Have pulled my head upon my knees. (229-33)

Fand promises Cuchulain an oblivion of 'Intricacies of blind remorse' (260) as the condition for kissing her. Yet her promise implies Cuchulain's complete isolation from his human life. She wants to completely possess Cuchulain in her spiritual world.

Compared with Fand's self-centred love Emer's seems sacrificial because, only hoping to restore Cuchulain to life, she asks his mistress, Eithne, to call his name because she thinks Eithne's 'sweet voice that is so dear to him' (98) can bring him back to life. But Emer gives away the right to call his name to Eithne because she believes she can ultimately reunite with him. In this sense her love is another form of possession of the object of love. Only the location is changed from the spiritual world to human reality. However it is the play-within-the-play that offers Emer an opportunity to think of her love from a different point of view. The new perspective she reaches helps her to take a heroic choice: she renounces Cuchulain's love forever and takes over the role of a tragic heroine who is doomed to watch the awakened Cuchulain choose her rival. Thus her love proves to be a sacrificial one. Just as Hamlet gains evidence of Claudius' guilt by means of the play-within-the-play, so Bricriu achieves his goal of making Emer renounce Cuchulain's love. She reacts to the 'false fire' of the inset play in the same way that Claudius does. As such, the two plays-within-plays advance the actions of the main plots.

The responses of Hamlet and Bricriu, the two producers, of the plays-within-plays show the lengths to which they will achieve their desired ends. As an on-stage spectator Hamlet shows a greater variety of reactions than Claudius. After the dumb-show, Hamlet gives Ophelia an ambiguous hint about its meaning, saying 'this is miching malicho. It means mischief' (3.2.135). He says its import will be revealed by the Prologue because he believes 'The players cannot keep counsel: they'll tell all' (3.2.138). Dover Wilson supposes that Hamlet fears that 'the players, through the dumb-show and its presenter, would divulge the nature of their play too soon'.[274] Whether or not Wilson's supposition is accepted, it is clear that Hamlet is not willing to reveal the import of the play through the dumb-show. On the other hand, Hamlet shows his active attitude after Lucianus' entrance. He introduces Lucianus as a 'nephew to the King', not a brother as in the Ghost's story. It can be said that here Hamlet hints at his design for revenge on his uncle and thus intends to threaten Claudius. Reminded of his revenge, Hamlet impatiently urges the player to start his speech:

> Begin, murderer. Leave thy damnable faces and begin.
> Come, the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.
> (3.2.246-9)

Through Hamlet's impatient reaction, the audience is led to feel that the moment when Claudius' conscience will be aroused is coming nearer: his reaction drives the audience to perceive the climax of the scene. When Lucianus speaks the lines which are supposed to have been inserted by Hamlet[275] and '*Pours the poison in the sleeper's ears*', the arrival of the

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[274] *Hamlet*, p. 297.

[275] Harold Jenkins comments on the speech of Lucianus in his notes to *Hamlet*, 'Many have maintained that this is the speech inserted by Hamlet, but others have denied that his speech is to be found in the play at all. Most critical opinion probably agrees with Dowden,

moment at which Hamlet expects to catch Claudius is sensed. Hamlet discloses the player's succeeding action: 'You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife' (3.2.257-8), and at last he witnesses Claudius' response. Claudius rises, saying 'Give me some light' (3.2.263). In consequence, Hamlet is persuaded that his revenge is justified. As such Hamlet is not only the producer of, but also a crucial reactor to, the players' play.

Like Hamlet, Bricriu reacts to his play-within-the play, though to a greater extent he is confined to the role of producer, seeking to provoke a reaction from Emer. Since Emer hesitates to renounce Cuchulain's love even after the Ghost of Cuchulain goes out from the stage following Fand, Bricriu impatiently urges Emer's renunciation, betraying his real intention:

> Fool, fool!
> I am Fand's enemy come to thwart her will,
> And you stand gaping there. There is still time.
> Hear how the horses trample on the shore,
> Hear how they trample! She has mounted up.
> Cuchulain's not beside her in the chariot.
> There is still a moment left; cry out, cry out!
> Renounce him, and her power is at an end.
> Cuchulain's foot is on the chariot-step.
> Cry- (288-97)

On meeting Emer Bricriu tells her that she must renounce Cuchulain if she wishes to save him. But in fact his purpose is to thwart Fand's will. The disclosure of his real aim proves the depth of his absorption in the play. In this sense Bricriu is also a reactor. Nevertheless in comparison with Hamlet Bricriu's reaction is understated, and this can be attributed to the

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'If we were forced to identify Hamlet's lines, we must needs point to the speech of Lucianus'. See *Hamlet*, p. 303.

fact that he is not a human but an immortal being. Yeats says 'the ghost is simple, the man heterogeneous and confused'[276] for man's innate nature is to endlessly 'seek his opposite'. Emer, a human being, reacts more strongly to the inset play. She struggles between her will and Bricriu's demand during the inset play. Not until she realises Cuchulain's ghost is at the point of being dissolved into the immortal world does she renounce Cuchulain's love. This shows the degree of her conflict and the pain of her transformation into a tragic heroine. From this perspective, Emer's response to the inset play exceeds Claudius's because her response is a painful transformation accompanying self-sacrifice, whereas the latter's is derived from his past crime.

On her announcement of the renunciation Bricriu, taking Cuchulain's image, '*sinks back upon the bed*'[277] and '*once more wears the heroic mask*'.[278] The Figure of Cuchulain plays the part of heroic Cuchulain again by the exchange of his mask. Consequently only people of human reality remain on the stage: Emer, Eithne and real Cuchulain. Awakened Cuchulain says to Eithne:

> Your arms, your arms! O Eithne Inguba,
> I have been in some strange place and am afraid. (303-4)

Cuchulain feels as if he has dreamed what he did in the play-within-the-play. The audience feel that the play of Emer and Bricriu is also a dream-like illusion because it disappears when the Figure of Cuchulain changes the mask of Bricriu into a heroic one as the play-within-the-play does at the

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[276] *Mythologies*, p. 335.
[277] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 561.
[278] Ibid., p. 563.

exit of the Ghost of Cuchulain and Fand. Hence Bricriu's mask produces another frame in the wider play of Emer, Eithne and Cuchulain. Emer reacts to the play-within-the-play and obtains a new perspective, whereas the audience react to the wider play and the two inner plays – the play of Fand and Cuchulain and that of Emer and Bricriu – so that they gain two new perspectives. Both Fand's self-centred love and Emer's heroic love are experienced by the audience.

As Helen Vendler argues this play, 'the most confusing of the dance plays, can be called the Hydra of Yeats's dramas'.[279] Among the problems the play presents, foremost is the construction of Emer. Vendler objects to the common view of regarding Emer as 'a selfless wife', arguing that this judgment is influenced by moral norms. She insists that the play's true heroine is Fand, saying 'Essentially, the play belongs to Fand, in spite of the fact that she is in the end defeated, and it belongs to her by virtue of her poetic impact'.[280] Yet her argument is rooted in the aesthetic because, she claims, Fand nearly reaches 'Phase 15' on the 'Great Wheel, the complete phase of those situated in the *antithetical tincture*, whose major characteristic is aesthetic.[281] However, viewed from a dramatic point of view, more stress should be placed on Emer than on Fand because it is

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[279] Helen Vendler, *Yeats's Vision and the Later Plays* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 216.

[280] Ibid., p. 223. Vendler's argument for considering the heroine of the play to be Fand follows the view of her predecessors, Birgit Bjersby and F.A.C. Wilson, but later their arguments are criticised by Leonard E. Nathan, who says 'these interpretations characteristically tend to explain the play as a code for Yeats's system or his life and ignore or distort the actual text by which *The Only Jealousy of Emer* stand or fall'. See Nathan p. 236. For Bjersby and Wilson see *The Interpretation of the Cuchulain Legend in the Works of W.B. Yeats* (Upsala: A.-B. Lundequistska, 1950), p. 157 and *Yeats's Iconography*, p. 120 respectively.

[281] W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, p. 73.

Emer who undergoes the transformation into a tragic heroine. Like Deirdre, who is transformed into a tragic heroine in spite of the fact that its consequence is her own death, Emer also undergoes a tragic process and as a result makes the tragic decision to give up Cuchulain's love, besides witnessing Cuchulain choose Eithne. Above all, the fact that Emer is an important on-stage viewer of the play-within-the-play of Fand and Cuchulain who makes an agonising decision as a result, is enough to make her the heroine of the play. This becomes more apparent through a comparison with Shakespeare's Cleopatra. It is her transformation in the last act that makes her a tragic heroine in spite of the traditional evaluation of her as a ruler who threw away a kingdom for lust.[282]

In a note to *The Only Jealousy of Emer* Yeats states that he was able to enjoy the freedom to fill his play with 'those little known convictions about the nature and history of a woman's beauty, which Robartes found in the *Speculum* of Gyraldus and in Arabia Deserta among the Judwalis' because it was intended 'for some fifty people in a drawing-room or a studio'.[283] Yeats says that the physical beauty of woman accompanies 'emotional toil':

> Much that Robartes has written might be a commentary on Castiglione's saying that the physical beauty of woman is the spoil or monument of the victory of the soul, for physical beauty, only possible to subjective natures, is described as the result of emotional toil in past lives.[284]

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[282] For example, Franklin Miller Dickey argues that 'traditionally Antony and Cleopatra are examples of rulers who threw away a kingdom for lust, and this is how, despite the pity and terror, which Shakespeare makes us feel, they appear in his play'. See *Not Wisely But Too Well: Shakespeare's Love Tragedies* (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1957), p. 179.
[283] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 566.
[284] Ibid., p. 566.

Emer's tragic process provides her with 'emotional toil', which is an indispensable factor in the production of physical beauty. The play ends with the Musicians' singing of her beauty:

> What makes your heart so beat?
> What man is at your side?
> When beauty is complete
> Your own thought will have died
> And danger not be diminished;
> Dimmed at three-quarter light,
> When moon's round is finished
> The stars are out of sight. (331-8)

Emer's own thoughts about claiming Cuchulain's love die, and instead her beauty is born through a tragic transformation of accepting 'the bitter reward / Of many a tragic tomb' (326-7). Because Emer experiences a process of 'Renunciation', it can be said that she reaches the Saint of Phase 27, whose *True Mask* is 'Renunciation'.[285] Yeats says 'A saint or sage before his final deliverance has one incarnation as a woman of supreme beauty'.[286] This is further confirmation of Emer's identity as the heroine of the play. Like Cleopatra, Emer reaches the status of tragic heroine through transformation, or the discovery of an alternative self which has been sleeping in some corner of her mind. In his introduction to *Fighting the Waves*, a prose rewriting of *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, Yeats says:

> 'Everything he loves must fly', everything he desires; Emer too must renounce desire, but there is another love, that which is like the man-at-arms in the Anglo-Saxon poem, 'doom eager'. Young, we discover an opposite through our love; old, we discover our love through some opposite neither hate nor despair can destroy, because it is another self, a self that we have fled in vain.[287]

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[285] *A Vision*, p. 180.
[286] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 566.
[287] Ibid., p. 571.

Yeats conspicuously uses the word 'desire' in this note instead of 'Cuchulain's love' as presented in the play. This makes it possible to understand Cuchulain's love as a symbol of all human desire, exceeding a particular woman's love for a man. As such, Emer is a dramatic character representing all human beings. What Yeats aims at in this play is to find our other self, and the device of the play-within-a-play is effectively used to posit the existence of additional personae. Emer reacts to Bricriu's play-within-the-play by renouncing her desire but as a result, finds another love, or, another self of hers.

Through the inner play Claudius, the target of Hamlet's play-within-the-play, confronts his other self. He feels nervous to the extent that he cannot continue to watch the play and in the subsequent scene (3.3) he trembles for fear: 'What if this cursed hand / Were thicker than itself with brother's blood, / Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens / To wash it white as snow?' (3.3.43-5). This is indeed a different aspect of his personality from the one that leads him to kill his own brother. Hamlet, who obtains obvious evidence of Claudius' guilt, finds another self, which could 'drink hot blood' (3.3.381) as he confesses in his soliloquy shortly after the play-within-the-play. This cruel self presumably makes it possible for him to kill Polonius and enact the plot leading to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's death. The process of finding, confronting, or struggling against one's other self can be construed as unique to human beings because, as Yeats points

out in *A Vision*, strife between opposites is a precondition of human life.[288] Through the relationship between the on-stage audiences and the inset plays in *Hamlet* and *The Only Jealousy of Emer* we experience the spiritual struggle between alternate selves.

4) The play-within-a-play and ritual: *The Tempest* and *The Words upon the Window-Pane*

Ritual and the play-within-a-play are two forms that share the symbolic effect sought by Yeats. Robert J. Nelson argues that 'the play within a play is the invention of the modern world' and points out that 'the play within a ritual' was prevalent until the theatre became detached from the church.[289] He adds that 'dramatised tropes occurring within a ritual, faces intercalated within mystery plays, minstrel *exodia* – such are the medieval formulas anticipating the concentric configuration of the play within a play'.[290] In modern drama ritual is inserted into a play. Therefore it can be said that in the modern theatre ritual is used as a form of the play-within-a-play in contrast to the medieval period when a play was part of a ritual.

On a theatrical level ritual retains its close kinship with non-illusory theatre. Tyrone Guthrie claims that this concept of shared dramatic experience includes all non-illusory theatre:

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[288] In *A Vision*, Yeats argues that 'Phase 1 and Phase 15 are not a human incarnation, because human life is impossible without strife between the tinctures'. p. 79.
[289] Robert J. Nelson, p. 7.
[290] Ibid., p. 8.

> I believe that the theatre makes its effect not by means of illusion, but by ritual. People do not believe that what they see or hear on the stage is 'really' happening. Action on the stage is a stylised re-enactment of real action, which is then imagined by the audience. The re-enactment is not merely an imitation but a symbol of the real thing. [291]

Guthrie points out both the intrinsic symbolic effect of ritual and the audience's active participation. Yeats was also conscious of both of these characteristics of ritual. In *Samhain: 1904* he writes:

> Ritual, the most powerful form of drama, differs from the ordinary form, because everyone who hears it is also a player.[292]

For Yeats, who desired the symbolic theatre to engage the audience's imagination, ritual is an effective mode of stylisation like song, dance, mime and mask. Almost all of his plays have ritual elements. In *Four Plays for Dancers* he inserts a cloth ritual at the beginning and end of the play. The cloth ritual is Yeats's unique invention despite the strong influence of traditional Noh drama it incorporates. Richard Allen Cave demonstrates that it is 'entirely Yeats's own invention', claiming that 'there is no equivalent in Noh drama'. [293]

In addition to its stylised symbolic aspects, ritual offers another advantage to Yeats: the freedom to present the supernatural on stage. Francis Edwards explains the involvement of the supernatural in ritual:

> Now, ritual, whenever it is associated with the life and death conflict of a community, inevitably tends to become a sacred act or office. This is largely because of the need in Man to address his desires, his hopes and his fears to an intelligible being rather than to blind

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[291] Tyrone Guthrie, *A Life in the Theatre*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1960), p. 313.
[292] *Explorations*, p. 129.
[293] *W.B. Yeats: Selected Plays*, ed. by Richard Allen Cave, p. 317.

> chance. Such a being is dignified with the name of god or goddess because he or she exercises a remote power over human destiny.[294]

As such, ritual presupposes the presence of the supernatural in Yeats's plays.

But as Francis Fergusson points out, ritual is also a feature of Shakespeare's theatre.[295] Fergusson identifies *Hamlet* as 'a species of ritual drama' and claims the play has six chief ritual scenes: The changing of the Guard (1.1), Claudius' First Court (1.2), The performance of Hamlet's play (3.2), Ophelia's Madness as a mock ritual (4.5), Ophelia's funeral (5.1), and the duel between Hamlet and Laertes (5.2).[296] The frequent use of the ritual form implies that it is a useful tool for Shakespeare's bare stage. William Frost explains:

> Ritual can operate to free both actor and playwright from the demands of strict verisimilitude, for the participants in a rite are assumed a priori to act parts and to speak language not simply their own or natural to them as individuals, but traditional or appropriate in some way to a publicly acknowledged occasion. [297]

Thus ritual can be conveniently accommodated by anti-naturalistic theatre seeking to portray a level of symbolism.

Yeats and Shakespeare employ ritual as an inset device. In particular *The Tempest* and *The Words upon the Window-Pane* involve plays-within-plays

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[294] Francis Edwards, *Ritual and Drama: The Mediaeval Theatre* (Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1976), p. 11.
[295] Francis Fergusson, *The Idea of A Theatre* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 114.
[296] Francis Fergusson, p. 115.
[297] William Frost, 'Shakespeare's Rituals and the Opening Scene of *King Lear*' in *Shakespeare's Tragedies: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, ed. by Laurence Lerner (London: Penguin, 1963), p. 161.

acted by supernatural beings. The masque in *The Tempest* is a kind of rite to celebrate the contract of true love between Miranda and Ferdinand and to wish for their bountiful marriage. As Allardyce Nicoll puts it, the use of this framing device is closely associated with the architectural shape of the Elizabethan playhouse, which is suitable for 'the entire fabric of the romance drama', where deities and creatures of the folk imagination are mixed with what purports to be the real, or the purportedly real includes the fantastic'.[298] On account of this, Nicoll argues that judging from its spirit this play belong to an earlier time even though it was written almost a decade after Queen Elizabeth's death.[299] On the other hand, the séance of *The Words upon the Window-Pane* has parallels with an inset play because the medium assumes a different persona or role, and the other characters observe her as an on-stage audience would. Because the purpose of the séance is to communicate with the dead by way of ritual, the audience confront supernatural beings on stage through her mediumship. The séance's similarities with a play-within-a-play will be explained later in this chapter.

As in the case *of The Only Jealousy of Emer*, *The Tempest* includes double frames of play-within-play. The events that occur on the island are planned by Prospero to restore his dukedom. He wreaks vengeance on his enemies and arranges his daughter's marriage for the continuation of his dynasty. In this sense, *The Tempest* itself is a sort of play-within-a-play presented by Prospero. He functions as a playwright and a director in that he has the

[298] Allardyce Nicoll, p. 51.
[299] Ibid., p. 54.

power to control the actions of the other dramatic personae through his magic power. As a result his island is the stage and the rest of the characters are actors. Leah Scragg explains the distinctive structure of *The Tempest*: 'the members of the theatre audience watch a Shakespearian comedy, while the principal figure within the comedy organises another play for purposes of his own'.[300] In the light of this, the masque presented by Prospero's pageant before Ferdinand and Miranda forms another frame, so that it becomes a play-within-a-play within a play. Robert J. Nelson uses the term 'triple convolution'[301] to describe the structure of this play.

Furthermore, unlike Hamlet and Bricriu, Prospero himself is immersed in the first play-within-the-play as an actor. Accordingly the line of demarcation sectioning the play-within-the-play is blurred. However, when he appears on the stage as a spectator, the demarcation of the play-within-the-play is clearly revealed. For instance, Prospero shows himself as an on-stage audience in Act 3, scene 1 for the first time. Though he is at a distance from Miranda and Ferdinand and unseen by them, the theatre audience recognise his physical presence and watch his response to the figures in the play-within-the-play. Prospero's responses are expressed in the form of asides. His first aside implies that he is not completely happy with Miranda's visit to Ferdinand: 'Poor worm, thou art infected! / This visitation shows it.' (3.1.31-2). But when he realises their love for each other, his opinion of the meeting alters: 'Fair encounter / Of two most rare affections! Heavens rain grace / On that which breeds between 'em' (74-

[300] Leah Scragg, pp. 105-6.
[301] Robert J. Nelson, p. 30.

76). This experience as an on-stage spectator affects Prospero's subsequent action with the result that he approves of Ferdinand's marriage to Miranda in Act 4, scene 1:

> If I have too austerely punished you,
> Your compensation makes amends, for I
> Have given you here a third of mine own life,
> Or that for which I live, who once again
> I tender to thy hand. All thy vexations
> Were but my trials of thy love, and thou
> Hast strangely stood the test. (4.1.1-7)[302]

The union of Miranda and Ferdinand was one of his projects, but he wanted to test Ferdinand's love, and the scene plays a crucial role in determining his decision. It therefore serves to advance the progress of the plot as the plays-within-plays of *Hamlet* and *The Only Jealousy of Emer* do.

The other scene showing Prospero as an on-stage spectator is Act 3, scene 3. Prospero is '*on the top (invisible)*' and watches the court party's reaction to the magic banquet carried by the '*several strange shapes*'. Gonzalo responds to the banquet with the remark that though the islanders are 'of monstrous shape', 'Their manners are more gentle, kind, than of / Our human generation' (31-3). Prospero agrees with Gonzalo as the aside: 'Honest lord, / Thou hast said well, for some of you there present / Are worse than devils' (34-6). Prospero also derides Alonso's premature praise of the vanishing figures with the ironic aside, 'Praise in departing' (39). Prospero reveals the ironic meaning of his asides by giving Alonso and the other conspirators a hard time: Ariel disguised as '*a harpy*' suddenly

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[302] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (London: Arden, 2003), All future references will be to this edition, citing Act, scene and line numbers parenthetically.

appears and discloses the sins of the three conspirators. Prospero's following lines confirm that all the plans for the banquet, and Ariel's appearance as a harpy, are the result of his instructions:

> Bravely the figure of this harpy hast thou
> Performed, my Ariel; a grace it had, devouring.
> Of my instruction hast thou nothing bated
> In what thou hadst to say. (3.3.83-6)

Prospero holds his enemies in his power completely by means of his 'high charms' (90). He leaves them in a state of temporary madness and is told the outcome of his charms in Act 5, scene 1. Ariel reports:

> Confined together
> In the same fashion as you gave in charge,
> Just as you left them; all prisoners, sir,
> In the line grove which weather-fends your cell.
> They cannot budge till your release. The King,
> His brother and yours abide all three distracted,
> And the remainder mourning over them,
> Brimful of sorrow and dismay; but chiefly
> Him that you termed, sir, the good old Lord Gonzalo.
> His tears run down his beard like winter's drops
> From eaves of reeds. Your charm so strongly works 'em
> That, if you now beheld them, your affections
> Would become tender. (5.1.8-19)

Ariel's report accompanies Prospero's order to release the King and his followers:

> The rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance. They being penitent,
> The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
> Not a frown further. Go, release them, Ariel.
> My charms I'll break; their senses I'll restore;
> And they shall be themselves. (5.1.27-32)

In this respect his forgiveness is closely connected with the play-within-the-play of the courtiers. In other words, the play of the courtiers has an impact on Prospero's action in the following scene as the play of Miranda and Ferdinand does. Therefore the relation of the play-within-the play to its

fictional spectator functions comparably to the way it does in *Hamlet* and *The Only Jealousy of Emer* in the sense that the plays-within-plays have effects on the heroes' and heroine's subsequent actions.

The masque of celestial deities for the betrothal of the young couple forms another frame in Prospero's play-within-a-play. But here Miranda and Ferdinand as well as Prospero become the on-stage audiences. The purpose of the masque is to celebrate the union of the young lover. As such the masque serves as a ritual preparing for blessing the rite of the wedding.

Iris, 'the Greek goddess who serves as the gods' messenger',[303] summons Ceres, 'the goddess of the earth and protectress of the harvest',[304] according to the order of Juno, 'the goddess of marriage', so that they may celebrate 'A contract of true love' (4.1.84). Iris informs Ceres, who fears the attendance of 'Venus or her son' (87), that they are banished because of their intention to charm Ferdinand and Miranda into lust:

> Here thought they to have done
> Some wanton charm upon this man and maid,
> Whose vows are that no bed-right shall be paid
> Till Hymen's torch be lighted, but in vain.
> Mars' hot minion is returned again;
> Her waspish-headed son has broke his arrows,
> Swears he will shoot no more, but play with sparrows,
> And be a boy right out. (4.1.94-101)

Juno asks Ceres to go with her 'To bless this twain that they may prosperous be, / And honoured in their issue' (4.1.105-6). In addition 'temperate nymphs' (4.1.132) are invited for the celebration according to

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[303] *The Tempest*, p. 142.
[304] Ibid., p. 142.

Juno's command. Accordingly this masque fulfills Prospero's insistence on Miranda's bountiful marriage and the legitimacy of his kingdom.

The masque has similarities to the oath-taking ceremony in *On Baile's Strand* in that the ceremony is inserted into the play as a kind of the play-within-the-play and it admits the involvement of the supernatural in man's life. As soon as Cuchulain agrees to take the oath for the protection of Conchubar's 'heartstone' and family values, Conchubar orders that the oath-taking ritual should take place to confirm Cuchulain's oath:

> On this fire
> That has been lighted from your hearth and mine;
> The older men shall be my witnesses,
> The younger, yours. The holders of the fire
> Shall purify the thresholds of the house
> With waving fire, and shut the outer door,
> According to the custom; and sing rhyme
> That has come down from the old law-makers
> To blow the witches out. Considering
> That the wild will of man could be oath-bound,
> But that a woman's could not, they bid us sing
> Against the will of woman at its wildest
> In the Shape-Changers that run upon the wind. (380-92)

As Ceres is afraid of Venus and 'her blind boy's scandaled company' (4.1.90), Conchubar fears the intervention of 'the witches'. The three women minding the fire start their ritual in the form of 'a traditional rite of exorcism,'[305] ensuring that the oath will be adhered to by warding off any possibility of malevolent supernatural influence from the fire over which the oath is to be sworn:

> May this fire have driven out
> The Shape-Changers that can put
> Ruin on a great king's house
> Until all be ruinous. (393-6)

[305] Richard Taylor, p. 74.

The musicians' song describes 'the Shape-Changers'. They are beings like 'whirling wind' (401), so that none 'can kiss and thrive' (400) the witches.

The ways they destroy man's life are depicted:

> They would make a prince decay
> With light images of clay
> Planted in the running wave;
> Or, for many shapes they have,
> They would change them into hounds
> Until he had died of his wounds,
> Though the change were but a whim;
> Or they'd hurl a spell at him,
> That he follow with desire
> Bodies that can never tire
> Or grow kind, for they anoint
> All their bodies, joint by joint,
> With a miracle-working juice
> That is made out of the grease
> Of the ungoverned unicorn. (403-17)

The man enchanted by the witches is 'thrice forlorn, / Emptied, ruined, wracked, and lost' (418-9),

> for at most
> They will give him kiss for kiss
> While they murmur, 'After this
> Hatred may be sweet to the taste'. (420-3)

They approach a man with a sweet kiss accompanying subsequent hatred.

The three women's ritual gesture and the seven-syllable line of those incantatory couples recall the three 'Weird Sisters' (3.5.132) in *Macbeth*.[306] Furthermore the scene of the witch evoking apparitions in front of Macbeth (4.1) is comparable to the visionary play-within-a-play which Bricriu unfolds for Emer. However, the Weird Sisters have more affinities with the witches the three musicians are dispelling through the ritual than with the

[306] Richard Allen Cave argues that this song is 'a resonance that Yeats seems deliberately to invite'. See *Selected Plays: W.B. Yeats*, p. 295.

three musicians, who function as priestesses who hold a ritual. It is true that Yeats's witches are based on Celtic mythology, while Shakespeare's are derived from 'Elizabethan witches',[307] but the respective descriptions of them within the plays reveal their affinities. For example, like Yeats's witches, the Weird Sisters destroy man with their witchcraft. The Sisters' spiteful involvement in human life is described in Act 1, scene 2. The First Witch reveals her plan to destroy the captain of the ship named '*Tiger*' (1.3.7) just because his wife did not want to give her chestnuts: 'Aroynt thee, witch!' (1.3.6). She says that she will slip on board the ship 'like a rat without a tail' (1.3.9) so that she is not noticed and adds:

> I'll drain him dry as hay:
> Sleep shall neither night nor day
> Hang upon his penthouse lid;
> He shall live a man forbid.
> Weary sev'n-nights nine times nine,
> Shall he dwindle, peak and pine:
> Though his bark cannot be lost,
> Yet it shall be tempest-tost. (1.3.18-25)[308]

Like Yeats's witches, who change their shapes into 'hounds', the First Witch's description of herself as 'a rat without a tail' suggests the power of metamorphosis. As Yeats's shape-changers enchant a man to the extent that he is 'thrice forlorn, / Emptied, ruined, wracked, and lost', so the First Sister has the power to make the captain 'dwindle, peak and pine'.

The ability to control the air is another common attribute of the witches of Shakespeare and Yeats. When the Witches vanish after the apparition scene (4.1), Macbeth feels that 'Infected be the air whereon they ride' (4.1.138).

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[307] Walter Clyde Curry, *Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns* (Michigan: Louisiana State University Press, 1937), p. 53.
[308] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by Kenneth Muir (London: Arden, 1962). All future references will be to this edition, citing Act, scene and line numbers parenthetically.

Something similar is detected by Conchubar in *On Baile's Strand.* Realising Cuchulain's impulse to befriend the Young Man who comes to kill Cuchulain, Conchubar says, 'Some witch is floating in the air above us' (609).

The apparition scene offers Macbeth over-confidence which leads him to tragedy as predicted by Hecate:

> He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear
> His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace, and fear;
> And you all know, security
> Is mortals' chiefest enemy. (3.5.30-3)

Macbeth decides to kill Macduff's wife, 'his babes, and all unfortunate souls / That trace him in his line' (4.1.152-3) on hearing Lenox's announcement about Macduff's fleeing to England because it loads considerable trustworthiness upon the witches' predictions about Macduff. A point of comparison between Macbeth's fate and the structure of drama arises because his actions are determined by supernatural influence in the same way that the behaviour of actors on a stage is the product of a script which already describes their fates.

As in the case of Macbeth, Cuchulain's tragic fate is closely connected with witchcraft. Conchubar believes that Cuchulain's friendship with the Young Man is the work of witchcraft:

> Some witch has worked upon your mind, Cuchulain.
> The head of that young man seemed like a woman's
> You'd had a fancy for. Then of a sudden
> You laid your hands on the High King himself! (604-7)

Cuchulain's instinctive attraction to the Young Man is derived from his relationship with Aoife, the woman he had had a fancy for. Aoife provides a direct cause of his tragic fate. Cuchulain's first encounter with Aoife is described in *At the Hawk's Well*. The play ends with Young Cuchulain's determination to confront Aoife as a consequence of his acceptance of a fight with her as his predetermined destiny. But it is the dance of the Guardian of the Well, possessed by the mountain witch, that leads reckless Cuchulain to realise his fate. As a result of the dance 'The madness has laid hold upon him' (216). Moreover it is 'The Woman of the Sidhe' (161), 'the mountain witch' (162) who has roused Aoife, 'the fierce woman of the hill' (242). Cuchulain notices Aoife's fierceness in the Young Man: 'He has got her fierceness, / And Nobody is as fierce as those pale women' (*On Baile's Strand*, 507-8). His attraction to Aoife's fierceness began from his first encounter with her and anticipates his tragic fate because her fierceness made her bring up her son to kill his own father. His affection for Aoife is like a witch's spell: a kiss indispensably bringing hatred. His tragic destiny is predicted by the Old Man:

> The Woman of the Sidhe herself,
> The mountain witch, the unappeasable shadow.
> She is always flitting upon this mountain-side,
> To allure or to destroy. When she has shown
> Herself to the fierce women of the hills
> Under that shape they offer sacrifice
> And arm for battle. There falls a curse
> On all who have gazed in her unmoistened eyes;
> So get you gone while you have that proud step
> And confident voice, for not a man alive
> Has so much luck that he can play with it.
> Those that have long to live should fear her most,
> The old are cursed already. That curse may be
> Never to win a woman's love and keep it;
> Or always to mix hatred in the love;
> Or it may be that she will kill your children,

That you will find them, their throats torn and bloody,
Or you will be so maddened that you kill them
With your own hand. (161-79)

Among the witch's curses Cuchulain falls victim to the curse to kill his own son with his own hand as presented in *On Baile's Strand*.

Tragic fate comes to the hero with the irresistible power of witchcraft. Yeats conceives of the hero as mysteriously impelled to pursue the obscure and attractive power which may lead his life both to greatness and to ruin. The hero's impulse to have power is a sort of passion: which is, according to Yeats, the central factor of tragedy. He argues that 'tragedy is passion alone, and rejecting character, it gets form from motives, from the wandering of passion'.[309] He describes passion as a kind of madness possessed by a powerful strength like supernatural power.

However in *The Tempest* the supernatural function is expressed in a more positive way, despite Venus and her son's plot to break Miranda's 'virginity 'before / All sanctimonious ceremonies may / With full and holy rite be ministered' (4.1.15-7). Rather the human affair of the 'foul conspiracy' (4.1.139) of Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano against Prospero hinders the supernatural beings' masque which is 'a most majestic vision, and / Harmonious charmingly' (4.1.117-8). But the sudden suspension of the masque makes the off-stage audience, as well as the on-stage, recognise the fact that what they have seen is the play-within-the-play forming another frame in the play. Prospero reminds both audiences of this:

[309] *Autobiographies*, p. 471.

> Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits and
> Are melted into air, into thin air [.] (4.1.150)

The masque is a magic spectacle which is to be 'melted into air'. This idea is extended to our real lives:

> And – like the baseless fabric of this vision –
> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep. (4.1.151-8)

Prospero compares our life to an actor's life. As an actor disappears with a fading pageant, so we dissolve after 'our little life' in the world. With the help of the figure of his pageant, he delivers the idea that the world's a stage.

The fact that his role as a dramatist is the widest frame in the play is revealed in the epilogue where Prospero addresses the theatre audience:

> Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
> And what strength I have's mine own,
> Which is most faint: now, 'tis true,
> I must be here confin'd by you,
> Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
> Since I have my dukedom got,
> And pardon'd the deceiver, dwell
> In this bare island by your spell;
> But release me from my bands
> With the help of your good hands [.] (1-10)

Prospero emphasises that his relation to the play's courtiers and that of the theatre audience to himself are in parallel to one another. He asks the audience to 'release him[self]' as he 'pardoned the deceivers'. The effect is to apply art to human life. Again the idea of the world as stage is confirmed.

Furthermore the multi-layered structure of the play is proved. That is, the play of the courtier is the play-within-the-play presented by Prospero's magic, but Prospero's pleading to the audience acknowledges that he is an actor watched by a theatre audience. Accordingly three circles are discovered: the smallest frame is the masque; the next the play of Ariel, Miranda, Caliban and the rescued passengers; and the widest is Prospero's action as dramatist.

Yeats's *The Words upon the Window-Pane* (1934) also involves a play-within-a-play in the form of a spiritualist séance, in antagonism with its apparently realistic setting. Thus the responses of human characters to the supernatural world are presented as in the case of the masque in *The Tempest*. Just as Yeats argues that 'mediumship is dramatisation,'[310] the three different voices the medium produces create a play-within-the play in the audience's mind.

The soul who occupies Mrs Henderson, the medium of the séance, in order to undergo the process of dreaming-back is Jonathan Swift's. Dr. Trench and John Corbet give the background knowledge of Swift's tragic life in the same way that an expository chorus might do. Dr. Trench considers Swift's life to have been 'A tragic life: Bolingbroke, Harley, Ormonde, all those great Ministers that were his friends, banished and broken' (125-7). But John Corbet argues that 'his tragedy had deeper foundations' (129):

> His ideal order was the Roman Senate, his ideal men Brutus and Cato. Such an order and such men had

[310] *Explorations*, p. 365.

> seemed possible once more, but the movement passed and he foresaw the ruin to come, Democracy, Rousseau, the French Revolution [.] (129-34)

Corbet hints that Swift's tragedy put its root in the conflict between his pursuit of subjective ideas and the objective age approaching him, and Dr. Trench adds an allusion to Swift's tragic afterlife:

> Some spirits are earth-bound – they think they are still living and go over and over some action of their past lives, just as we go over and over some painful thought, except that where they are thought is reality. For instance, when a spirit which has died a violent death comes to a medium for the first time, it re-lives all the pains of death. (191-7)

As implied above, Swift's spirit re-enacts his tragic moment through the medium's mouth: in particular the conflict in his special relationship with Vanessa and Stella. Vanessa serves as his daimon, 'seeking its own opposite',[311] because she demands what is opposite to his ideal. She insists on marrying Swift, who 'had sworn never to marry' (348) because he does not want to spread his inherited illness and 'add another to the healthy rascaldom and knavery of the world' (375). Vanessa's ceaseless persuasion with her warning that he will remain 'an old miserable childless man' (398) drives Swift's soul to shout 'My God, I am left alone with my enemy. Who locked the door, who locked me in with my enemy?'(405-7). Identifying Vanessa as his 'enemy' confirms her role as his daimon. Yeats suggests an analogy between daimon and sweetheart and in addition proves the close association between sweetheart and enemy by introducing 'the principal stars, that govern enemy and sweetheart alike'[312] offered by Greek antiquity.

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[311] *Mythologies*, p. 335.
[312] Ibid., p. 336.

However, Swift's soul is in agony about Stella, who shares heroic virtues with him. The soul moans from his remorse because of her unhappiness:

> Have I wronged you, beloved Stella? Are you unhappy? You have no children, you have no lover, you have no husband. A cross and ageing man for friend – nothing but that. (433-6)

Swift fears she will become a victim of his ideal. According to his ideal, Stella chooses to love 'according to the soul' instead of 'according to the flesh'. But Swift is afraid that his ideal will take away happiness from Stella:

> [The poem Stella wrote for Swift's birthday] is the thought of the great Chrysostom who wrote in a famous passage that women loved according to the soul, loved as saints can love, keep their beauty longer, have greater happiness than women loved according to the flesh. That thought has comforted me, but it is a terrible thing to be responsible for another's happiness. There are moments when I doubt, when I think Chrysostom may have been wrong. (443-51)

Swift believes her poem drives doubt away, but the séance ends up without his request that Stella 'will close my eyes' (472) being answered. His endeavour to shape destiny to his liking results in his tragic life and further the repetition of the process of dreaming-back even in his afterlife.

Though it is an imagined play-within-the-play, the response of the on-stage audience is notable because it influences the theatre audience's perception. John Corbet's response is particularly influential. He is a new comer to the séance and makes clear his scepticism about spiritualism. But it is he who is more involved in the séance than the other experienced spiritualists. Other sitters participate in the séance mainly for their own selfish purposes. For instance, Mrs. Mallet, who is considered 'a very experienced spiritualist'

(95), came to the séance to listen to her dead husband's advice about her plan to start 'a tea-shop in Folkestone' (160). Abraham Johnson, 'a minister of the Gospel' (147), needs spiritual aids to support his profession:

> My hope is that I shall be able to communicate with the great Evangelist Moody. I want to ask him to stand invisible beside me when I speak or sing, and lay his hands upon my head and give me such a portion of his power that my work may be blessed as the work of Moody and Sankey was blessed. (151-6)

As soon as Swift's soul takes possession of the medium's voice, the participants are disappointed because they think that their séance is spoilt by 'a hostile influence' (43). They are not interested in Swift's tragic life. On the other hand, Corbet becomes more and more engaged in the séance by Swift's ghost because he is 'writing an essay on Swift and Stella' (117) for his doctorate at Cambridge. As a result he functions as a commentator even though it is true that his interest in Swift's soul is also selfish in a way. When the others are threatened by the sudden invasion of 'a man's voice' (316), Corbet identifies it as 'Swift, Jonathan Swift, talking to the woman he called Vanessa' (338). And when Mrs. Henderson speaks 'Stella' in Swift's voice after Swift's painful argument with Vanessa, John Corbet comments 'Vanessa has gone, Stella has taken her place' (427). In addition it is his role that recognises the words spoken by Swift's voice as 'The words upon the window-pane' (461) that 'tradition says Stella herself' (77) cut from a poem of hers at the very house where the séance is held. In the light of this, Corbet serves as a commentator who offers the implication of the play-within-the-play to the other on-stage spectators like Bricriu, even though the séance is not an actual play-within-the play. In a sense he acts as

a narrator whose interpretation makes sense of the séance for both on and off-stage audiences.

Nevertheless Corbet does not respond to the play-within-the-play to the extent that he believes it is 'the work of spirits', even though he reveals his passionate involvement in the séance. He clearly notices the spiritual implication, but he prefers to think of it as 'fancy' (431) or the medium's creation:

> When I say I am satisfied I do not mean that I am convinced it was the work of spirits. I prefer to think that you created it all, that you are an accomplished actress and scholar. (506-10)

Corbet's response is contrasted with that of Miss Mackenna who says 'That spirit rather thrilled me' (495). He asks Mrs. Henderson some questions which again emphasise the links between Swift's personal tragedy and history because he believes she is an accomplished scholar:

> But there is something I must ask you. Swift was the chief representative of the intellect of his epoch, that arrogant intellect free at last from superstition. He foresaw its collapse. He foresaw Democracy, he must have dreaded the future. Did he refuse to beget children because of that dread? Was Swift mad? Or was it the intellect itself that was mad? (514-20)

However contrary to Corbet's expectation, Mrs. Henderson does not offer any answer to his questions. Instead she accelerates his questions by saying that just as she woke up she saw a dirty old man whose face was distorted by disease even though Swift was 'neither old nor dirty when Stella and Vanessa loved him' (528-9).

The séance does not result in such a major transformation of an on-stage spectator as Emer is transformed into a tragic heroine. This may also be true of the theatre audience. Yet, the last scene of the play gives an amazing shock to the off-stage audience to the extent that they cannot avoid confronting the intensity with which Swift's suffering transcends Corbet's questioning. Mrs. Henderson, who remains alone and prepares a cup of tea, suddenly speaks again in Swift's voice:

> Five great Ministers that were my friends are gone, ten great Ministers that were my friends are gone. I have not fingers enough to count the great Ministers that were my friends and that are gone. (547-50)

She '*wakes with a start and speaks in her own voice*'. But again she is possessed by Swift: 'Perish the day on which I was born' (554). Andrew Parkin comments on this scene:

> Yeats leaves us pondering Corbet's questions, which raise the fascinating issue of the relationship of the individual personality to history, and then, at the very end of the play, by questioning our scepticism or our superstition, he shocks us back into the intensity of Swift's suffering, enlisting our sympathy for the anguished spirit whatever our allegiance to the historical forces he had loathed and feared.[313]

Here, the play-within-the-play differs from those in the other works discussed since it produces no major change in the on-stage audience. But instead the theatre audience witness Swift's soul possess the medium's personality. In his introduction to the play Yeats uses the term 'a secondary personality' to describe the soul who occupies a medium:

> I consider it certain that every voice that speaks, every form that appears, whether to the medium's eyes and ears alone or to some one or two others or to all present,

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[313] Andrew Parkin, *The Dramatic Imagination of W.B. Yeats* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978), p. 144.

> whether it remains a sight or sound or affects the sense of touch, whether it is confined to the room or can make itself apparent at some distant place, whether it can or cannot alter the position of material objects, is first of all a secondary personality or dramatisation created by, in, or through the medium.[314]

Whatever Yeats's view regarding the authenticity of the medium's claims that she has contact with the supernatural, he is clear that her actions constitute a kind of performance. The discovery of another self is witnessed through the performance. The shocking effect is heightened by the contrast 'between the placid usualness of the realistic setting and the sudden intrusion of a dialogue between unseen, but vividly present, spirits'.[315]

Contrary to the precedent set by *Four Plays for Dancers*, this play uses a completely realistic setting. The naturalistic theatre is usually called 'drawing room drama'[316] because its major setting is a drawing room. The stage direction of this play is reminiscent of such a drawing room:

> *A lodging-house room, an armchair, a little table in front of it, chairs on either side. A fireplace and window. A kettle on the hob and some tea-things on a dresser.*[317]

In spite of its 'surface realism'[318], this play is antagonistic to naturalistic theatre because the action ultimately transcends realistic setting by centring upon the imagined spiritual setting of Swift's purgatory. The play-within-the-play presented by means of the medium's use of different voices demands that the audience use their imaginations, and it is therefore in alignment with Yeats's dramatic goal. It can consequently be argued that

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[314] *Explorations*, p. 364.
[315] Leonard E. Nathan, p. 219.
[316] George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 290.
[317] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 937.
[318] Leonard E. Nathan, p. 217.

this play is not divorced from his more overtly symbolist plays but chooses a new means to satisfy his idea of the theatre.

In *Hamlet*, the players, who are actors in the primary play, perform the play-within-the-play entitled *The Murder of Gonzago* to the group of royal figures. An announcement of the arrival of the actors by Rosencrantz and Polonius and Hamlet's discussion of the playlet emphasise the subordinate sequence of the play-within-the-play with the result that the theatricality of the inset play is heightened. On the other hand, in the case of *The Tempest*, the play-within-the-play produced by Prospero is in transformed form, so that the demarcation between the primary play and the inset play is not clear. Nevertheless the play-within-the-play in *The Tempest* offers Prospero, the major on-stage spectator, the opportunity of perceiving an alternative version of his self as a result of watching the playlet in the same ways that Hamlet does. Just as Shakespeare used the device of the play-within-a-play in a flexible way according to his purposes, so Yeats also transformed the device in his own distinctive ways. The play-within-the-play of *The Only Jealousy of Emer* is a visionary playlet, while that of *The Words upon the Window-Pane* takes the shape of a spiritualist séance. Yet, despite this fact, Yeats's plays-within-plays also serve as a device for the discovery of another self. Emer finds another self of hers in response to the playlet and is transformed into a tragic heroine as a result, whereas the medium of the séance undergoes the transformation of her personality by being possessed by another soul. In other words, all of the four plays explore a common subject through their plays-within-plays: 'the soul', which Yeats argues is

'a constant subject of drama'.[319] In this sense the device of the play-within-a-play was another theatrical property to explore the spiritual struggle in 'the deeps of mind'. In addition to the device for exploring the soul, the play-within-a-play in the form of ritual offered other theatrical advantages, for the inherent features of ritual such as its stylised symbolic effect and the freedom it gives from the demands of strict verisimilitude. To Yeats in particular it was an effective dramatic technique for the presentation of the supernatural because of the close relationship between ritual and the supernatural. The next chapter will continue to examine the way in which theatrical devices are used to explore the relationship between alternative selves by focusing on the subplot, and its respective use in the plays of Shakespeare and Yeats.

[319] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 370.

CHAPTER FOUR

Interlocking Dramaturgy: Subplot and 'Shakespeare's Myth'

This chapter examines two closely related interlocking devices that Yeats used to set two aspects of a play against each other: the construction of a mirroring relationship between subplot and main plot, and the placement of pairs of characters in relations of resemblance and contrast with one another. Yeats's analysis of Shakespeare's use of the latter as a way of enhancing emotional and psychological depth formed the theatrical basis for what he called 'Shakespeare's Myth'. I also look at how these processes of interlocking are attributed a wider philosophical significance in relation to Yeats's Great Wheel.

The subplot is a theatrical means to offering the audience a richer understanding of the hero by presenting his character and story within a separate vehicle which acts as its mirror. 'Shakespeare's Myth', a way of posing one character against another, produces the same effect that the subplot does because by means of it we gain an insight into the hero's character through a perception of the qualities that a hero lacks in another, minor character. For example, Hamlet's propensity for procrastination is contrasted with Fortinbras's success as a monarch. By presenting us with the very qualities that Hamlet lacks Shakespeare help us to understand him. Yeats placed extra emphasis upon the subplot in his plays, as he found it apt to be ignored as a consequence of the brightness of the main plot. This is also true of 'Shakespeare's Myth' because it focuses on 'the wise man',

whose subjective abundance is underestimated, compared with the objective success of 'the empty man'. Therefore Yeats's system is based on an effort to understand man fully as a result of paying the same attention to his subjective aspects, which are ignored in a society where only practical objectivity is thought highly of. I shall discuss the use of subplots through a comparative analysis of *King Lear* and Yeats's *On Baile's Strand*; and Shakespeare's Myth and the Great Wheel, the basis of Yeats's myth, through a detailed analysis of Yeats's essay on Shakespeare's historical plays.

1) The Subplot

In his essay 'Emotion of Multitude', Yeats cites Shakespeare's use of subplots as a theatrical interlocking technique used to achieve the 'emotion of multitude'. Yeats writes:

> The Shakespearian drama gets the emotion of multitude out of the sub-plot which copies the main plot, much as a shadow upon the wall copies one's body in the firelight.[320]

In many of Shakespeare's plays an action similar to that of the main plot happens to the minor characters who are in different situations. King Lear's tragedy, caused by the ungratefulness of his children, is echoed in Gloucester with the result that *King Lear* is thought of 'less as the history of one man and his sorrow than as the history of a whole evil time'.[321] In other words, the subplot functions to universalise the tragedy. In *Hamlet*, another

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[320] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 215.
[321] Ibid., p. 215.

play which Yeats uses as an example, the motif of the murder of Hamlet's father and the sorrow of Hamlet is repeated in the lives of Fortinbras, Ophelia and Laertes. In fact the motif pervades the slaughter of Priam in the Player's speech. The subplots, Yeats says, are 'so subtly' woven that 'one hardly notices'.[322] As such, the subplots serve to doubly call up before us 'the image of multitude' and thus 'the mind goes on imagining other shadows, shadow beyond shadow, till it has pictured the world'.[323] In Ruth Nevo's account, Yeats's argument about the use of subplots is intended to achieve 'the reduplicative effect of symbolism in drama'.[324]

Yeats believes the device of subplot to be shared by all the great masters:

> Indeed all the great masters have understood that there cannot be great art without the little limited life of the fable, which is always the better the simpler it is, and the rich, far-wandering, many-imaged life of the half-seen world beyond it.[325]

Yeats argues that 'the life of artisans and countrypeople'[326] is the best factor for the invention of 'the little limited life of the fable'. His intention is shown in '*Samhain: 1902*':

> Our movement is a return to the people, like the Russian movement of the early seventies, and the drama of society would but magnify a condition of life which the countryman and the artisan could but copy to their hurt. The play that is to give them a quite natural pleasure should tell them either of their own life, or of that life of poetry where every man can see his own images, because there alone does human nature escape from arbitrary conditions.[327]

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[322] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 215.
[323] Ibid., p. 215
[324] Ruth Nevo, 'Yeats, Shakespeare and Ireland' in *Literature and Nationalism*, eds. by Vincent Newey and Ann Thompson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991), p. 193.
[325] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 216.
[326] *Explorations*, p. 96.
[327] Ibid., p. 96.

By means of the 'life of poetry where every man can see his own images', as opposed to a life that is culturally isolated from the lives of the audience, they can be offered 'a quite natural pleasure' because there they can confront human nature above 'arbitrary conditions'. Yeats desired a drama full of 'vague symbols that set the mind wandering from idea to idea, emotion to emotion'.[328] He claimed that the naturalistic theatre could not offer such drama because it lacks the 'emotion of multitude'. The essay 'Emotion of multitude' began by giving a clear account of his objection to the naturalistic theatre:

> I have been thinking a good deal about plays lately, and I have been wondering why I disliked the clear and logical construction which seems necessary if one is to succeed on the modern stage. It came into my head the other day that this construction, which all the world has learnt from France, has everything of high literature except the emotion of multitude.[329]

To Yeats the naturalistic construction seems to be too 'clear and logical' to arouse the imagination and as a result to produce multiple images. He wrote in his letter that 'our drama has grown effeminate through the over-development of the picture-making faculty'.[330] He detests the naturalistic construction which tries to present our life on the stage as it is. He expresses his antipathy in his essay 'At Stratford-on-Avon':

> Naturalistic scene-painting is not an art, but a trade, because it is, at best, an attempt to copy the more obvious effects of Nature by the methods of the ordinary landscape-painter, and by his methods made coarse and summary.[331]

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[328] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 216.
[329] Ibid., p. 215.
[330] *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, p. 466.
[331] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 100.

Yeats's aim is to lead us into the depth of the mind, where we can taste the essence of life, and he believes it to be achievable through the imaginative arts:

> All imaginative art remains at a distance and this distance, once chosen, must be firmly held against a pushing world. Verse, ritual, music, and dance in association with action require that gesture, costume, facial expression, stage arrangement must help in keeping the door. Our imaginative arts are content to set a piece of the world as we know it in a place by itself, to put their photographs as it were in a plush or a plain frame, but the arts which interest me, while seeming to separate from the world and us a group of figures, images, symbols, enable us to pass for a few moments into a deep of the mind that had hitherto been too subtle for our habitation. As a deep of the mind can only be approached through what is most human, most delicate, we should distrust bodily distance, mechanism, and loud noise.[332]

The 'emotion of multitude' is a crucial factor for Yeats because it stirs the audience's imagination.

Yeats explained the importance of the 'emotion of multitude' taking the example of the sun and moon:

> There are some who understand that the simple unmysterious things living as in a clear noon light are of the nature of the sun, and that vague, many-imaged things have in them the strength of the moon. Did not the Egyptian carve it on emerald that all living things have the sun for father and the moon for mother, and has it not been said that a man of genius takes the most after his mother?[333]

The main plot of a play, the equivalent of 'the nature of the sun', is the essential factor of the play, but it is found in 'the simple unmysterious things living as in a clear noon light'. The feature Yeats prefers is the sub-

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[332] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 225.
[333] Ibid., p. 216.

plot or the 'emotion of multitude' because it invents 'vague, many-imaged things' by the strength of the moon. As a result, it leads the audience to 'a deep of the mind' by linking an individual passion to a broader human feeling. This is, Yeats believes, a power to lead the audience to the essence of our lives.

In *On Baile's Strand* (1904), Yeats obtains the 'emotion of multitude' out of the subplot as Shakespeare did. This play has particular affinities with *King Lear*. As Yeats explains in 'Emotion of Multitude', Lear's tragedy, the main plot of the play, is repeated in Gloucester, who is the hero of the subplot. Both Lear and Gloucester experience suffering caused by 'filial ingratitude' (3.4.14). Likewise, in *On Baile's Strand*, the relationship between Cuchulain and Conchubar, the main plot of the play, mirrors that between the Fool and the Blind Man. The main plot of the heroic characters is projected in the subplot of the distorted pairs playing the counterparts of the heroic characters. The Blind Man and the Fool need each other for survival, but the Blind Man takes advantage of the Fool for the sake of his selfish purposes. This is true of the relationship between Conchubar and Cuchulain. As the Earl of Gloucester serves as a paradigm of the 'rich, far-wandering, many-imaged life'[334] of King Lear, so the Fool and the Blind Man function as the image of multitude of Cuchulain and Conchubar who are the '*King of Muirthemne*' [335] and the '*High King of Uladh*' [336] respectively.

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[334] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 216.
[335] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 457.
[336] Ibid., p. 457.

The two plays have some similarities in their expositions. *King Lear* starts with a conversation between Gloucester and Kent. Though they talk about 'the division of the kingdom', the event of the main plot, their topic swiftly shifts to Gloucester's illegitimate son, Edmund, who is the agent of Gloucester's tragedy, and Edgar, his legitimate son. Accordingly the short exposition throws up a connection between the main plot and subplot, foreshadowing King Lear and Gloucester, the two fathers' tragedies.

On Baile's Strand also begins with the action of the subplot, played by the Fool and the Blind Man. The opening scene implies a reciprocal relationship between them. The Fool needs the Blind Man's practical wisdom, while the Blind Man requires the Fool's eyes or action. The Fool says:

> What a clever man you are though you are blind! There's nobody with two eyes in his head that is as clever as you are. Who but you could have thought that the henwife sleeps everyday a little at noon? I would never be able to steal anything if you didn't tell me where to look for it. And what a good cook you are! You take the fowl out of my hands after I have stolen it and plucked it, and you put it into the big pot at the fire there, and I can go out and run races with the witches at the edge of the waves and get an appetite. (1-11)

In addition to elucidating the relationship between the Fool and the Blind Man, the exposition reveals important facts about the main plot. As a matter of fact, the story of Cuchulain and Conchubar told by the Blind Man is intended to distract the Fool's attention from the chicken. Nevertheless, his story serves as a prologue to the main plot in the same way that the conversation between Gloucester and Kent offers a glimpse of King Lear's intention of dividing his kingdom. Instead of responding to the Fool, who is

excited about eating the chicken, the Blind Man diverts the topic to the big chair. He says:

> I know the big chair. It is to-day the High King Conchubar is coming. They have brought out his chair. He is going to be Cuchulain's master in earnest from this day out. It is that he's coming for. (39-42)

The Blind Man exposes that Conchubar's purpose is to domesticate Cuchulain. He also mentions a young man given birth to by Aoife who hates Cuchulain. The scene involving the Fool and the Blind Man preceding the appearance of the main characters introduces all the main actions of the play apart from revealing 'who the young man's father is' (173-4). The scene of the characters of the main plot only reconstructs the Blind Man's story. Conchubar, who 'would leave / A strong and settled country to my children' (214-5) forces Cuchulain to take the oath by which he can tame 'all the wildness of [his] blood' (244).

The function of the Blind Man and Fool as the counterparts of Conchubar and Cuchulain is more clearly demonstrated when the Blind Man '*has got into the chair*' [337] and plays the role of Conchubar. The Blind Man says:

> He will sit up in this chair and he'll say: 'Take the oath, Cuchulain. I bid you take the oath. Do as I tell you. What are your wits compared with mine, and what are your riches compared with mine? And what sons have you to pay your debts and to put a stone over you when you die? Take the oath, I tell you. Take a strong oath'. (57-64)

The Fool responds to the Blind Man's role-playing as if he were Cuchulain: 'I will not. I'll take no oath. I want my dinner' (65-6). The Fool's role as a counterpart of Cuchulain is clearly proved. Besides, the Blind Man

[337] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 463.

mentions that Conchubar wants to 'put an oath upon him [Cuchulain] that will stop his rambling' (50-1). This 'rambling' is reflected in the Fool who 'can go out and run races with the witches at the edge of the waves' (9-10) while the Blind Man cooks the chicken. Yeats himself sums up the similarity in a letter to Frank Fay, written in January of 1904:

> He [Cuchulain] is the fool – wandering, passion, houseless & all but loveless. Concobar [Conchubar] is reason that is blind because it can only reason because it is cold. Are they not the cold moon and the hot sun?[338]

Conchubar and the Blind Man display aspects of the sun, whereas Cuchulain and the Fool have the features of the moon in common. But at the same time, Conchubar and Cuchulain belong to the nature of the sun in that they are the characters of the main plot. For the same reason the Fool and the Blind Man are under the strength of the moon.

In *King Lear*, after the short exposition which shows the correlation between the main plot and sub-plot, the main action of King Lear's fatal mistake occurs. King Lear gives his kingdom to Goneril and Regan as a result of their flattering tongues and casts off Cordelia, who refuses to flatter. Furthermore he banishes his royal subject Kent for opposing his decision. In the following scene (1.2), Gloucester makes a similar mistake. As a consequence of Edmund's forged letter, he makes a hasty judgement that his beloved son, Edgar, is a villain who is planning a conspiracy against his own father.

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[338] *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. 3, p. 527.

The two fathers' mistakes are evident enough to be mocked by the very children who they choose as their heirs. Goneril and Regan regard King Lear's casting off of Cordelia whom 'he always lov'd' most as the result of 'poor judgement', itself the product of 'the infirmity of his age' (1.1.292) and judge 'Kent's banishment' (1.1.300) by King Lear to be the product of his 'rash' (1.1.295) disposition. Likewise Gloucester is underestimated as 'A credulous father' (1.3.176) by Edmund, whom he selects as his rightful heir. Their mistakes bring them enormous sufferings: King Lear reaches a state of derangement in consequence of the two daughters' ingratitude and Gloucester becomes blind by Edmund's betrayal. King Lear loses his mind while Gloucester loses his eyes. King Lear's mental suffering is incorporated as physical pain in the subplot. In *On Baile's Strand*, mad Lear and blind Gloucester are resurrected as the Fool and the Blind Man.

In Act 4, scene 4, Lear and Gloucester are in a miserable state caused by the shame of their own mistakes as well as their children's ingratitude. But through this painful process they gain a realisation of life:

> *Lear.* O, ho! are you there with me? No eyes in your head, nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are in a heavy case, your purse in a light: yet you see how this world goes.
> *Glou.* I see it feelingly.
> *Lear.* What! Art mad? A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears: see how yond justice rail upon yond simple thief. (4.6.143-50)

They realise the foolish wisdom which Yeats also shares: 'that Blind eyes can see more than other eyes'.[339] Gloucester already confessed 'I stumbled

[339] *Mythologies*, p. 116.

when I saw' (4.1.19). Edgar gains the wisdom of 'Reason in madness' (4.4.173) in Lear's lunatic speech.

On the other hand, in *On Baile's Strand*, Yeats gives an obvious revelation of wisdom through the First Woman. She says that 'Life drifts between a fool and a blind man' (623). In this play, a fool represents the subjective man, while a blind man symbolises the objective man. Accordingly, the First Woman's line extends the strife between Cuchulain and Conchubar to all human beings' conflict.

After the three women's exit, the Fool enters, dragging the Blind Man. Now he knows of the Blind Man's cheating and this anticipates Cuchulain's realisation of Conchubar's selfish contract that in the end will force Cuchulain to kill his own son to save Conchubar's children. With Cuchulain's reappearance after killing the Young Man, the characters of both the main plot and subplot meet and the play is directed towards Cuchulain's implacable fate. Finally, Cuchulain is informed that the young man he killed is his own son. He realises all is the result of Conchubar's selfish plot. Cuchulain says:

> Now I remember all.
> [*Comes before Conchubar's chair, and strikes out with his sword,as if Conchubar was sitting upon it.*]
> 'T was you who did it – you who sat up there
> With your old rod of kingship, like a magpie
> Nursing a stolen spoon. No, not a magpie,
> A maggot that is eating up the earth!
> Yes, but a magpie, for he's flown away.
> Where did he fly to? (762-8)

However, despite the many analogies between the two plays, they have different endings. *King Lear* ends with the deaths not only of the characters of the main plot but also of Gloucester and Edmund, the characters of the subplot. Of the survivors Albany, Kent and Edgar, the latter, Gloucester's legitimate son, takes over Lear's Kingdom. In other words, the play ends anticipating a new start. On the other hand, *On Baile's Strand* finishes with a scene reflecting the relationship between the Blind Man and the Fool:

> *Blind Man*: Come here, Fool!
> *Fool*: The waves have mastered him.
> *Blind Man*: Come here!
> *Fool*: The waves have mastered him.
> *Blind Man*: Come here, I say.
> *Fool*: [*coming towards him, but looking backwards toward the door,*] What is it?
> *Blind Man*: There will be nobody in the houses. Come this way; come Quickly! The ovens will be full. We will put our hands into the ovens. (796-804)

The Blind Man continuously summons the Fool who is absorbed in Cuchulain's suffering. His repeated summons diverts the Fool's attention from the tragic struggle of Cuchulain to the mundane oven. The Fool eventually comes towards the Blind Man, '*but looking backwards toward the door*'. The last scene of the play shows that the relationship between the Fool and the Bind Man is continuously repeated even after the Fool realises the Blind Man has cheated him. Furthermore it parodies Cuchulain's domestication by Conchubar. In our lives, which according to Yeats are composed of strife between the subjective and objective, the strength of the sun is apt to be emphasised even though it is said that 'a man of genius

takes the most after his mother'.[340] The subjective man is infirm before the cruel strength of the objective man.

2) The Myths of Shakespeare and Yeats

Yeats's attempt to depict the subjective man against the objective man is clearly revealed in his invention of two pairs of opposing characters. This is associated with 'Shakespeare's Myth' which Yeats defines as Shakespeare's dramatic skill of creating two conflicting characters. In his essay 'At Stratford-on-Avon', Yeats says that 'there is some one myth for every man, which, if we but knew it, would make us understand all he did and thought'.[341] He introduces 'Shakespeare's Myth':

> [It] describes a wise man who was blind from very wisdom, and an empty man who thrust him from his place, and saw all that could be seen from very emptiness.[342]

Yeats poses Hamlet as an example of someone 'who saw too great issues everywhere to play the trivial game of life', against Fortinbras, 'who came from fighting battles about "a little patch of ground" so poor that one of his captains would not give "six ducats" to "farm it", and who was yet acclaimed by Hamlet and by all as the only befitting king'.[343] Furthermore Yeats identifies Richard II as 'unripened Hamlet' and Henry V as 'ripened Fortinbras'.[344] Shakespeare, Yeats argues, placed Henry V against Richard

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[340] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 216.
[341] Ibid., p. 107.
[342] Ibid., p. 107.
[343] Ibid., pp. 107-8.
[344] Ibid., p. 108.

II in all respects because Henry V is 'the vessel of clay' opposed to Richard II, 'the vessel of porcelain'.[345] Yeats's opinions about Richard II and Henry V contrast markedly with the conventional Shakespearean criticism of his contemporaries.

In 1901 Yeats visited Stratford to watch F.R. Benson's production of the whole cycle of Shakespeare's history plays. He wrote in his letter to Lady Gregory:

> I have seen this week *King John*, *Richard II*, the second part of *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, the second part of *Henry VI*, and *Richard III* played in their right order, with all the links that bind play to play unbroken; and partly because of a spirit in the place, and partly because of the way play supports play, the theatre has moved me as it has never done before.[346]

Yeats mentions this production again in the essay 'At Stratford-on-Avon', emphasising his impression that the six plays are 'but one play'.[347] This visit hints at a certain relation to the creation of Yeats's Cuchulain cycle. But Ruth Nevo denies the direct connection between Yeats's visit to Stratford in 1901 and his Cuchulain cycle even though she admits that the figure of Cuchulain originated in Shakespeare.[348] She argues that 'although the idea of "five plays that are but one play" enchanted him, his own sequence was long in the making and he plays fast and loose with the unity of the five-in-one during the period of their composition'.[349] Nevertheless it is clear that this visit offered Yeats an opportunity of reinterpreting Shakespeare's historical plays. Declan Kiberd claims that Yeats's

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[345] *Essays and Introductions*, p.108.
[346] *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, p. 61.
[347] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 109.
[348] Ruth Nevo, p.183.
[349] Ibid., p.183. In fact Yeats saw six, and not five plays at Stratford in 1901.

reinterpretation was 'massively influential; and the reversal which he brought about in criticism had consequences for creative art too.'[350]

During the visit, Yeats watched the performance of Shakespeare's historical plays and composed the essay on Shakespeare he had long wanted to write. He was allowed to use the library of the Shakespeare Institute which was attached to the theatre and there educated himself about Shakespeare. He wrote in his letter to Lady Gregory [*25 April 1901*]:

> I am working very hard, reading all the chief criticisms of the plays & I think my essay will be one of the best things I have done. The more I read the worse does the Shakespeare criticism become. And Dowden is about the climax of it. I[t] came out [of] the middle class movement & I fear it my legitimate enemy.[351]

In 'At Stratford-on-Avon', the essay written as a result of his hard work at Stratford, Yeats claimed that the Shakespearean critics had become vulgar worshippers of success.[352] He also found 'an antithesis' which nearly all Shakespearean critics shared, arising as a result of considering Richard II as 'sentimental', 'weak', 'selfish', 'insincere', and Henry V as 'Shakespeare's only hero'.[353] For instance, Edward Dowden, one of the most esteemed Shakespearean critics, divided Shakespeare's six English kings into two groups of three in his essay 'The English Historical Plays'[354] according to the extent to which their heroes attain 'a practical mastery of the world'.[355] One is a group of studies of 'kingly weakness' and the other of 'kingly

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[350] Declan Kiberd, p. 269.
[351] *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol.3, p. 61.
[352] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 103.
[353] Ibid., p. 103-4.
[354] Edward Dowden, *Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* (London: Henry S. King, 1876).
[355] Ibid., p. 169.

strength'. King John, King Richard II, and King Henry VI belong to the first group, while King Henry IV, King Henry V and King Richard III belong to the second. Henry V is elevated above Richard III who is 'a royal criminal, strong in his crime' and Henry IV, a usurper who is 'strong by a fine craft in dealing with events, by resolution and policy, by equal caution and daring'.[356] He gave all compliments to Henry V, arguing that 'the strength of Henry V is that of plain heroic magnitude, thoroughly sound and substantial, founded upon the eternal verities'.[357] He concluded that the characters of Shakespeare's historical plays 'all lead up to Henry V, the man framed for the most noble and joyous mastery of things'.[358]

On the other hand, Dowden gave quite a harsh verdict on Richard II. He claimed that all that Shakespeare represented through the character of Richard II could be understood in terms of the word 'boyishness' of which a principle feature is 'unreality', because 'the mind in the boyish stage of growth "has no discriminating convictions and no grasp of consequences"'.[359] He argued:

> Richard, to whom all things are unreal, has a fine feeling for 'situations'. Without any of true kingly strength or dignity, he has a fine feeling for the royal situation. Without any making real to himself what God or what death is, he can put himself, if need be, in the appropriate attitude towards God and towards death. Instead of comprehending things as they are, and achieving heroic deeds, he satiates his heart with the grace, the tenderness, the beauty, or the pathos of situations. Life is to Richard a show, a succession of images; and to put himself into accord with the

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[356] Edward Dowden, pp. 168-9.
[357] Ibid., p. 169.
[358] Ibid., p.169.
[359] Ibid., p.193.

> aesthetic requirements of his position is Richard's first necessity.[360]

His abasement of Richard II reached its climax when he described the king's death by saying 'the graceful futile existence has ceased'.[361]

Yeats strongly objected to Dowden's estimation of Richard II and said Dowden would be his 'legitimate enemy'.[362] Yeats considered that such an estimation 'took the same delight in abasing Richard II that schoolboys do in persecuting some boy of fine temperament, who has weak muscles and a distaste for school games'.[363] Yeats also explained the background of Dowden's criticism in 'the middle class movement':[364]

> He [Dowden] lived in Ireland, where everything has failed, and he meditated frequently upon the perfection of character which had, he thought, made England successful, for, as we say, 'cows beyond the water have long horns'. He forgot that England, as Gordon has said, was made by her adventurers, by her people of wildness and imagination and eccentricity; thought that Henry V, who only seemed to be these things because he had some commonplace vices, was not only the typical Anglo-Saxon, but the model Shakespeare held up before England; and he even thought it worth while pointing out that Shakespeare himself was making a large fortune while he was writing about Henry's victories.[365]

Jonathan Allison gives a clear account on 'the middle class movement' in his 'W.B. Yeats and Shakespearean Character'.[366] He argues that Yeats's enemy in 1901 was 'the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, with which he associated

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[360] Edward Dowden, p. 194.
[361] Ibid., p. 204.
[362] *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. 3, p. 61.
[363] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 104.
[364] *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. 3, p. 61.
[365] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 104.
[366] Jonathan Allison, in *Shakespeare and Ireland: History, Politics, Culture*, pp. 114-135.

Dowden and, above all, Trinity College.'[367] Yeats elaborated on what he meant by 'the middle class movement' by saying that 'the atmosphere of what is called educated Dublin is an atmosphere of cynicism – a cynicism without idea'.[368] Allison writes:

> Educated Dublin hates enthusiasm, Irish literature and the Irish poor. This was the 'middle class movement' with which Yeats associated Dowden.[369]

Yeats was not the first person to object to Dowden's interpretation of Richard II. John Butler Yeats, Yeats's father and a close friend of Dowden's, had already expressed his antipathy. William M. Murphy depicts John Butler Yeats's outraged retort to Dowden's preview of his lecture on *Richard II* in his *Prodigal Father*:

> John Butler Yeats leaped to the defence of Richard, denouncing Dowden's judgement of the characters as "a sort of splenetic morality that would be fitter in the mouth of the old gardener." Richard and his wife were "absolutely *perfect*," he maintained, with "the *sweet irreverence of children*." The trouble with the contemporary world and the critical judgements to which it gave rise was "a most damnable heresy – worship of success."[370]

The 'worship of success', the expression which John Butler Yeats used, hints that his father's opinion comes to function powerfully in Yeats's thoughts about Richard II as it is a phrase that he reproduced in his essay on Shakespeare: 'Shakespearian criticism became a vulgar worshipper of success'.[371] Murphy confirms this fact, arguing that 'the son absorbed and

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[367] Jonathan Allison, p. 119.
[368] *Uncollected Prose of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. II, p. 151.
[369] Jonathan Allison, p. 119.
[370] William M. Murphy, *Prodigal Father: The Life of John Butler Yeats (1839-1922)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 97.
[371] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 103.

appropriated his father's views and had them published in a place where the world – including Dowden – could see them'.[372] Yeats's letter to Lady Gregory, [*25 May 1901*] after finishing the essay 'At Stratford-on-Avon' proves that his idea was identical to his father's:

> My father is delighted with my second article on Shakespeare. He has just written to say that it is 'the best article' he 'ever read'. He has sent off four copies. The truth is that Dowden has always been one of his 'intimate enemies' & chiefly because of Dowden's Shakespeare opinions.[373]

In the essay Yeats asserted that he could not believe it was Shakespeare's intention regarding Richard II to look on him 'with any but sympathetic eyes, understanding indeed how ill-fitted he was to be king'[374] and looked to Walter Pater who called Richard II 'a wild creature'.[375]

Pater maintained in his essay 'Shakespeare's English Kings' that what Shakespeare has made prominent in his English histories is 'another side of kingship', which he rephrased as an 'irony of kingship':[376]

> Average human nature, flung with a wonderfully pathetic effect into the vortex of great events; tragedy of everyday quality heightened in degree only by the conspicuous scene which does but make those who play their parts there conspicuously unfortunate; the utterance of common humanity straight from the heart, but refined like other common things for kingly uses by Shakespeare's unfailing eloquence: such, unconsciously for the most part, though palpably enough to the careful reader, is the conception under which Shakespeare has arranged the lights and shadows of the story of the English kings, emphasising merely the light and shadow inherent in it, and keeping very close to the

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[372] William M. Murphy, p. 230.
[373] *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. 3, p. 74.
[374] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 105.
[375] Walter Pater, 'Shakespeare's English Kings' in *Appreciations: with an essay on style* (London: Macmillan, 1910), p. 200.
[376] Ibid., p. 185.

> original authorities, not simply in the general outline of these dramatic histories but sometimes in their very expression.[377]

Pater claimed that Shakespeare's mastery lay in 'the lights and shadows of the story of the English kings' as a 'conspicuous example of the ordinary human condition', instead of their 'natural prerogative'. Pater's point of view resulted in his distinctive interpretation of Shakespeare's English kings. He identified the person and story of Richard II as 'the touching of all examples of the irony of kingship', while he looked upon 'the popularity, the showy heroism' of Henry V as a dramatic device 'used to give emphatic point to the old earthy commonplace about "wild oats" as contrasted with Richard II who remained "that sweet lovely rose"'.[378] What Pater emphasises is Shakespeare's fair treatment of English kings because 'Shakespeare's kings are not, nor are meant to be, great men: rather, little or quite ordinary humanity, thrust upon greatness'.[379] He took Henry V's lines (4.1) spoken to his soldier as a key example of Shakespeare's treatment of Henry V. Henry V disguises himself with Sir Thomas Erpingham's cloak and meets his soldiers the day before the battle of Agincourt. Henry V says to a common soldier on the field:

> I think the king is but a man, as I am: the violet smells to him as it doth to me: the element shows to him as it doth to me; all his senses have but human conditions; his ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man; and though his affections be higher mounted than ours, yet when they stoop, they stoop with like wings. (4.1.101-8)

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[377] Walter Pater, p. 186.
[378] Ibid., p. 189.
[379] Ibid., p. 199.

Yeats expanded his own opinion on the basis of Pater's. He especially tried to tease out the concealed positive aspects of Richard II. He wrote:

> The man on whom Shakespeare modelled him had been full of French elegances as he knew from Holinshed, and had given life a new luxury, a new splendour, and been 'too friendly' to his friends, 'too favourable' to his enemies.[380]

He asserted that Richard II's failure was 'a little because he lacked some qualities that were doubtless common among his scullions, but more because he had certain qualities that are uncommon in all ages'.[381] What Shakespeare saw in Richard II, who was deposed, is, Yeats thinks,

> The defeat that awaits all, whether they be artist or saint, who find themselves where men ask of them a rough energy and have nothing to give but some contemplative virtue, whether lyrical fantasy, or sweetness of temper, or dreamy dignity, or love of God, or love of His creatures.[382]

In accordance with Pater's notion of the irony of kingship, Yeats focused on the imminence of tragedy to all human beings. Against Dowden, who treated Richard II as a weak king who may well be deposed, Yeats claimed that Shakespeare 'did indeed think it wrong to overturn a king'.[383]

Yeats also offered a unique opinion of Henry V, whom he considered the equivalent of 'the vessel of clay' opposed to Richard II, 'the vessel of porcelain' according to Shakespeare's Myth. Yeats wrote:

> He [Shakespeare] makes him [Henry V] the reverse of all that Richard was. He has the gross vices, the coarse nerves, of one who is to rule among violent people, and he is so little 'too friendly' to his friends that he bundles

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[380] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 105.
[381] Ibid., p. 105.
[382] Ibid., p. 105.
[383] Ibid., p. 106.

> them out of doors when their time is over. He is as remorseless and undistinguished as some natural force, and the finest thing in his play is the way his old companions fall out of it broken-hearted or on their way to the gallows.[384]

Yeats pointed out that Henry V, 'the vessel of clay', suffers failure 'as all men great and little fail in Shakespeare'.[385] To support his argument, Yeats remarked on the play's last act:

> His conquests abroad are made nothing by a woman turned warrior. That boy he and Katharine were to 'compound', 'half French, half English', 'that' was to 'go to Constantinople and take the Turk by the beard', turns out a saint and loses all his father had built up at home and his own life.[386]

Yeats's account is demonstrated in the fact that *Henry V* ends with a Chorus that implies Henry VI's tragedy:

> Fortune made his sword,
> By which the world's best garden he achieved,
> And of it left his son imperial lord.
> Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crown'd King
> Of France and England, did this king succeed;
> Whose state so many had the managing,
> That they lost France and made his England bleed[.] (5.2.6-12)

Yeats drew the conclusion that 'Shakespeare watched Henry V not indeed as he watched the greater souls in the visionary procession, but cheerfully, as one watches some handsome spirited horse, and he spoke his tale, as he spoke all tales, with tragic irony'.[387] Yeats employed the phrase, 'tragic irony' instead of Pater's 'irony of kingship' and argued that Shakespeare described Henry V in the same way that he did the other characters, with

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[384] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 108.
[385] Ibid., p. 108.
[386] Ibid., p. 108.
[387] Ibid., p. 109.

the result that Shakespeare portrayed Henry V's suffering as a human being.

What Yeats found in Shakespeare was 'a like spirit' that 'great literature has always been written in': that is, to describe 'a true self' 'behind the momentary self, which acts and lives in the world, and is subject to the judgment of the world'.[388] The true self is 'that which cannot be called before any mortal judgement seat, even though a great poet, or novelist, or philosopher be sitting upon it'.[389] Yeats argued that 'you cannot know a man from his actions because you cannot watch him in every kind of circumstance' and that 'men are made useless to the State as often by abundance as by emptiness, and that a man's business may at times be revelation, and not reformation'.[390]

Shakespeare's Myth is an effort to explore 'a true self' in that it offers duplicate lines by which to judge a human being, not a single line. By posing character against character their contrasting aspects are distinguished and, interestingly, the opposing aspects are what they lack and at the same time what they require in order to be a complete being. In this way the two opposing characters are 'the complement of one another'.[391] In Yeats's own play *On Baile's Strand*, Cuchulain lacks Conchubar's practical wisdom while Conchubar wants Cuchlain's strength, even though it is true that Cuchulain is taken advantage of by Conchubar.

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[388] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 102.
[389] Ibid., p. 102.
[390] Ibid., p. 103.
[391] Ibid., p. 108.

Both of them can be closer to a complete being when they have what the other has.

Yeats created two opposing characters that function reciprocally, as has been seen in *On Baile's Strand*. Thomas Parkinson has summed up the general character of Yeats's first batch of plays:

> The major subject of Yeats' Abbey dramas was the conflict between the fixed palpable world of human affairs (Guaire, Conchubar) and the world of passion and aspiration, which is beyond reason, system, or office (Seanchan, Cuchulain). The basic split in the plays is that between the institutional world – limited, tame, calculating, interested in the virtue of fixed character – and the personal world – exuberant, carefree, wild, affirming the value of intense personality.[392]

Yet, even after the first batch of plays, the device of posing one character against another is continuously found: for instance, the Old Man and young Cuchulain in *At The Hawk's Well*; Congal and the Fool in *The Herne's Egg*; and the Blind Man and old Cuchulain in his last play *The Death of Cuchulain*, who replace Conchubar and Cuchulain from his earlier plays.

The long-lasting interest in the dramatic technique of placing characters against one another is a reflection of 'Yeats's myth', by which we can understand 'all he did and thought':[393] the interlocking device, which is 'a double cone, vortex, preferring to consider subjectivity and objectivity as intersecting states struggling one against the other'.[394] The subjectivity cone is called the 'antithetical tincture', which is 'emotional and aesthetic,'

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[392] Thomas Parkinson, *W.B. Yeats: Self-Critic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), p. 54.
[393] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 107.
[394] *A Vision*, p. 71.

whereas the objectivity cone is called the 'primary tincture', which is 'reasonable and moral'.[395] According to the amounts of antithetical tincture and primary tincture, Yeats awarded numbers corresponding to the phases of the moon. This is the creation of the 'Great Wheel', by which Yeats explains 'every possible movement of thought and of life'.[396] On the Great Wheel, Phase 15 is a state of 'Complete Subjectivity', which is called 'Sun in Moon because the solar or primary tincture is consumed by the lunar',[397] while Phase 1 is a state of 'Complete Objectivity', which is called 'Moon in Sun because the lunar or antithetical tincture is consumed in the primary or solar'.[398] The individual in a normal life cycle passes through twenty-eight phases from birth to death.

These twenty-eight phases are a way of understanding the development of a human life that might be compared to Shakespeare's seven ages of man. Richard Ellmann points out the correlation: 'The Shakespearean life-span of seven ages grew to twenty-eight in Yeats's scheme'. [399] In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare expresses his notion of the ages of man through Jaques' speech. Shakespeare formulates life as a player's act and defines the player's part in 'seven ages':

> All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players
> They have their exits and their entrances,
> And one man in his time plays many parts
> His acts being seven ages. (2.7.139-43)

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[395] *A Vision*, p. 73.
[396] Ibid., p. 81.
[397] Ibid., p. 82.
[398] Ibid., p. 82.
[399] Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*, p. 227.

The first three roles man has to play in his life are 'the infant' (144), 'the whining school boy' (146) and 'the lover / Sighing like furnace' (148-9). The fourth and fifth are 'a soldier' (150) and 'the justice' (154). The sixth 'shifts / Into the lean and slippered pantaloon' (158-9). The seventh is 'second childishness and mere oblivion' (166) that 'ends this strange eventful history' (165). The last stage goes back to the first one with the result that it makes one circle.

Shakespeare's seven stages of life may be pessimistic in that they are spoken by melancholy Jaques. But Yeats witnessed the positive freedom of life in Shakespeare's seven ages. He wrote in a letter to Mario M. Rossi:

> There is 'the straight line' in every novelty and there is the circle joined, or the absolute return or finish. There is no spiral, no curve. We have only those two absolutes and all partial returns are constructions of the mind. Is that your thought? Yet every old man has lived differently through Shakespeare's seven ages and there is an annual return of spring or a partly novel spring. Do you mean that in reality it is always the same spring? [400]

Every man has the same destination and passes the same seven stops on the way to that destination. But, despite this fact, each man leads a different life according to the kind of person he is. Similarly each person creates his own distinctive life, passing through all twenty-eight phases.

Declan Kiberd points out the Yeatsian soul's freedom in the system of *A Vision*, comparing it with Marxism:

> Yeats also resembled the Marxists in his certainty that, although the basic plot of history had been written, a

[400] *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, p. 784.

person was free to improvise what freedom and dignity he or she could.[401]

In *Deirdre*, the heroine is condemned to live out a preordained plot, but still has the freedom to create a different life by choosing her own improvised lines.

Shakespeare's seven stages have in common with Yeats's 28 phases that they understand life as a form of cycle. Yeats's interpretation of history is particularly well expressed in *Dove or Swan*, which is the fifth book of *A Vision*. Yeats's interpenetrating gyres composed of the subjectivity and objectivity cones are a basis of 'The Historical cones'.[402] As soon as the objective cone reaches its fullest expansion, the subjective cone, the counter-movement of the objective cone, begins toward its fullest expansion. The cycles of the movement continue in eternal recurrence. Likewise, as one age expands towards its ultimate, inevitable disintegration, it accompanies the simultaneous beginning of the next age to countermove in turn. The process of expansion and contraction – or 'winding' and 'unwinding' – takes about 2,000 years. [403] The cyclical movement of the historical cones is vividly expressed in Yeats's 'The Second Coming':

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.
[...]

Surely some revelation is at hand;

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[401] Declan Kiberd, p. 320.
[402] *A Vision*, p. 266.
[403] Ibid., p. 267.

Surely the Second Coming is at hand. (1-4, 9-10)[404]

Opposed to the two thousand years that went before it, the primary cone of our age is the cone of the Christian era, which represents objectivity and self-effacement. This cone has expanded almost to its fullest extent, so that it is time that the antithetical cone should begin its expansion. The 'Second Coming' Yeats refers to is different from that found in Christianity. Yeats wrote 'I do not believe in it [the Second Coming] – at least not in its Christian form'.[405] Yeats's second coming implies the arrival of the antithetical values to the Christian era instead of Christ's second coming: subjective, hierarchical, polytheistic, aesthetic and immoral.

Shakespeare, who is placed in Phase 20 of the Great Wheel, belongs to 'the eighth gyre, which corresponds to Phases 16, 17 and 18'[406] on the Historical Cones. Yeats writes:

> I see in Shakespeare a man in whom human personality, hitherto restrained by its dependence upon Christendom or by its own need for self-control, burst like a shell. Perhaps secular intellect, setting itself free after five hundred years of struggle, has made him the greatest of dramatists, and yet because an *antithetical* age alone could confer upon an art like his the unity of a painting or of a temple pediment, we might, had the total works of Sophocles survived – they too born of a like struggle though with a different enemy – not think him greatest.[407]

Yeats argues that 'human personality', which is a subjective value as opposed to Christian self-control, 'burst like a shell' in Shakespeare. This

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[404] *The Variorum of The Poems of W.B. Yeats*, eds. by Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (London: Macmillan, 1957), pp. 401-2. All future references of Yeats's poems will be to this edition, citing line number parenthetically.
[405] *Uncollected Prose of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. II, p. 464.
[406] *A Vision*, p. 293.
[407] Ibid., p. 294.

clearly points out Shakespeare's subjectivity against Christian objectivity. But Yeats's use of the word 'burst' suggests he possessed ambiguous attitude to the Renaissance. He writes that the Renaissance caused 'individualism' like a disastrous explosion in his essay 'The Holy Mountain':

> It is the irrational glory that reaches perfection at the mid-moment, at the Renaissance of every civilisation... In the Spiritual dawn when Raphael painted the Camera della Segnature, and the Medician Popes dreamed of uniting Christianity and Paganism, all that was sacred with all that was secular, Europe might have made its plan, begun the solution of its problems, but individualism came instead; the egg, instead of hatching, burst.[408]

Jonathan Allison claims that the doubleness of Yeats's Renaissance implies 'efflorescence and birth of degraded modernity'.[409] But, despite the ambivalence of his Renaissance, Yeats makes it clear that 'the mid-Renaissance could but approximate to the full moon', which is representative of only subjective mind, 'for there's no human life at the full or the dark'.[410] Yeats also says that Shakespeare's characters are attributed to the next three nights of the moon because his men are subjective ones who 'make all things serve their passion'.[411] As Yeats mentions in the Great Wheel, Shakespeare's actual personality was 'faint and passionless' but he created the most subjective art through '*Mas*k and Image, reflected in a multiplying mirror'.[412] Yeats says:

> Do we not feel an unrest like that of travel itself when we watch those personages, more living than ourselves, amid so much that is irrelevant and heterogeneous,

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[408] *Essays and Introductions*, pp. 467-8.
[409] Jonathan Allison, p.116.
[410] *Autobiographies*, p. 229-3.
[411] Ibid., p. 291.
[412] *A Vision*, p. 153.

> amid so much *primary* curiosity, when we are carried from Rome to Venice, from Egypt to Saxon England, or in the one play from Rome to Christian mythology?[413]

'Shakespeare's Myth' is the expression of Yeats's insights into Shakespeare's plays and thus there is a possibility it could be coloured by his own tastes. Besides, there is no direct evidence suggesting the causal influence of 'Shakespeare's Myth' upon the creation of Yeats's myth. Nevertheless, Yeats's thoughts about 'Shakespeare's Myth' demonstrate how important the works of his dramatic predecessor were as a means to framing his own ideas about the theatre and the world. Yeats's thoughts about subjectivity and objectivity involved a clear preference for the former. In turn they led to an interest in the fool as the representative figure of subjectivity. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

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[413] *A Vision*, p. 294.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Fool, 'the wisest of all'

An interest in the wisdom of the fool is an important point of contact between the dramas of Yeats and Shakespeare. Yeats's use of the fool can be regarded as a special instance of 'Shakespeare's Myth' (as discussed in the previous chapter), whereby two characters in a drama have an opposing relationship of subjectivity and objectivity. The fools of Yeats's plays are characteristically 'natural fools' who have lost their wits, but also holy fools who are closely related to supernatural wisdom. While the natural fool also features in Shakespeare's plays (for example Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Peter in *Romeo and Juliet*), his fools are usually 'court-fools' who act through their wit. Nonetheless it is the court-fools who have important similarities with the dramatic functions of Yeats's fools since, by different means, they ultimately display a wisdom that is lacking in the characters they counter-balance, providing new perspectives on the supposedly wise.

Yeats's interest in fools was stimulated by their appearance in Shakespeare's plays, but he applied his own system of thought to the fools by finding in them relations of subjectivity and objectivity, the two central bases of the Great Wheel. He describes the wisdom of subjective fools by contrasting them with objective men, and by showing the failure of the latter at the hands of the fool. This will be demonstrated through analyses of *The Hour-Glass* and *The Herne's Egg*. The fools in these plays will be

compared with those in *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*, in order to show how Yeats's fools are similar to and different from those in Shakespeare's plays, and how both types were absorbed in the subversion of conventional wisdom.

Yeats's account of the Fool is given in *A Vision*. He positions the Fool in the last of the twenty-eight phases of the moon on the Great Wheel. The Fool's *Mask* is drawn from Phase 14 and his *Body of Fate* is from Phase 16. Phases 14 and 16 are the phases where 'the greatest human beauty becomes possible'.[414] '[The Fool's] true business' is 'to become his own opposite, to pass from a semblance of Phase 14 to the reality of Phase 28'.[415] The Fool has 'no active intelligence', so that 'he owns nothing of the exterior world but his mind and body' with the consequence that he becomes his own opposite 'under the influence of his own mind and body'.[416] The Fool is called "The Child of God" because he exposes himself to nature without any interruption of the objective code like 'a straw blown by the wind'.[417] Yeats identifies two extreme qualities of the Fool:

> At his worst his hands and feet and eyes, his will and his feelings, obey obscure subconscious fantasies, while at his best he would know all wisdom if he could know anything.[418]

The Fool in *On Baile's Strand* is a prototype of the fool who lives in 'obscure subconscious fantasies'. He cannot distinguish the visionary world

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[414] *A Vision*, p. 131.
[415] Ibid., p. 182.
[416] Ibid., p. 182.
[417] Ibid., p. 182.
[418] Ibid., p. 182.

from his reality. He carefully divulges his fantasy which to him must be reality:

> Don't tell it to anybody, Blind Man. There are some that follow me. Boann herself out of the river and Fand out of the deep sea. Witches they are, and they come by in the wind, and they cry, 'Give a kiss, Fool, give a kiss', that's what they cry. (23-8)

His body and mind are totally engrossed in the visionary world with the result that he is isolated from average human beings. Yet the Fool as "The Child of God" approaches the truth of the universe, so that he has the ability to obtain all wisdom.

Yeats mentions the fool, 'the wisest of all', in his essay 'The Literary Movement in Ireland':

> 'In every household' of the spirits even, there is 'a queen and a fool, and maybe, the fool is the wisest of all'. This fool, who is held to wander in lonely places and to bewitch men out of the world, – for the touch of the queen and of the fool give death, – is the type of that old wisdom from which the good citizen and the new wisdom have led the world away, forgetting that 'the ruins of time build mansions in eternity'. The poetry that comes out of the old wisdom must turn always to religion and to the law of the hidden world, while the poetry of the new wisdom must not forget politics and the law of the visible world; and between these poetries there cannot be any lasting peace.[419]

Yeats identifies the fairy fool whose touch gives death as 'Dalua'[420] and defines the fool as 'the type of that old wisdom'. He distinguishes the old wisdom from the new wisdom. The old wisdom is related to the invisible or supernatural world, whereas the new wisdom is linked to the visible world. Accordingly, the conflict between the poetries of the old wisdom and of the

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[419] *Uncollected Prose by W.B. Yeats*, Vol. II, pp. 192-3.
[420] Ibid., p. 193.

new wisdom is a different expression of the war between the subjective and the objective, the supernatural and the natural; and the dead and the living. Yeats puts more emphasis upon the old wisdom of the fairy Fool which is derived from the supernatural world.

Yeats's essay 'The Queen and The Fool' gives a more detailed account of fairy fools. In the essay he describes the fool he saw in his vision as 'a long, lank, ragged man sitting by the hearth in the cottage of an old miller'.[421] He says that he cannot tell whether the fool is 'an *Amadán-na-Breena*, a fool of the forth', whose stroke has no cure. Yeats cites a boy he knew well who lost his wits after confronting the *Amadán*. He also remarks on the fool's capacity for shape-changing as told to him by 'an old woman in Galway workhouse, who had some little knowledge of Queen Maeve':

> The *Amadán-na-Breena* changes his shape every two days. Sometimes he comes like a youngster, and then he'll come like the worst of beasts, trying to the touch he used to be.[422]

In addition Yeats suggests a link between the fairy fool and Aengus:

> I knew a man who was trying to bring before his mind's eye an image of Aengus, the old Irish god of love and poetry and ecstasy, who changed four of his kisses into birds, and suddenly the image of a man with a cap and bells rushed before his mind's eye, and grew vivid and spoke and called itself 'Aengus' messenger'.[423]

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[421] *Mythologies*, p. 112.
[422] Ibid., p. 114.
[423] Ibid., p. 115. The man in the quotation is probably George Russell (AE), who 'records his own vision of Aengus, his fool, and his birds in *The Candle of Vision* (1918), pp. 162-9'. See *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. 2, p. 443.

The fool as Aengus' messenger is reminiscent of Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Puck is a jester to Oberon, the king of the Fairies, and functions as his messenger. Though he is not the god of love, Oberon has an affinity with Aengus in that Oberon is involved in the lovers' affairs. Puck seems to be the incarnation of the *False Mask* of the phase of the Fool because his visage is construed as 'Malignity'.[424] He is called 'Robin', who is well known as a 'shrewd and knavish sprite' (2.1.33).[425] He enjoys mischievous pranks, frequenting the villagers. The Fairy identifies him:

> Are not you he
> That frights the maidens of the villagery,
> Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
> And bootless make the breathless housewife churn,
> And sometime make the drink to bear no barm,
> Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm? (2.1.34-9)

Like *Amadán-na-Breena* Puck also has the ability to change his shape. He says he makes Oberon smile by his shape-shifting:

> I jest to Oberon, and make him smile
> When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
> Neighing in likeness of a filly foal;
> And sometimes lurk I in a gossip's bowl
> In very likeness of a roasted crab,
> And when she drinks, against her lips I bob,
> And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale.
> The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
> Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
> Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
> And 'tailor' cries, and falls into a cough;
> And then the whole quire hold their hips and loffe
> And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
> A merrier hour was never wasted there. (2.1.44-57)

Puck changes his shape into 'a fat and bean-fed horse' neighing like 'a filly foal' and 'a roasted crab' to surprise a tattling woman. He also transforms

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[424] *A Vision*, p. 182.
[425] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Harold F. Brooks (London: Methuen, 1979). All future references will be to this edition, citing Act, scene, and line numbers parenthetically.

himself into a 'three-foot stool'. But unlike *Amadán*, who is said to 'come like a youngster' he is mainly changed into animals. It is 'An ass's nole [head]' (3.2.17) that he fixes on Bottom's head. He is closely associated with animals.

In addition the ass's head connects Bottom with fools. According to Robert Hillis Goldsmith's account of the fool's traditional costume, 'the long, drooping ears' found in the costume of all court fools obviously conventionalises 'asses' ears'.[426] Goldsmith points out that besides the asses' ears other traditional decorations of the fool such as the coxcomb and the occasional fox's tail makes it possible to presume that the fool's wardrobe is derived from 'some sort of primitive animal masquerade'.[427] D.J. Gifford reveals that a long tradition of 'the ass's head as fool's head-dress' goes back to the medieval times. He demonstrates that Seth-Typhon, the Egyptian god who is legendarily depicted as a fool or trickster, appears with an ass's head and later as 'a human with ass's head' in the classical art.[428] He also argues that the ass-head of Seth has something to do with the medieval jester or fool: 'we know that in Roman times terracottas of heads depicting such eared hoods existed, representing no doubt Roman fools.'[429]

Aengus' fool in George Russell's vision appears as 'the image of a man with a cap and bells', which makes it easier to identify his status. Similarly

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[426] Robert Hillis Goldsmith, *Wise Fools in Shakespeare* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1974), p. 2.
[427] Ibid., p. 3.
[428] D.J. Gifford, 'Iconographical Notes Towards a Definition of the Medieval Fool' in *The Fool and the Trickster*, ed. by Paul V.A. Williams (Totowa, N. J.: D. S. Brewer . Rowman & Littlefield, 1979), p. 33.
[429] Ibid., p. 33.

an ass-head serves as a symbol to represent the fool. An ass is also used as a pronoun to designate the fool in Shakespeare's plays. For instance, Hamlet calls the gravedigger who throws up skulls an 'ass' as well as a 'knave':

> That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once. How the knave jowls it to th' ground, as if 'twere Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder. This might be the pate of a politician which this ass now o'er-offices, one that would circumvent God, might it not? (5.1.74-9)

As such, Yeats's assignment of the impersonal mask for his fool in *The Hour-Glass* can be regarded as a development of the symbolisation of the fool.

In this context Puck's choice of the ass-head represents his intention of making Bottom a fool or clown in the play. William Willeford claims that 'the ass's ears and the cockscomb link the figures to animals famous for their sexuality as well as their silliness.'[430] In this sense Titania's falling in love with the ass-headed mechanical functions as the most irrational, foolish, and sexual case of the potential aspects of love. Puck reports to Oberon, 'Titania wak'd, and straightway lov'd an ass' (3.2.34) and is rewarded with his master's compliment: 'This falls out better than I could devise' (3.2.35).

Yeats also describes a white fool mentioned to him by George Russell:

> And I knew another man, a truly great seer, who saw a white fool in a visionary garden, where there was a tree with peacocks' feathers instead of leaves, and flowers that opened to show little human faces when the white fool had touched them with his cockscomb, and he saw

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[430] William Willeford, *The Fool and His Sceptre* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1969), p. 37.

> at another time a white fool sitting by a pool and smiling and watching images of beautiful women floating up from the pool.[431]

According to the note to Yeats's letter to George Pollexfen [*c.23 February 1899*], Yeats himself saw 'the white fool'. The note records:

> The 'White Fool', which first appeared to WBY and George Pollexfen on 27 Dec 1898 after their evocation of Aengus, was a 'messenger of the true Aengus'.[432]

Yeats identifies the white fool with Dalua[433] whom he takes as an example of the fool as 'the wisest of all'. He wrote in his letter to George Russell [*27 August 1899*]:

> If you can call up the white fool & have the time I wish you could make a sketch of him, for Dalua seems to be becoming important among us.[434]

Yeats's interest in the Fool is aroused because the Fool is linked to 'that wisdom which ancient peoples, and all wild peoples even now, think the only wisdom'.[435]

Yeats also points out that women come more easily than men to that wisdom and it accounts for the reason why 'in every household of Faery',[436] there is a queen with a fool instead of a king. Woman's superior receptivity to wisdom is incorporated in the female fool Crazy Jane in Yeats's poems. For instance 'Crazy Jane and the Bishop' shows that it is

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[431] *Mythologies*, p. 115.
[432] *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. 2, p. 364.
[433] Unlike Yeats, Fiona Macleod (William Sharp) identified Dalua as the dark fool. She asserted that 'of Dalua I can say but a word here. He is the Amadan-Dhu, or Dark Fool, the Faery Fool, whose touch is madness or death for any mortal: whose falling shadow even causes bewilderment and forgetfulness. The Fool is at once an elder and dreadful god, a mysterious and potent spirit, avoided even by the proud immortal folk themselves: and an abstraction, 'the shadow of pale hopes, forgotten dreams, and madness of men's minds'. See *Poem and Dramas* (London: William Heinemann LTD, 1927), pp. 312-3.
[434] *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. 2, p. 443.
[435] *Mythologies*, p. 115.
[436] Ibid., p. 112.

Crazy Jane, not the objective Bishop, who gains the wisdom of God. Yeats explains in his note to *The Pot of Broth* that this poem has a real association with 'an old woman known as Cracked Mary':

> The words and the air of 'There's Broth in the Pot' were taken down from an old woman known as Cracked Mary, who wanders about the plain of Aidhne, and who sometimes sees unearthly riders on white horses coming through stony fields to her hovel door in the night time.[437]

The old woman in a Galway workhouse in 'The Queen and The Fool' was able to inform Yeats of the fairy fool's ability to change shape. Likewise Cracked Mary has the capacity to see supernatural riders. Richard Ellmann explores the relation between Cracked Mary and Crazy Jane. He argues:

> Twenty-seven years [after Yeats's first encounter] he returned to Cracked Mary, combining her apparently with another old woman who lived near Lady Gregory, 'the local satirist and a really terrible one'. He changed the name from Cracked Mary to Crazy Jane because of possible invidious religious implications.[438]

In the first printing of the poem, 'the title was initially 'Cracked Mary and the Bishop'.'[439] In the poem Crazy Jane enjoys the company of dead Jack who 'Wanders out into the night' (24), whereas the Bishop is forced to banish 'Jack the Journeyman' (9). Crazy Jane knows that '*All find safety in the tomb*' (3) whether 'solid man' or 'coxcomb' (7). Yeats writes:

> The self, which is the foundation of our knowledge, is broken in pieces by foolishness, and is forgotten in the sudden emotions of women, and therefore fools may get, and women do get of a certainty, glimpses of much that sanctity finds at the end of its painful journey.[440]

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[437] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 254.
[438] Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats*, p. 275. Yeats wrote in his letter to Olivia Shakespear that 'Crazy Jane is more or less founded upon an old woman who lives in a little cottage near Gort'. See *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, pp. 785-6.
[439] A. Norman Jeffares, *A New Commentary on the Poems of W.B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 308.
[440] *Mythologies*, p. 115.

Man is given 'glimpses of much that sanctity finds at the end of its painful journey' through the experience of having his self destroyed by 'foolishness' or his self 'forgotten in the sudden emotions of woman'. This emphasises the fact that man can reach wisdom through lunar subjectivity instead of solar objectivity. Tragic heroes' lingering on the threshold of that sanctity may be another expression of the 'painful journey' that precedes a glimpse of the sanctity. Yeats asserts that death is 'the beginning of wisdom and power and beauty': [441]

> Wisdom and beauty and power may sometimes, as I think, come to those who die everyday they live, though their dying may not be like the dying Shakespeare spoke of. [442]

Where the objective self dies, there comes 'wisdom and beauty and power'.

Yeats says 'foolishness may be a kind of death'. [443]

For Yeats the Fool is a sacred being who achieves a glimpse of sanctity. His shape is expressed in many different forms. Yeats says that 'one finds his many shapes on passing from the village fool to the Fool of Shakespeare'[444] in *A Vision*. Enid Welsford's classic study *The Fool* offers a full-length analysis of the Fool's social and literary history. According to her definition, the Fool is

> a man who falls below the average human standard, but whose defects have been transformed into a source of delight, a main-spring of comedy, which has always been one of the great recreations of mankind and particularly of civilized mankind.[445]

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[441] *Mythologies*, p. 115.
[442] Ibid., p. 116.
[443] Ibid., p. 115.
[444] *A Vision*, p. 182.
[445] Enid Welsford, *The Fool* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935), p. xi.

She subdivides the Fool into three different types: the parasitical buffoon, the court-fool and the stage-clown.[446] In her account, the Fool in *King Lear*, Touchstone in *As You Like It* and Feste in *Twelfth Night* are court-fools. Yorick in *Hamlet* used to be the king's jester. It is true that Puck is a fairy fool, but he is similar to the other court-fools in that Puck is a jester to Oberon.

The court-fools belong to the owner of the court and their function is to give their masters or mistresses laughter by means of their riddles, jokes and songs. John Southworth points out that they enjoyed a special relationship with the king or ruler 'as his personal retainer' and commonly go by the name of 'jester', 'though that is a term that in its present usage dates only from the Tudor period.' [447] Welsford gives important information about the court-fools:

> The court-fool, however, causes amusement not merely by absurd gluttony, merry gossip, or knavish tricks, but by mental deficiencies or physical deformities which deprive him both of rights and responsibilities and put him in the paradoxical position of virtual outlawry combined with utter dependence on the support of the social group to which he belongs.[448]

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[446] 1. The parasitical Buffon – the type of fool who differs least from the normal man. 'He resembles other comic fools in that he earns his living by an openly acknowledged failure to attain to the normal standard of human dignity'.
2. The Court-Fool – 'the man whose real or assumed infirmities have detached him from his fellows and marked him out as predestined for comedy'. 'The chief difference between the court-fool and the parasitical buffoon is that the former is more strikingly abnormal than the latter, and more completely separated from the rest of his fellow-men'.
3. The Stage-Clown – 'a type of Fool whose folly is admittedly a matter of make-believe, a role deliberately assumed at special times in a special environment framed off from the ordinary flux of events'.

[447] John Southworth, *Fools and Jester: At the English Court* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998), p. 1.

[448] Enid Welsford, p. 55.

Therefore there is another standard by which to distinguish 'a natural fool' from 'an artificial fool', which is 'a distinction which is constantly drawn in English literature.'[449] Welsford takes Henry VIII's fools as an example: she says that Patch was 'a natural fool' and Will Somers, 'an artificial fool'. On account of his madness Patch was treated as 'a mere chattel'.[450]

There is a distinction between the natural fool and the artificial fool in Shakespeare's plays. The natural fool usually undertakes a simple comic part, whereas an artificial one plays an important role in relation to the main plot. According to J.A.B. Somerset Shakespeare began to create his series of wise fools with *As You Like it* (1599-1600) through to *King Lear* (1605-6). He argues that the major motive was the proclivities of Robert Armin who joined the Lord Chamberlain's men sometime in 1599-1600 and replaced Will Kemp.[451] James Black points out that Armin 'brought talents – for verbal wit, for singing – that Kemp may not have had, talents which in fact are thought to have influenced Shakespeare's own writing'.[452] Armin played the parts of artificial fools (Touchstone, Feste, Lear's unnamed Fool and Lavache (in *All's Well That Ends Well*)), even though Gareth Lloyd Evans points out that 'it has been suggested that he also played Dogberry', the natural fool in *Much Ado About Nothing*.[453] On the other hand the roles of natural fools were assigned to Kemp. Goldsmith writes:

> Kemp had acted the roles of such louts as Dogberry and Peter [*Romeo and Juliet*], whereas Armin shows

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[449] Enid Welsford, p. 159.
[450] Ibid., p. 159.
[451] J.A.B. Somerset, 'Shakespeare's Great Stage of Fools 1599-1607' in *Mirror up to Shakespeare*, ed. by J.C. Gray (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 68.
[452] James Black, 'Shakespeare's Mystery of Fooling' in *Mirror up to Shakespeare*, p. 84.
[453] Gareth Lloyd Evans, p. 147.

himself a connoisseur of court fools in his book *Foole upon Foole*, or *Six Sortes of Sottes* (1600).[454]

Evans argues that the distinction is related to the consanguinity of actor and role. His argument about Dogberry's scene supports this view:

> First, the scene [4.2] is, in an obvious sense, a throwaway, barely necessary to forward the action, and its dialogue is almost entirely designed to promote comic business. Second, the comedy of the scene seems arranged to 'feed' Dogberry / Kemp and, moreover, seems deliberately to be leading up to giving him the opportunity for the last solo speech of the scene – ending with 'O that I had been writ down an ass'. [455]

As such Dogberry's major function is that of mirth-maker. His malapropisms are the main source of laughter. Goldsmith argues that 'mistaking the word is a trick as old as Aristophanes and as recent as the latest Fibber McGee show' and Shakespeare gives this comic business mostly to such clowns as Dogberry [...], not to his wise fools.'[456]

A natural fool is distinguished from an artificial fool in that his role is separated from the main action of the play. Peter, the Nurse's servant, takes a small part and his action is less connected with the main plot or characters. Even though he stands on the stage with Romeo (2.4), there is no connection between them. Compared with Peter, Dogberry is more important because he plays a decisive role in revealing Don John's plot against Hero, though it is not the product of his own efforts. Nevertheless he remains alienated from the main plot in contrast with Shakespeare's wise

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[454] Robert Hillis Goldsmith, p. 47.
[455] Gareth Lloyd Evans, p. 146.
[456] Robert Hillis Goldsmith, p. 19.

fools, who have close relationships with the main characters and influence their actions.

In this respect it is Shakespeare's artificial fools who have an important feature in common with Yeats's fools: they play important roles related to the main plot and are closer to wisdom than supposedly wise men. Shakespeare's court fools are wise fools despite the fact that it is difficult to draw a critical consensus on the state of mind of Lear's fool.[457] For this reason Welsford uses the term 'sage-fool' to describe those with a capacity to 'see the truth'.[458] The Fool's words exercise a power upon the audience as well as the others in the plays. Evans suggests that this is because

> no true Fool is completely committed to the world within which the actions of the plays are placed. The Fool, in a way, is an ideal 'us'; he represents that part of us which does not identify with characters or situations, but sits back and is able to see behind illusion.[459]

Welsford also notes that Touchstone supplies us with a *punctum indifferens*, a neutral point.[460] In this respect the fool serves as the Chorus in Greek Drama, which Yeats argues produces the 'Emotion of Multitude'. William Willeford has a similar opinion, arguing that 'the fool is neither the player nor the audience [...] but both and something else.'[461] The Fool functions to lead the audience to a desirable interpretation of the play. Yeats makes an

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[457] Goldsmith suggests contradictory opinions of Lear's fool, but explains the fool's five wits and concludes that the fool transcends his fellows such as Touchstone and Feste in the quality of his wisdom. He calls him 'the supremely wise fool who expresses in his heartfelt devotion to Cordelia and to his king the Christian virtues of patience, humility, and love.' See *Wise Fools in Shakespeare*, p. 67.
[458] Enid Welsford, p. 253.
[459] Gareth Lloyd Evans, pp. 154-5.
[460] See *OED*.
[461] William Willeford, p. 49.

association between writer and fool when he says that a writer may be permitted 'the licence of cap and bell'.[462]

Shakespeare's court-fools have the right to jest without social restraint despite the fact that they have to be 'whipped for taxation' (*As You Like it*, 1.2.85). The Fool in *King Lear* complains about this:

> they'll have me whipped for speaking true, thou'lt have me whipped for lying; and sometimes I am whipp'd for holding my peace.
> (1.4.179-81)

Nonetheless their jesters can be forgiven in most cases because they are 'all-licens'd' (*King Lear* 1.4.201) to make jokes about the folly of their masters and people around them and offer much delight. For the same reason Olivia defends Feste against Malvolio, who feels annoyed with his jest in *Twelfth Night*:

> There is no slander in an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail; nor no railing in a known discreet man, thought he do nothing but reprove.
> (1.5.93-6)

Feste used to jest with Olivia's father, who 'took much delight'(2.4.12) in his mockery, and after his death works for Olivia. Feste criticises his mistress Olivia's excessive mourning of her brother:

> *Clown*. Good Madonna, why mourn'st thou?
> *Olivia*. Good fool, for my brother's death.
> *Clown*. I think his soul is in hell, madonna.
> *Olivia*. I know his soul is in heaven, fool.
> *Clown*. The more fool, madonna, to mourn for your Brother's soul, being in heaven. (1.5.64-9)

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[462] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 233.

His statement that 'I wear not motley in my brain' (1.5.54-5) indicates that he is intelligent enough to induce that Olivia's behaviour is foolish by means of his wits. His wisdom and understanding are observed by Viola who says:

> This fellow is wise enough to play the fool,
> And to do that well, craves a kind of wit:
> He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
> The quality of persons, and the time,
> And like the haggard, check at every feather
> That comes before his eye. This is a practice
> As full of labour as a wise man's art;
> For folly that he wisely shows is fit;
> But wise men, folly-fall'n, quite taint their wit. (3.1.61-9)

Viola mentions that the profession of clown demands 'practice / As full of labour as a wise man's art' because he 'must observe their mood on whom he jests, / The quality of persons, and the time'. She makes clear that Feste is 'wise enough to play the fool'.

Like Feste, Touchstone is also a professional jester who assumes infirmity. Celia acknowledges that 'the dullness of the fool is the whetstone of the wits' (1.2.53-4), and Rosalind asks Touchstone to 'unmuzzle [his] wisdom' (1.2.69). When Rosalind plans to go to the 'Forest of Arden' (1.3.104) to escape from Duke Frederick, she asks Celia to take Touchstone with her even though he is 'the roynish clown' (2.2.8) of Duke Frederick who 'was wont to laugh' (2.2.9) at his jester:

> But cousin, what if we assayed to steal
> The clownish fool out of your father's court?
> Would he not be a comfort to our travail? (1.3.126-8)

In the Forest of Arden, when others show their humanity by falling in love, Touchstone, as his name implies, serves as an objective standard in the romantic world. Touchstone describes his reasonable point of view:

> We that are true lovers run into strange capers. But as all is mortal in nature, so is all nature in love mortal in folly. (2.4.50-2)

'The melancholy Jaques' (2.1.26) envies the Fool's licence to criticise the world without restraint, saying:

> O that I were a fool!
> I am ambitious for a motley coat. (2.7.42-3)

Duke Senior's estimation of Touchstone is that 'He uses his folly like a stalking-horse and / Under the presentation of that he shoots his wits' (5.4.104-5).

In contrast with Touchstone, who always keeps an objective point of view, the Fool in *King Lear* is quite emotional. He 'hath much pined away' (1.4.72) since Cordelia was forced to go to France as a result of King Lear's injustice and consequently he did not appear to King Lear for two days. On the other hand he keeps his fidelity to King Lear by deciding to stay with the king. His role goes further than that of a disinterested commentator:

> That sir which serves and seeks for gain,
> And follows but for form,
> Will pack when it begins to rain,
> And leave thee in the storm.
> But I will tarry, the Fool will stay,
> And let the wise man fly.
> The knave turns fool that runs away,
> The Fool no knave, perdie. (2.4.78-85)

On account of the Fool's difference from the other court-fools he is mostly treated as a natural fool. Nevertheless he attacks Lear's rash decision by making good use of his bitter jokes:

> *Fool.* Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between
> a bitter Fool and a sweet one?
> *Lear.* No, lad; teach me.
> *Fool.* That lord that counsell'd thee
> To give away thy land,
> Come place him here by me,
> Do thou for him stand:
> The sweet and bitter fool
> Will presently appear;
> The one in motley here,
> The other found out there.
> *Lear.* Dost thou call me fool, boy?
> *Fool.* All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou
> wast born with.
> (1.4.134-47)

When the Fool remarked on Lear's injustice to Kent, Lear ignored him, calling him 'A bitter Fool' (1.4.133). But the Fool teaches Lear in his own way that he himself is a bitter fool 'in motley', but Lear is also 'a sweet one' who has given away all the titles he was born with. The Fool is told that he is 'not altogether [a] Fool' (1.4.148) by Kent. The Fool leads Lear to confess 'I am even / The natural fool of Fortune' (4.6.189). The barrier between wisdom and foolishness is collapsed by Lear through the realisation that all human beings are fools:

> When we are born, we cry that we are come
> To this great stage of fools. (4.6.180-1)

The sage-fools reveal both the folly of the supposedly wise man and the wisdom of the fool. As a result the fixed view of wisdom and foolishness is shaken. The man who is able to notice the wisdom the assumed fool retains can be defined as a genuinely wise man.

Yeats describes the sharp collision between foolish wisdom and wise foolishness through two characters called 'the Wise Man' and 'the Fool' in his *The Hour-Glass* (1914).[463] Yeats intends to have the Fool described as 'the Fat Fool of folklore'. He says in his note to *The Hour-Glass*:

> The same Fool and mask, the Fat Fool of folklore who is 'as wide and wild as a hill' and not the Thin Fool of modern romance, may go with a masked Blind Man into *On Baile's Strand*.[464]

Instead of the motely or cap and bells which are the typical costume of court-fools Yeats assigns his fool the mask which makes him seem 'less a human being than a principle of the mind'.[465] Teigue, the Fool in *The Hour-Glass*, is regarded as a natural fool who lost his wits. The Wise Man's pupils think that Teigue begs for pennies because his wits are gone. The Second pupil sings:

> Who dragged your wits away
> Where no one knows?
> Or have they run off
> On their own pair of shoes? (312-5)

The First pupil believes his master, the Wise Man, will find Teigue's wits. The Wise Man is widely reputed to be wise, but his wisdom is only confined to the visible world. He teaches that only foolish people believe in what 'we cannot see' (528) and 'cannot touch' (528). He is 'a man in the full of vigour of life'.[466] When Taigue secretly reveals what he has seen about the angels, the Wise Man retorts that it is 'sheer folly' (121):

> *Fool*: Let me come close to you, where nobody will hear me; but first you must promise not to drive

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[463] Yeats called this play '*The Fool and the Wise Man*' in his letter to Lady Gregory [*13 June 1902*] and the note to the letter says that [it is] 'Eventually named *The Hour-Glass*'. See *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, p. 375.
[464] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 645.
[465] Ibid., p. 645.
[466] *The Collected Letters of W.B Yeats*, Vol. 3, p. 224.

them away. [*Wise Man nods.*] Every day men go out dressed in black and spread great black nets over the hills, great black nets.

Wise Man: A strange place that to fish in.

Fool: They spread them out on the hills that they may catch the feet of the angels; but every morning, just before the dawn, I go out and cut the nets with the shears and the angels fly away.

Wise Man: [*speaking with excitement*] Ah, now I know that you are Teigue the Fool. You say that I am wise, and yet I say there are no angels.

(176-88)

Yet the Wise Man's superiority to the Fool is broken by the visitation of the angel who announces his imminent death. In addition he is doomed to depend on the Fool in order to be saved from hell. The angel says that 'you will die when the last grain of sand / Has fallen through this glass' [...] 'because no soul has passed / The heavenly threshold since you have opened school' (247-52). Moreover the Wise Man is condemned to go to hell, which is 'the place of those who have denied' (260) the fact that there is a Purgatory and a Heaven. He desires to undo what he has done 'until the sand has run in the glass' (291). But he is told it is not possible. The Angel suggests a way for his soul to be saved:

Though you may not undo what you have done,
I have this power – if you but find one soul,
Before the sands have fallen, that still believes,
One fish to lie and spawn among the stones
Till the great Fisher's net is full again,
You may, the purgatorial fire being passed,
Spring to your peace. (292-8)

The Wise Man tries to find someone who believes in the supernatural but fails with his pupils and wife. In the urgent situation of death speedily approaching him, he reaches a wisdom obtained as a reward for the pain of having his self broken into pieces:

Go call my pupils – I can explain all now.
Only when all our hold on life is troubled,
Only in spiritual terror can the Truth
Come through the broken mind. (478-81)

Truth comes to 'those who die everyday they live'.[467] The Wise Man realises Teigue is 'the one I seek, and I am saved' (592). But Teigue does not give the answer the Wise Man needs, saying, 'what a lot the Fool knows, but he says nothing' (588-9). The Wise Man dies in despair as a result of Teigue's rejection, but with a recognition of his supernatural power, which is 'God's will' (609). Teigue says to the dead Wise Man: 'You and I, we are the two fools, we know everything, but we will not speak' (629-30). The Wise Man at last becomes the fool who knows everything.

The Fool who functions through subjective insight is the Wise Man's anti-self, as opposed to the objective and rational wise man. In other words, the Fool is the Wise Man's *Mask.* This is true of Lear's Fool. His disappearance from the play as soon as Lear acts like a fool accounts for this. In Act 4, scene 6, when Lear enters 'fantastically dressed with wild flower', Lear is not with the Fool any more in spite of his obsession with him in earlier scenes: Lear struck Goneril's gentleman 'for [the] chiding of his Fool' (1.3.1-2) and felt 'the world's asleep' (1.4.47) when he could not see the Fool. The Fool was also very faithful to Lear to the extent that he was his only companion when the King was forced to go to the storm-blasted heath after losing everything:

Kent. But who is with him?

[467] *Mythologies*, p. 116.

Gent. None but the Fool, who labours to out-jest
His heart-strook injuries. (3.1.15-7)

However the Fool disappears after he says his last line ('And I'll go to bed at noon' (3.4.83)) as a response to Lear's lunatic speech ('We'll go to supper i'th'morning (3.4.82)). Nevertheless Lear is less concerned about his location than previously. On this account, Willard Farnham argues that the Fool is Lear's other self,[468] and it is natural that the Fool should disappear when Lear goes mad and becomes a natural fool himself. Welsford argues:

> His disappearance was a poetic necessity, for the King having lost everything, including his wits, has now himself become the Fool.[469]

Goldsmith also points out that the Fool serves as 'Lear's alter ego, his externalised conscience, or as he puts it himself, "Lear's shadow" (1.4.251).[470] In this respect, the Fool represents the subjectivity that objective heroes should accept as their opposites.

As in *The Hour-Glass*, in which the Fool serves as a symbolic figure rather than as a rounded human, the Fool in *The Herne's Egg* (1938) is also a symbol representing subjectivity. The Fool lays an implacable curse on the objective hero. In scene II, when Congal, King of Connacht, plots to steal the Great Herne (the heron god)'s egg, a fool related to the Great Herne's curse is told:

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[468] Willard Farnham, *The Shakespearean Grotesque* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 119.
[469] Enid Welsford, p. 264. Kenneth Muir cites a more practical account of the Fool's disappearance in his note to *King Lear* (London: Arden, 1972). He uses the argument of Brandl, Quiller-Couch and Edith Sitwell that 'the two parts of Cordelia and the Fool were taken by the same actor.' But Muir points out that their argument was refuted by Alwin Thaler, who 'shows that the parts could not have been doubled.' Nevertheless it is also true that Thaler's argument loses its power in the modern practice of casting the same actress in both roles. See *King Lear*, p. 205.
[470] Robert Hillis Goldsmith, p. 67.

'He that a herne's egg dare steal
Shall be changed into a fool,'
Said the old, old herne that had but one leg.
'And to end his fool breath
At a fool's hand meet his death,'
Said the old, old herne that had but one leg. (2.125-30)

A fool is chosen in order to stress the cruelty of the curse because it must be unbearably shameful for the hero to be a fool and to die at a fool's hand. Like the Wise Man, the objective Congal does not believe in supernatural power. He tries to prove his righteousness by defying the Great Herne. He rapes the priestess Attracta, who is the Great Herne's bride, and steals the herne's egg. Yet he realises he 'must die at a fool's hand / When the moon is full / Upon the holy mountain' (5.90-2) as soon as the Great Herne announces his power in the form of thunder. On the Great Wheel the full moon corresponds to phase 15, which is called 'Complete Subjectivity' because 'the solar or primary tincture is consumed by the lunar'.[471] From this perspective, Congal's death during the full moon symbolises objectivity's consumption by the strength of the moon. Furthermore, the fool as an agent of Congal's death serves the *Mask* that Congal should accept.

When Congal is awaiting his fate, the Fool called Tom enters with an anti-heroic appearance: he is quixotically armed with 'spit, cauldron lid and pot' (6.27) instead of spear, shield and helmet. Congal's fateful anti-self seems 'as unlike as possible to his natural ego or *Will*'.[472] But, in spite of his

[471] *A Vision*, p. 81.
[472] Ibid., p. 84.

appearance, the Fool has an intuition of his role as an instrument of the Great Herne:

> I sat in Widow Rooney's kitchen,
> Somebody said, 'King Congal's on the mountain
> Cursed to die at the hands of a fool'.
> Somebody else said 'Kill him, Tom'.
> And everybody began to laugh
> And said I should kill him at the full moon,
> And that is to-night. (14-20)

The Fool does not know, or want to know, the reason why he has to kill Congal. He just accepts it as a natural process of life, unlike Congal who desires to emulate the godhead. The wisdom that Congal gains at the expense of his life has already been attained by the Fool. In the end Congal becomes aware of the suggestion that he is himself a fool: 'Fool! Am I myself a / Fool?' (6.116). On Peter Ure's account, Congal's fighting the god makes him 'a kind of fool'. [473] He argues that 'in the god's perspective everything from the death of Aedh to his own self-destruction has been Congal's fool's play'.[474]

F.J. Fay, who 'played the Fool in *The Hour-Glass*, produced on 14 March 1903 at the Molesworth Hall, Dublin', had told Yeats that the 'Hour Glass has been cast as you suggested. Would you tell me where I get some of the folk-tales [...] in which a fool similar to yours occurs [?]' [475] Yeats wrote a letter to Fay in reply [*13 August 1902*]:

> I don't think there is any special book that will give you an understanding of the fool. The fool, in the sense in which I use him is continually cropping up in folk-lore.

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[473] Peter Ure, 'Yeats's Hero-Fool in *The Herne's Egg*' in *Huntington Library Quarterly* Vol. 24, 1960-1961, (San Marino, California: Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery), p. 126.
[474] Ibid., p. 134.
[475] *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. 3, pp. 219.

> There is something about him in an essay called 'The Queen and the Fool' in my new 'Celtic Twilight' which Russell has a copy of. But there is nothing there or anywhere else, that I can think of, which would help you much. If you play the part as incarnate fantasy, the fantasy of Richard the Second and Hamlet you will get the meaning well enough. The fool, as I understand him, is the fool merely because his imagination is too busy with its own over abundant life to turn to useful occupations. It is the wild ass of the bible, which refuses burdens. It is the untamed and untamable mind of the world.[476]

Richard II and Hamlet are characters Yeats takes as diametrically opposed to Henry V and Fortinbras in his explanation of 'Shakespeare's Myth', by means of which he identifies Shakespeare's interlocking dramatic skill of placing character against character. Yeats argues that Richard II and Hamlet are examples of 'the vessel of porcelain', representing wise men who were 'blind from very wisdom',[477] whereas Henry V and Fortinbras are classified with 'the vessel of clay', the category of 'an empty man who thrust [wise men] from [their] place[s], and saw all that could be seen from very emptiness'[478] according to 'Shakespeare's Myth'. Henry V and Fortinbras can be judged as better kings than Richard II and Hamlet, but only according to Yeats's objective standard. His subjective standard allows an assessment similar to 'Shakespeare's Myth'. He claims that Richard II and Hamlet may be made useless to the State not by 'emptiness' but by 'abundance'.[479] In the letter above Yeats remarks that Richard II and Hamlet offer 'well enough [the] meaning' of the fool he sought. Therefore this letter hints at the distinctive definition of Yeats's fool.

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[476] *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. 3, pp. 219-20.
[477] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 107.
[478] Ibid., p. 107.
[479] Ibid., p. 103.

The objective standard treats the Fool as foolish because he lives in the subjective world. The subjective man is apt to be treated as a fool in the objective world. In *On Baile's Strand* subjective Cuchulain is taken advantage of by the objective Conchubar. The same happens to their counterparts, the Fool and the Blind Man. In *The Death of Cuchulain* Old Cuchulain is killed by the Blind Man who is a representative of objectivity. But Yeats tries to prove that the subjective man retains 'abundance' instead of the objective man's 'emptiness'.

This is what Yeats found in 'Shakespeare's Myth' and seeks to express through his fools. Thus Yeats's fool represents a subjective man who tries to remain in his subjective world, untamed by the objective code. 'Tragic joy', the weapon with which the subjective fool triumphs in a war against the objective world, is the theme of the next and last chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Tragic Joy

In his essay 'Poetry and Tradition', Yeats describes the tragic joy experienced by Shakespeare's characters:

> Shakespeare's persons, when the last darkness has gathered about them, speak out of an ecstasy that is one-half the self-surrender of sorrow, and one-half the last playing and mockery of the victorious sword before the defeated world.[480]

Shakespeare's persons display an extremely calm attitude in the face of their imminent death and speak their lines in a kind of ecstasy. Their speech is filled with joy, not sorrow. For example, Cleopatra enjoys her 'last playing' with the Clown who brings her the asp with which she will take her life. Timon of Athens leisurely orders his tomb by the beached verge of the salt flood when he realises the imminence of his own death.

Yeats returns to the ecstasy experienced by the Shakespearean hero in his essay 'A General Introduction for my Work':

> The heroes of Shakespeare convey to us through their looks, or through the metaphorical patterns of their speech, the sudden enlargement of their vision, their ecstasy at the approach of death.[481]

At the instant of death the tragic heroes undergo 'the sudden enlargement of their vision' and in their ecstasy become a 'God or Mother Goddess'.[482] However, even in this state of ecstasy, they maintain a state of self-possession. Yeats claims that 'all must be cold; no actress has ever sobbed

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[480] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 254.
[481] Ibid., p. 523.
[482] Ibid., p. 523.

when she played Cleopatra, even the shallow brain of a producer has never thought of such a thing.'[483] He also explores this idea in the poem 'Lapis Lazuli':

> All perform their tragic play,
> There struts Hamlet, there is Lear,
> That's Ophelia, that Cordelia;
> Yet they, should the last scene be there,
> The great stage curtain about to drop,
> If worthy their prominent part in the play,
> Do not break up their lines to weep. (9-15)

The heroes transcend their grief and are carried into a state of 'pure contemplation',[484] guided by their tragic ecstasy. This contemplation leads them to extend their individual suffering to all human beings' fates, and as a result they are able to transform their feelings into 'the aboriginal ice'[485] the earliest songs deliver. Yeats argues that the tragic heroes' last words, spoken in a calm state, move us because their sorrow is not for their own particular trouble, such as tomb or asp, but for all men's fate.[486] Yeats respects Lady Gregory's argument that 'Tragedy must be a joy to the man who dies',[487] and argues that tragic joy is 'the best that art – perhaps that life – can give'.[488]

In his essay 'The Tragic Theatre', Yeats employs the term 'reverie' instead of 'ecstasy' and expounds the process of reverie which tragic heroes produce on the stage:

> Tragic art, passionate art, the drowner of dykes, the confounder of understanding, moves us by setting us to

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[483] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 523.
[484] Ibid., p. 239.
[485] Ibid., p. 523.
[486] Ibid., p. 255.
[487] Ibid., p. 523.
[488] Ibid., p. 239.

> reverie, by alluring us almost to the intensity of trance. The persons upon the stage, let us say, greaten till they are humanity itself. We feel our mind expand convulsively or spread out slowly like some moon – brightened image – crowded sea. That which is before our eyes perpetually vanishes and returns again in the midst of the excitement it creates, and the more enthralling it is the more do we forget it.[489]

Again the persons upon the stage magnify their tragic situations to all human beings' tragedy and thus collapse 'the dykes that separate man from man'. [490] Yeats argues that this reverie is the 'condition of tragic pleasure'[491], but 'it is so rare and so brief'[492] because it is like a 'twilight between sleep and waking, this bout of fencing, alike on the stage and in the mind, between man and phantom, this perilous path as on the edge of a sword'.[493]

Yeats remarks on Richard II's poetic reverie in his letter to Dorothy Wellesley [*27 September, 1937*]:

> I have no news except that I went to *Richard II* last night, as fine a performance [as] possible, considering that the rhythm of all the great passages is abolished. The modern actor can speak to another actor, but he is incapable of reverie. On the advice of Bloomsbury he has packed his soul in a bag and left it with the bar-attendant. Did Shakespeare in *Richard II* discover poetic reverie?[494]

Yeats's peculiar definition of 'poetic' is given in 'The Tragic Theatre'. In the essay Yeats argues that 'the art of Shakespeare' is called 'poetical' when Shakespeare shows us 'Hamlet broken away from life by the

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[489] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 245.
[490] Ibid., p. 241.
[491] W.B. Yeats, *Plays for an Irish Theatre with designs by Gordon Craig* (London: Bullen, 1913), p. ix.
[492] Ibid., p. ix.
[493] Ibid., p. ix.
[494] *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, p. 899.

passionate hesitation of his reverie'[495] 'because we must bring more to it than our daily mood if we would take our pleasure; and because it takes delight in the moment of exaltation, of excitement, of dreaming (or in the capacity for it)'.[496] Yeats distinguishes the poetical art from 'real' art because 'character can only express itself perfectly in a real world'.[497] Therefore the 'poetic reverie' Yeats refers to in his letter is another expression of tragic reverie. Engaged in the contemplation which takes place in a state of tragic reverie, Richard II undergoes a process of the depersonalisation of his self. Recognising his sorrowful death, Richard remembers the fact that other kings also confront their deaths even though they do so by different means:

> For God's sake let us sit upon the ground
> And tell sad stories of the death of kings –
> How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
> Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed,
> Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed –
> All murdered. (3.2.155-60)[498]

All kings in 'the sad stories of the death of kings' are 'slain', 'killed' and 'murdered'. What all eventually confront is death, the indispensable destination of all human beings. Through depersonalisation an individual's fate is tied to that of all men. Richard is depersonalised with the consequence that the mark of individuality is drowned out. As such the process of depersonalisation is included in pure contemplation.

In one of his journals Yeats distinguishes 'reverie' or 'ecstasy' from 'joy':

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[495] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 242.
[496] Ibid., p. 234.
[497] Ibid., p. 234.
[498] William Shakespeare, *King Richrad II*, ed. by Charles R. Forker (London: Arden, 2002).

> It [tragedy] attains to ecstasy, which is from the contemplation of things which are vaster than the individual and imperfectly seen, perhaps, by all those that still live [...] Joy is of the will which does things, which overcomes obstacles, which is victorious.[499]

Ecstasy or reverie involves a pure contemplation whereby the tragedy of all human beings is contemplated and thus there is always 'some realisation or fulfilment of the soul in itself, some slow or sudden expansion of it like an overflowing well'.[500] On the other hand, joy entails a hero's will 'which does things, which overcomes obstacles, which is victorious'. Accordingly tragic joy is at the mercy of a tragic hero's capacity. Leonard E. Nathan gives a convincing account:

> The suffering of the hero is the result of his irremediable defeat; the joy is the result of the capacity of the heroes to rise above defeat to a 'reverie' in which individual suffering is contemplated under the aspect of spiritual reality, the anima mundi.[501]

Tragic joy requires the heroes' effort to transcend their 'irremediable defeats'.

Yeats defines tragic joy as a 'shaping joy':

> That shaping joy has kept the sorrow pure, as it had kept it were the emotion love or hate, for the nobleness of the arts is in the mingling of contraries, the extremity of sorrow, the extremity of joy, perfection of personality, the perfection of its surrender, overflowing turbulent energy, and marmorean stillness; and its red rose opens at the meeting of the two beams of the cross, and at the trysting-place of mortal and immortal, time and eternity.[502]

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[499] *Memoirs*, p. 152.
[500] Ibid., p. 153.
[501] Leonard E. Nathan, pp. 156-7.
[502] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 255.

The joy shaped by a hero's will in a state of sorrowful defeat makes his sorrow 'pure' as the 'mingling of contraries' such as 'sorrow' and 'joy' brings up a noble art. The 'nobleness of the arts' is formed at 'the trysting-place' of contraries. In Yeats's Rosicrucian order of the Golden Dawn the red rose blooms as a result of the conjunction of rose and cross, which is called 'a fifth element' or 'a mystic marriage'. [503] The red rose here symbolises 'Eternal beauty' (12) as in the poem 'To the Rose upon the Rood of Time'. Richard Ellmann argues that the mystic marriage, the result of the conjunction of rose and cross is:

> the transfiguring ecstasy which occurs when the adept, after the long pain and self-sacrifice of the quest in this world, a world in which opposites are for ever quarrelling, finds his cross – the symbol of that struggle and opposition – suddenly blossom with the rose of love, harmony and beauty.[504]

Forgael, the hero in *The Shadowy Waters*, recognises this meaning of the red rose:

> I can see nothing plain; all's mystery.
> Yet, sometimes there's a torch inside my head
> That makes all clear, but when the light is gone
> I have but images, analogies,
> The mystic bread, the sacramental wine,
> The red rose where the two shafts of the cross,
> Body and soul, waking and sleep, death, life,
> Whatever meaning ancient allegorists
> Have settled on, are mixed into one joy. (131-9)

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[503] The Rose is a symbol that appears in Yeats's very early poems, but it recurs later as an increasingly complex symbol. In particular it was as a result of his membership of the Golden Dawn, an occult society or Rosicrucian order, that the meaning of the Rose as the symbol of spiritual and eternal beauty was intensified. 'In the Rosicrucian symbolism a conjunction of rose (with four leaves) and cross forms a fifth element – a mystic marriage – the rose possessing feminine sexual elements, the cross masculine; the rose being the flower that blooms upon the sacrifice of the cross.' See A. Norman Jeffares, *A New Commentary on the Poems of W.B. Yeats*, p. 21.
[504] Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats*, p. 64.

Shaping joy can be regarded as the equivalent of style in the arts because style arises out of 'a deliberate shaping of all things'[505] as courtesy and self-possession in life do. Yeats defines style as 'the only thing that is immortal in literature' [506] and in particular identifies Shakespeare's style as tragicomedy.[507] He distinguishes tragedy from comedy: 'tragedy is passion alone and, instead of character, it gets form from motives, the wandering of passion; while comedy is the clash of character'.[508] He explains how comedy and tragic situation coexist in Shakespeare's tragicomedy:

> In writers of tragic-comedy (and Shakespeare is always a writer of tragic-comedy) there is indeed character, but we notice that it is in the moments of comedy that character is defined, in Hamlet's gaiety let us say; while amid the great moments, when Timon orders his tomb, when Hamlet cries to Horatio 'Absent thee from felicity awhile', when Anthony names 'Of many thousand kisses the poor last,' all lyricism, unmixed passion, 'the integrity of fire'.[509]

'Character' is the main factor in comedy and accordingly 'comedy keeps house' upon character or 'the dykes that separate man from man',[510] whereas tragedy is 'a drowning and breaking of the dykes'[511] because 'a poet creates tragedy from his own soul, that soul which is alike in all men'.[512]

Moreover Yeats argues that Shakespeare's style as a dramatist of tragicomedy plays an important role on a theatrical level. He says that 'in

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[505] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 253.
[506] Ibid., p. 254.
[507] *Memoirs*, p. 152.
[508] Ibid., p. 152.
[509] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 240.
[510] Ibid., p. 241.
[511] Ibid., p. 241.
[512] *Memoirs*, p. 152.

all drama which would give direct expression to reverie, to the speech of the soul with itself, there is some device that checks the rapidity of dialogue'.[513] He points out that the Chorus serve the function in Greek drama:

> When Oedipus speaks out of the most vehement passions, he is conscious of the presence of the Chorus, men before whom he must keep up appearances, 'children latest born of Cadmus' line' who do not share his passion.[514]

On the other hand, 'an often encumbering euphuism' and 'a loosening of his plot' are used in order to gain time for reverie in Shakespearean drama:

> Shakespeare, upon whose stage everything may happen, even the blinding of Gloucester, and who has no formal check except what is implied in the slow, elaborate structure of blank verse, obtains time for reverie by an often encumbering euphuism, and by such a loosening of his plot as will give his characters the leisure to look at life from without.[515]

Tragic joy is possessed of a feature different from Aristotelian *catharsis*, which is the emotional effect of tragedy. According to Aristotle, by exciting 'pity and fear' tragedy gives a healthy outlet to such emotions. *Catharsis* represents the purgation of such emotions experienced by the audience. On the other hand tragic joy is shared by not only the audience but also by the tragic hero. Furthermore tragic joy transcends pity and fear, shaping joy. F.A.C. Wilson also argues that what Yeats sought in theatre is closer to that

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[513] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 333.
[514] Ibid., p. 333.
[515] Ibid., pp. 333-4.

he calls 'stillness' rather than *catharsis.*[516] Wilson explains the state of 'stillness' as

> a single moment of emotional equipoise to which all the 'passionate intensity' of the action will tend, and which will give the audience temporary use of all their most hidden faculties; one might define it as an awareness of stasis, a moment when the mind passes through profound emotion into a condition of absolute calm.[517]

Yeats describes the tragic joy experienced by the tragic hero as well as the audience in 'The Tragic Theatre'. He takes Deirdre in Synge's *Deirdre of the Sorrows* as an example:

> And at last when Deirdre, in the paroxysm before she took her life, touched with compassionate fingers him that had killed her lover, we knew that the player had become, if but for a moment, the creature of that noble mind which had gathered its art in waste islands, and we too were carried beyond time and persons to where passion, living through its thousand purgatorial years, as in the wink of an eye, becomes wisdom; and it was as though we too had touched and felt and seen a disembodied thing.[518]

In the 'paroxysm' of her tragedy the heroine becomes 'the creature of that noble mind' for a moment and the audience is guided to where passion becomes wisdom and their sensation is mysterious as if they had touched and felt and seen 'a disembodied thing'.

Yeats's tragic joy is better understood in relation to his understanding of Nietzsche. Yeats wrote in a letter to John Quinn [*6 February 1903*]:

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[516] In his notes Wilson points out that this word was originally used in this context by Samuel Palmer. See F.A.C. Wilson, *W.B. Yeats and Tradition*, p. 255.
[517] Ibid., p. 37.
[518] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 239.

I don't know how I can thank you too much for the three volumes of Nietzsche.[519] I had never read him before, but find that I had come to the same conclusions on several cardinal matters. He is exaggerated and violent but has helped me very greatly to build up in my mind an imagination of the heroic life. His books have come to me at exactly the right moment, for I have planned out a series of plays which are all intended to be an expression of life which seem[s] to me a kind of proud hard gift giving joyousness.[520]

Nietzsche's theory starts from a recognition of eternal recurrence, an ancient cosmological idea, which is the conception that 'everything that happens is part of an endlessly repeating cycle or sequence of events.'[521] Nietzsche expresses eternal recurrence as a repeating hour-glass in *The Gay Science*: 'the eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!'[522] A perception of the possibility of recurrence might lead to a pessimistic attitude toward life, as voiced by Macbeth:

> Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
> To the last syllable of recorded time
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more. (5.5.19-26)

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[519] The footnote to this letter identifies the three volumes Yeats mentioned: 'evidently the three volumes of *The Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, edited by Alexander Tille in 1899, and companions to his translation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which Quinn had sent WBY in September 1902.' See *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. 3, p. 313.
[520] *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, Vol. 3, p. 313.
[521] *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. by Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 251.
[522] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books: 1974), p. 273.

In the universe of an endlessly repeating cycle, our life, a part of the sequence, steps 'the way to dusty death' regardless of our will, like a poor player who is condemned to move according to a given script.

Yet Nietzsche suggests that we are able to overcome nihilism by accepting eternal recurrence joyously. His Zarathustra[523] gains joy as a result of self-overcoming. Nietzsche identifies Zarathustra as '*the teacher of the eternal recurrence*'.[524] The process of self-conquest is the hardest task which requires enormous power to the extent that only a hero is able to achieve it. Nietzsche's analysis of joy can be compared with the shaping joy Yeats employs to express tragic joy. Nietzsche argues that what makes one heroic is 'Going out to meet at the same time one's highest suffering and one's highest hope.'[525] To shape a joy by means of self-overcoming of suffering is expected of a hero. Shakespeare's tragic heroes become the models for Nietzsche's Superman, who is incorporated into the Yeatsian hero, as the embodiment of 'an expression of life which seem[s] to me a kind of proud hard gift giving joyousness'.[526]

Yeats also shows that the shaping joy is comparable to an 'astringent joy' in a letter to Lady Gregory:

> I have written to you little and badly of late I am afraid for the truth is you have a rival in Nietzsche, that strong

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[523] Zarathustra (Greek Zoroastres) is 'the founder of the ancient Persian religion, and the book with which he is credited, the Zend-Avesta, is its Bible [...] The heart of his religion is a conflict between Ahura Mazda (Ormuzd), the god of light and good, and Angra Mainyu (Ahriman), the god of darkness and evil.' See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1961), p. 30.
[524] *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 237.
[525] *The Gay Science*, p. 219.
[526] *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. 3, p. 313.

> encounter. I have read him so much that I have made my eyes bad again. They were getting well it had seemed. Nietzsche completes Blake & has the same roots – I have not read anything with so much excitement since I got to love Morris's stories which have the same curious astringent joy.[527]

Yeats points out that Morris's stories have 'the same curious astringent joy' as Nietzsche's thought. He stresses the painful difficulty of achieving tragic joy by using the word 'astringent' instead of 'shaping'. In Yeats's understanding Nietzsche proceeds in the same direction as Blake, who looks upon 'every mortal loss' as 'an immortal gain'.[528] From this perspective shaping joy is obtained as the result of a contemplative transcendence of time, encouraged by the Blakean faith that 'the ruins of time build mansions in eternity'.[529] Yeats says that 'when Timon makes his epitaph, we feel no sorrow, for life herself has made one of her eternal gestures, has called up into our hearts her energy that is eternal delight.'[530]

In his letter to Florence Farr [? *July 1905*], Yeats wrote that *The Shadowy Waters*, which he was revising, was 'now upon one single idea – which is in these new lines –

> When the world ends
> The mind is made unchanging for it finds
> Miracle, ecstasy, the impossible joy,
> The flagstone under all, the fire of fires,
> The root of the world.'[531]

Yeats's idea of gyres can be connected with the notion of eternal recurrence in the sense that according to both views our life can be explained as part of

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[527] *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, Vol. 3, p. 284.
[528] Introduction to *The Works of William Blake: Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical*, eds. by Edwin J. Ellis and W.B. Yeats, Vol. 1 (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893), p. 35.
[529] Ibid., p. 35.
[530] *Explorations*, p. 163.
[531] *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, p. 454.

a cyclical system. Yeats gives a long account of the system of the gyres in the note to his poem 'The Second Coming'. He explains that the conception of 'revolving gyres intersecting each other at various angles' is derived from mathematical diagrams made up of 'squares and spheres, cones', and is founded upon 'a single fundamental thought'.[532] He argues that the movement of the mind can be expressed by 'a mathematical form':

> The mind, whether expressed in history or in the individual life, has a precise movement, which can be quickened or slackened but cannot be fundamentally altered, and this movement can be expressed by a mathematical form.[533]

Yeats expands his conception, saying 'all living mind has likewise a fundamental mathematical movement, however adapted in plant, or animal, or man to particular circumstance.'[534] He maintains that we can predict 'the entire future of humanity, or of an individual man' when we have found the movement and calculated its relations. He claims that death can be considered in this way:

> It is possible in this way, seeing that death is itself marked upon the mathematical figure, which passes beyond it, to follow the soul into the highest heaven and the deepest hell.[535]

Death is also an event of life which can be analysed mathematically as the movement of two interlocking spinning cones like 'the eternal hourglass of existence'. Yeats repeats this point of view on death in *A Vision*:

> [...] tragic and happy circumstance alike offer an intellectual ecstasy at the revelation of truth, and the most horrible tragedy in the end can but seem a figure in a dance.[536]

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[532] *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats*, p. 823.
[533] Ibid., p. 823.
[534] Ibid., pp. 823-4.
[535] Ibid., p. 824.
[536] *A Vision* (1925), p. 231.

Death is 'part of an endlessly repeating cycle' of events. Thus the most horrible tragedy becomes 'a figure in a dance'. But the reason why we are able to be joyful is that we are offered 'an intellectual ecstasy at the revelation of truth'.

Yeats offers a concrete example of tragic joy in the life of J.M. Synge. In the essay 'J. M. Synge and the Ireland of his Time', Yeats says Synge's bad health made him ponder life and death and resulted in his heroic art:

> I think that all noble things are the result of warfare; great nations and classes, of warfare in the visible world, great poetry and philosophy, of invisible warfare, the division of a mind within itself, a victory, the sacrifice of a man to himself. I am certain that my friend's noble art, so full of passion and heroic beauty, is the victory of a man who in poverty and sickness created from the delight of expression, and in the contemplation that is born of the minute and delicate arrangement of images, happiness and health of mind.[537]

Just as great poetry and philosophy are the result of 'invisible warfare' which involves 'the division of a mind within itself, a victory, the sacrifice of a man to himself', so Synge's noble art is the outcome of the self-overcoming of his poverty and sickness. His specific circumstances drive him to undergo a process of depersonalisation in the same way that Richard II does. He gains a new perspective by which he can see himself as 'a part of the spectacle of the world', that is, as part of an eternal recurrence.

Richard II generalises his fate onto all human beings. Similarly Synge contemplates his own death 'as if it were another's':

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[537] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 321.

> He (Synge) can see himself as but a part of the spectacle of the world and mix into all he sees that flavour of extravagance, or of humour, or of philosophy, that makes one understand that he contemplates even his own death as if it were another's and finds in his own destiny but, as it were, a projection through a burning-glass of that general to men.[538]

As a consequence of this contemplation Synge obtains a shaping joy. Yeats discusses it as a 'creative joy':

> There is in the creative joy an acceptance of what life brings, because we have understood the beauty of what it brings, or a hatred of death for what it takes away, which arouses within us, through some sympathy perhaps with all other men, an energy so noble, so powerful, that we laugh aloud and mock, in the terror or the sweetness of our exaltation, at death and oblivion.[539]

The creative joy is obtained as a result of accepting 'what life brings' and is 'an energy so noble, so powerful, that we laugh aloud and mock, in the terror or the sweetness of our exaltation, at death and oblivion' through 'some sympathy' with all human beings. Yeats paraphrases creative joy as the 'Emotion of Sanctity' in *A Vision*:

> Before the self passes from Phase 22 it is said to attain what is called the 'Emotion of Sanctity', and this emotion is described as contact with life beyond death. It comes at the instant when synthesis is abandoned, when fate is accepted.[540]

Just as creative joy rewards 'an acceptance of what life brings', so the 'Emotion of Sanctity' comes at the moment 'when fate is accepted'. Yeats identifies the nature of sanctity itself: 'the sanctity is described as the renunciation of personal salvation'.[541]

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[538] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 322.
[539] Ibid., p. 322.
[540] *A Vision*, p. 181.
[541] Ibid., p. 181.

'Renunciation' is the feature of the *True Mask* of phase 27, the Phase of the Saint. Therefore tragic joy is experienced when our soul passes Phase 27 on the Great Wheel. Yeats expounds the Saint's joy:

> His joy is to be nothing, to do nothing, to think nothing; but to permit the total life, expressed in its humanity, to flow in upon him and to express itself through his acts and thoughts.[542]

Phase 27 belongs to the last three crescents of the moon. Death can be construed as the end of one dispensation that necessarily entails the coming of a new dispensation. One dispensation of the cycle ends with Phase 28, the last phase of the moon. It is the Phase of the Fool, which is called "The Child of God",[543] and a phase of aimless energy. The joy experienced in this phase is an aimless joy. Yeats says that 'An aimless joy is a pure joy'[544] in his poem 'Tom O'Roughley'. He gives an account of the phrase in his essay 'Bishop Berkeley':

> In the *Commonplace Book* alone is Berkeley always sincere, and there I find in paragraph 636, 'Complacency seems rather to [...] constitute the essence of volition', which seems what an Irish poet meant who sang to some girl 'A joy within guides you', and what I meant when I wrote 'An aimless joy is a pure joy.' Berkeley must have been familiar with Archbishop King's *De Origine Mali* which makes all joy depend 'upon the act of the agent himself, and his election'; not upon an external object. The greater the purity the greater the joy. A Sligo countryman once said to me, 'God smiles even when He condemns the lost.'[545]

An aimless joy depends 'upon the act of the agent himself'; upon the one who feels, and not an 'external object'. In this respect an aimless joy also requires its subject to form joy regardless of his objective circumstance.

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[542] *A Vision*, p. 180.
[543] Ibid., p. 182.
[544] *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats*, p. 337.
[545] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 408.

Nevertheless tragic joy seems different from aimless joy because it is obtained as a consequence of overcoming human suffering. Tom O'Roughley is a kind of holy fool who is 'but a straw blown by the wind, with no mind but the wind and no act but a nameless drifting and turning'.[546] As such, shaping joy accompanying the burden of human suffering can not be expected from him.

However Yeats makes clear that an aimless joy is included in tragic joy in his *On the Boiler*:

> The arts are all the bridal chambers of joy. No tragedy is legitimate unless it leads some great character to his final joy. Polonius may go out wretchedly, but I can hear the dance music in 'Absent thee from felicity awhile', or in Hamlet's speech over the dead Ophelia, and what of Cleopatra's last farewells, Lear's rage under the lightning, Oedipus sinking down at the story's end into an earth 'riven' by love? Some Frenchman has said that farce is the struggle against a ridiculous object, comedy against a movable object, tragedy against an immovable; and because the will, or energy, is eternal delight', and when its limit is reached it may become a pure, aimless joy, though the man, the shade, still mourns his lost object.[547]

The 'will, or energy' that tragic heroes exercise in their struggles against the 'immovable' is 'eternal delight'. When their will or energy reaches its limit, 'it may become a pure, aimless joy'. It can as a result be said that tragic joy is experienced when the soul passes from the Phase of the Saint to that of the Fool. The shift between the two phases is shown in the poem 'Demon and Beast'. In this poem Yeats tries to assume the mask of the

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[546] *A Vision*, p. 182.
[547] *Explorations*, pp. 448-9.

Saint. But in the third stanza the poet moves from the mask of the Saint to that of the Fool:

> But soon a tear-drop started up,
> For aimless joy had made me stop
> Beside the little lake
> To watch a white gull take
> A bit of bread thrown up into the air[.] (21-5)

The poet, thinking of the persona of the saint (the monk 'old Luke Wadding'(10)) feels that 'a tear-drop started up' because aimless joy proffers space to appreciate 'a white gull take / A bit of bread thrown up into the air'.

Tragic joy is the crucial aim which Yeats tried to incorporate into his plays. He wrote in a letter to Dorothy Wellesley: 'To me the supreme aim is an act of faith and reason to make one rejoice in the midst of tragedy.'[548] Yeats expresses his 'supreme aim' in the poem 'The Gyres': 'Hector is dead and there's a light in Troy; / We that look on but laugh in tragic joy.'[549] And in another letter to Dorothy Wellesley [*15 August, 1938*] he revealed his satisfaction with a performance of *On Baile's Strand* because there Cuchulain's creative joy was well presented:

> There was a fine performance of my 'Baile's Strand'. 'Cuchulain' seemed to me a heroic figure because he was creative joy separated from fear.[550]

The 'creative joy separated from fear' is a desirable finale Yeats seeks to deliver us through his heroes' deaths.

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[548] W.B. Yeats, *Letter on Poetry to Dorothy Wellesley* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 13.
[549] *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats*, p. 564.
[550] *Letter on Poetry to Dorothy Wellesley*, p. 202.

Yeats presents in *Deirdre* a scene similar to Cleopatra's final scene. For most of the play Deirdre's heroic aspect is not distinguished, just as Cleopatra is primarily designated as the 'serpent of old Nile' (1.5.26) as opposed to the 'Queen of Egypt' (5.2.9). But it is their transformed attitudes at the point of death that allow Deirdre and Cleopatra to be evaluated as tragic heroines. The two heroines are 'cold' like 'the aboriginal ice' and achieve their plans to conclude their stories as 'noble' ones by means of committing suicide in disruption of their enemies' plans. Conchubar wants to recover Deirdre as his wife and Caesar spares Cleopatra's life, 'For her life in Rome / Would be eternal in our triumph' (5.2.65-6). In a state of self-possession Cleopatra jokes with the Clown, whom Michael Neill identifies as 'the antic voice of mortality'[551] in his *Issues of Death*. As Neill puts it in his note, John Bowers looks upon the Clown as the grotesquely comic figure of death 'wearing the cap and bells of a jester'.[552] However Cleopatra's lines at the moment of the 'paroxysm' preceding her death ('my baby at my breast / That sucks the nurse asleep' (5.2.7-8)) are 'all lyricism, unmixed passion, "the integrity of fire"'. They spring from the shaping joy she obtains as a reward for overcoming her tragic fate.

Like Cleopatra, Deirdre becomes cold at the time of her death. She disguises herself on discovering Naoise's death so as to accomplish her plan to die following Naoise. She pretends to accept Conchubar because she knows that otherwise she will not have the chance to commit suicide. When Conchubar is made suspicious by her suddenly calm attitude, Deirdre

[551] Michael Neill, p. 324.
[552] John M. Bowers, '"I Am Marble-Constant": Cleopatra's Monumental End' in *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 46 (1983), p. 285.

persuades him by means of her cunning laugh and mean mockery. At last she gains Conchubar's permission to see Naoise and goes behind the curtain. As a matter of fact it represents the way to her death, but despite her tragic fate Deirdre says in a state of coldness:

> Now strike the wire, and sing to it a while,
> Knowing that all is happy, and that you know
> Within what bride-bed I shall lie this night,
> And by what man, and lie close up to him,
> For the bed's narrow, and there outsleep the cock-crow.
> (728-32)

Superficially Deirdre's speech anticipates her marriage night with Conchubar but actually the 'bride-bed' is her death-bed. Nonetheless she says that 'all is happy'. As in Lady Gregory's remark, tragedy is 'a joy' to Deirdre 'who dies'.[553]

Unlike Cleopatra and Deirdre who preserve their dignity through suicide, Antony's attempt at an honourable death ends in vain. Amongst Yeats's heroes he can be compared with Congal in *The Herne's Egg*. The two heroes' ineffectually foolish attempts can be explained by Yeats's system of the Great Wheel. Antony decides to choose 'the high Roman fashion' (4.5.91) when he realises all is over with him. Mardian's false announcement of Cleopatra's suicide and Eros' suicide undertaken in order to avoid killing his master strengthen Antony's resolve. He tries to kill himself by falling on his sword but fails in his attempt: 'Not dead? Not dead? / The guard, ho! O, dispatch me' (4.14.104-5). Suffering physical pain, Antony is condemned to beg the guards to inflict 'Sufficing strokes for death' (4.4.118). This situation is far from a heroic ending. Rather it

[553] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 523.

presents a miserably foolish scene. According to Yeats's Great Wheel the explanation is that Antony's soul passes the Phase of the Fool, the last phase before death and the culmination of a cycle. The last crescents of the moon are Phases 26, 27 and 28, as stated in 'The Phases of the Moon':

> Hunchback and Saint and Fool are the last crescents.
> The burning bow that once could shoot an arrow
> Out of the up and down, the wagon-wheel
> Of beauty's cruelty and wisdom's chatter –
> Out of that raving tide – is drawn betwixt
> Deformity of body and of mind.[554]

In Yeats's system, the final phases have the common characteristic that 'one can find few or no examples from personal experience',[555] and Phase 26 is the most difficult phase to discover personal examples of. As a result 'one must create the type from its symbols without the help of experience.'[556]

The Hunchback's deformity is used by Yeats as an example. Yeats says that it 'may be of any kind, great or little, for it is but symbolised in the hump that thwarts what seems the ambition of a Caesar or of an Achilles.'[557] In this sense, the deformity is a symbol that represents a lethal fault which interrupts the heroic self. Shakespeare's Richard III soliloquises that his deformity determines his fate to be a villain:

> I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
> Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature,
> Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world scarce half made up –
> And that so lamely and unfashionable
> That dogs bark at me, as I halt by them –
> Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,

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[554] *A Vision*, pp. 63-4.
[555] Ibid., p. 177.
[556] Ibid., p. 177.
[557] Ibid., p. 177.

Have no delight to pass away the time,
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun,
And descant on mine own deformity.
And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain,
And hate the idle pleasures of these days. (1.1.18-31)

By comparison Antony's 'hump' might be said to be his passion for Cleopatra, which he realises leads him to a tragic end, but which he cannot overcome: 'These strong Egyptian fetters I must break, / Or lose myself in dotage' (1.2.123-4).

After the wretched Phase of the Hunchback, Antony passes the next phase, the Phase of the Saint, at the beginning of Act 4, scene 14. There he has a new recognition of his life while conceiving the approach of his death:

Sometimes we see a cloud that's dragonish,
A vapour sometime like a bear or lion,
A towered citadel, a pendent rock,
A forked mountain, or blue promontory
With trees upon't that nod unto the world
And mock our eyes with air. Thou hast seen these
signs?
They are black vesper's pageants. (4.14.2-8)

A cloud sometimes takes a 'dragonish' shape as 'A vapour [is] 'sometime[s] like a bear or lion'. Likewise all objects are transformed, mocking our eyes. Antony realises the phenomenon is true of his identity. He feels his identity become indistinct 'As water is in water':

That which is now a horse, even with a thought
The rack dislimns and makes it indistinct
As water is in water. (4.14.9-11)

Antony recognises he cannot keep his identity, only a 'visible shape' (4.14.14). In other words, he undergoes the renunciation of his self. In this

respect, Antony's last unarming scene can be considered as a ritual of the 'dismantling of heroic identity':[558]

> Off ! Pluck off ! [Eros unarms him.]
> The sevenfold shield of Ajax cannot keep
> The battery from my heart. O, cleave, my sides!
> Heart, once be stronger than thy continent;
> Crack thy frail case! Apace, Eros, apace!
> No more a soldier; bruised pieces go;
> You have been nobly borne. (4.14.38-44)

Because of this Michael Neill argues that Antony's death is distinguished from Cleopatra's in displaying 'resolute self-determination'.[559] Antony's renunciation of identity is drawn from the Phase of the Saint. Thus his soul is in Phase 27, although his attempt at suicide seems to take place in the next phase, the Phase of the Fool. It is a scene of humiliation inappropriate for a hero. However Antony exhibits a heroic attribute again when he is told that Cleopatra is still alive after he has fallen on his sword. He does not rail at Cleopatra because he has already transcended the code of morality. Yeats uses this example to argue that Shakespeare transcends the moral code, taking Antony's case as an example in *Samhain: 1904*:

> [...] if Antony had railed at Cleopatra in the monument [...] we might have gone away muttering the Ten Commandments.[560]

Instead of criticising Cleopatra he speaks from 'the integrity of fire': 'Only / I here importune death awhile until / Of many thousand kisses the poor last / I lay upon thy lips' (4.15.20-22). His lines are, as Yeats points out,

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[558] Michael Neill, p. 318. Maurice Charney also has a similar opinion about Antony's unarming scene: 'The sword and armor Antony wears are the visible signs of his soldiership and empire [...] his unarming is a formal dumbshow for his renunciation of Rome'. See *Shakespeare's Roman Plays* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961), p.126.
[559] Michael Neill, p. 318.
[560] *Explorations*, p. 155.

comparable to Hamlet's 'Absent thee from felicity awhile' (5.2.352), which is spoken at the great moment of tragedy.[561]

Yeats believed that the heroes' last lines prove the supremacy of soul. He wrote:

> I asked, when a lad of seventeen or eighteen, a learned Brahmin how he taught philosophy to a man who denied the soul's immorality. 'I say to him', he said, "What have you to do with that?" – words which assert the soul's supremacy as do Hamlet's 'Absent thee from felicity a while' and all of Shakespeare's other last words and closing scenes.[562]

Antony, who is in the Phase of the Saint, emancipates Cleopatra from her possible feeling of guilt:

> The miserable change now at my end,
> Lament nor sorrow at, but please your thoughts
> In feeding them with those my former fortunes
> Wherein I lived the greatest prince o'th'world,
> The noblest[.] (4.15.53-57)

He tells Cleopatra not to feel sorrow at his death but to please her thoughts with 'former fortunes'. His magnanimity is made possible as a consequence of renunciation, with the result that his soul is closer to the Phase of the Saint. Thus Antony vacillates between the Phase of the Saint and that of the Fool before his death. In this sense Cleopatra's joke with the clown is evidence that her soul passes the Phase of the Fool. It is 'her chosen motley' not 'her terror before death and stillness' that is exhibited.[563]

An abject situation analogous to Antony's failure to achieve an honourable death is assigned to Congal, the hero of *The Herne's Egg*. Congal tries to

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[561] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 240.
[562] *Explorations*, p. 296.
[563] *A Vision*, p. 133.

kill himself in order to defy the Great Herne's curse, which says that he will die at the hand of a fool. He puts the Fool's kitchen spit in stones so as to die by falling on it as Antony tries to commit suicide by falling on his sword. But as a matter of fact, he has already been wounded by the Fool who becomes the agent of his death for the reward of 'pennies'. However the Fool's spit is not enough to give Congal immediate death. Through his pain Congal is conscious that his life is at the mercy of the Great Herne's will, like 'a dog's life' (107). He tries to keep his human dignity through taking his life at his own will just as Antony desires to preserve his dignity as a soldier by choosing the Roman, stoical manner of death. Yet, contrary to his intention, the attempt ends in vain. He shouts:

> It seems that I am hard to kill,
> But the wound is deep. Are you up there?
> Your chosen kitchen spit has killed me,
> But killed me at my own will, not yours. (127-30)

Congal's situation is painful and foolish as in the case of Antony. Congal himself reveals a realisation that his defiance is foolish when he asks the Fool: 'Am I myself a Fool?' (116) just before he tries to die. The Herne's curse includes Congal's change into a fool as well as his death at the hand of a fool. Congal's tragic joy is drawn from his union with the Fool, his own opposite.

However like Antony, who passes the Phase of the Saint, Congal shows the aspect of the Phase of the Saint at the end of scene v. There Congal is told he is 'under the curse' (88) of dying at the hand of a fool 'Upon the holy mountain' (92) and responds:

> I know the place and I will come,

Although it be my death, I will come.
Because I am terrified, I will come. (98-100)

Congal faces his fate even though he is trembling with fear. He accepts his fate as Nietzsche's Superman embraces eternal recurrence. As a result he possesses the 'Emotion of Sanctity' gained only when 'fate is accepted',[564] and his soul passes the Phase of the Saint where his identity is dissolved into objectivity. However, in the last scene when he encounters the Fool he seems to be a fool himself. '*The moon of comic tradition, a round smiling face*'[565] adumbrates his change into a fool.

To Congal, who still believes his death is within his own power, Attracta, the Great Herne's bride, says, 'I called you to this place, / You came, and now the story is finished' (137-8). Her speech gives the impression that Congal's death is like a story whose ending is predetermined. Regardless of Congal's will, the story ends with his death as predicted. His defiance of the godhead is reduced to a foolish challenge. His foolishness is revealed again when he asks Attracta to protect him because he is scared of his afterlife:

Protect me, I have won my bout,
But I am afraid of what the Herne
May do with me when I am dead.
I am afraid that he may put me
Into the shape of a brute beast. (141-5)

But she does not have enough power to protect him from the godhead's implacability, which is exercised even in the afterlife. She confesses that 'I thought that I / Could give a human form to Congal, / But now he must be born a donkey' (173-5). Congal dies with the stubborn faith that he has

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[564] *A Vision*, p. 181.
[565] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 1034.

beaten the Great Herne. He could think of it as a heroic attitude, but the audience realises how foolish he is. The play ends with Corney's mocking laughter. Congal is absorbed into Phase 1, Complete Objectivity, after passing the Phase of the Fool.

In *At the Hawk's Well*, the process of depersonalisation experienced by Richard II is shown through young Cuchulain. After becoming possessed with the supernatural power expressed by the dance of the Guardian of the Well, Cuchulain realises his duty as hero. He accepts it as his fate and as a result is transformed into a tragic hero. His transformation is proved by means of his depersonalization: 'He comes! Cuchulain, son of Sualtim, comes!' (249). Cuchulain identifies himself using the third person with which Cuchulain identified himself ('He comes'). This is in contrast with self-introduction at his first encounter with the Old Man: 'I am named Cuchulain, I am Sualtim's son' (84). Even though Cuchulain does not speak a long speech similar to that of Richard II, he also undergoes a process of depersonalisation and the dance of the Guardian of the Well helps the creation of a state of tragic reverie.[566]

It is in *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939), Yeats's last play, that a hero's death and the process of tragic joy is most effectively presented. At the beginning of the play, after the prologue, Eithne, Cuchulain's mistress, enters with conflicting messages that leads Cuchulain into confusion. She delivers his

[566] Peter Ure argues that in addition to the dance, 'the strong rhythms, the masked face, the mysterious conjunction of life and artefact, dancer and dance – all these are, *mutatis mutandis*, the bodily equivalent of something like Richard II's lament.' See 'W.B. Yeats and the Shakespearian moment', in *Yeats and Anglo-Irish Literature*, p. 219.

wife Emer's message: 'No matter what's the odds, no matter though / Your death may come of it, ride out and fight' (7-8). Contrary to her message, the letter in her hand from Emer 'tells a different story'. Cuchulain reads:

> I am not to move
> Until to-morrow morning, for, if now,
> I must face odds no man can face and live.
> To-morrow morning Conall Caernach comes
> With a great host. (18-22)

The opposing messages are a symbol of Yeats's 'private philosophy'.[567] In a letter to the novelist Ethel Mannin [*20 October 1938*] Yeats wrote:

> To me all things are made of the conflict of two states of consciousness, beings or persons which die each other's life, live each other's death. This is true of life and death themselves. Two cones (or whirls), the apex of each in the other's base.[568]

Cuchulain suspects Eithne wishes for his death so that she can have 'a younger man, a friendlier man' (45). Nonetheless he does not rail against her. He says calmly

> You thought that if you changed I'd kill you for it,
> When everything sublunary must change,
> And if I have not changed that goes to prove
> That I am monstrous. (57-9)

As 'everything sublunary' changes, so Eithne's affection is naturally waning. Cuchulain also realises it is time for him to change. This acceptance of his fate allows him to experience the 'Emotion of Sanctity' and pass the phase of renunciation, the Phase of the Saint. The renunciation of self gives him the ability to grant Eithne magnanimity as Antony does to Cleopatra. Cuchulain seeks a way to 'save her from her own wild words' (83). He believes he can do so by means of the capacity to determine truth

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[567] *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, p. 916. In the letter Oct 9 [? *1938*] Yeats wrote that 'my "private philosophy" is the material dealing with individual mind which came to me with that on which the mainly historical *Vision* is based.'
[568] Ibid., p. 918.

by assertion: 'I make the truth!' (84). Consequently he declares Eithne's version to be 'the truth'. His decision to choose death by his own will relieves Eithne of any future possibility of guilt. In addition he asks his servant to protect her life and arranges for her to be sent to Conall Caernach in the case of his death:

> What herbs seem suitable, but protect her life
> As if it were your own, and should I not return
> Give her to Conall Caernach because the woman
> Have [*sic*] called him a good lover. (87-90)

This parallels Antony, who does not criticise Cleopatra's lie and furthermore asks her to be pleased with 'his former fortune' lest she should feel guilty.

Cuchulain also passes the Phase of the Fool. He jests with the Blind Man who kills him as Cleopatra does with the Clown under the pressure of death. From this perspective the Blind Man is a comic 'Death-figure'[569] similar to Cleopatra's Clown. Cuchulain's and Cleopatra's jests with the death-figures are their last attempts to mock their own deaths and fates. Cuchulain says 'twelve pennies' (170) is good enough reason 'for killing a man' (170) and spares some space to say to the Blind Man, 'You have a knife, but have you sharpened it?' (171). Cuchulain's question echoes Cleopatra's 'Will [the asp] eat me?' (5.2.270). Both questions are drawn from a shaping joy gained as a reward for the painful struggle to overcome their respective tragedies.

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[569] John M. Bowers, p. 287.

Cuchulain shows clear evidence of the process of the depersonalisation of the self. Through this process of depersonalising, he increases his self-possession and consequently obtains the gift of vision:

> There floats out there
> The shape that I shall take when I am dead,
> My soul's first shape, a soft feathery shape,
> And is not that a strange shape for the soul
> Of a great fighting-man? (177-81)

In this vision, Cuchulain sees his shape when he is dead and his 'soul's first shape, a soft feathery shape'. His last cry is not sorrowful but ecstatic: 'I say it is about to sing' (183). It is derived from a 'shaping', 'creative' and 'astringent' joy, and a pure and aimless joy, separated from fear. Cuchulain's gaiety 'transfigur[es] all that dread' [570] as in the case of Hamlet and Lear.

In addition the expression of tragic joy is a decisive factor that distinguishes Yeats from the absurdist playwrights, in spite of the apparent suggestions of absurdism that can be found especially in his later plays. Barbara L. Croft gives a good account of the relation between Yeats and absurdism in her *"Stylistic Arrangements"*. She takes *The Herne's Egg* as providing best evidence for Yeats's absurdism:

> The play is, of course, a farce; but Congal's eventual isolation, his ignoble rebirth as a donkey, and the doubt cast upon reason as a guide to human action move the theme somewhat out of the genre of comedy and toward the truly absurd.[571]

She argues that 'Yeats's self-drama is analogous in the nature of its conflict to modern absurdist drama', although she adds that 'of course, it is never

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[570] *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats*, p. 565.
[571] Barbara L. Croft, *"Stylistic Arrangements": A Study of William Butler Yeats's A Vision* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1987), p. 151.

precisely absurd.'[572] As shown in Cuchulain's death scene, Yeats's hero overcomes the absurdity of life with tragic joy. It was tragic joy that Yeats as a dramatist desired to achieve all his life. He wrote in *On the Bolier:*

> Then I say to myself, I have had greater luck than any other modern English-speaking dramatist; I have aimed at tragic ecstasy, and here and there in my work and in the work of my friends I have seen it greatly played. What does it matter that it belongs to a dead art and to a time when a man spoke out of an experience and a culture that were not of his time alone, but held his time, as it were, at arm's length, that he might be spectator of the ages?[573]

Yeats added that he was haunted by moments of tragic ecstasy, and that they would continue to haunt him on his death-bed.[574] As he wrote in his *Autobiographies*, this lifelong pursuit of his had its origins in Henry Irving's portrayal of Hamlet's 'self-possession', which he saw in his childhood:

> When I was ten or twelve my father took me to see Irving play Hamlet [...] For many years Hamlet was an image of heroic self-possession for the poses of youth and childhood to copy, a combatant of the battle within myself.[575]

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[572] Barbara L. Croft, p. 156.
[573] *Explorations*, pp. 415-6.
[574] Ibid., p. 416.
[575] *Autobiographies*, p. 47.

CONCLUSION

In her *Ghostwriting Modernism* Helen Sword argues that Shakespeare must be conceived of as 'a ghost rather than a flesh-and-blood mortal' for many modernist writers because 'Shakespeare can be either ephemeral or all powerful, but he can never be merely ordinary.'[576] She continues:

> Ghosts are not just dead people transported through space or time into the quotidian realm of the here and now. They are symbolic entities, objects of admiration and dread, emblems of literature's capacity to haunt our imagination and disturb the status quo.[577]

Shakespeare's presence as a symbolic entity is true of no one more than Yeats, as his prose writings describing how powerfully Shakespeare worked upon his imagination attest. He said that he owed his soul to Shakespeare[578] and selected him as the first of the six authors that should suffice a man after forty.[579] He also recollected how the image of Hamlet's self-possession that he witnessed in his childhood became 'an image of heroic self-possession for the poses of youth and childhood to copy, a combatant of the battle within [him]self'.[580] It is certain that Shakespeare was at the very heart of Yeats's conceptual development as a dramatist.

A Vision was the outcome of the 'metaphors for poetry'[581] to which Yeats was inspired by his encounters with spiritual beings. Barbara L. Croft claims that the system in *A Vision* is 'like a timeworn shell cast up from the

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[576] Helen Sword, *Ghostwriting Modernism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 53.
[577] Ibid., p. 53.
[578] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 519.
[579] Ibid., p. 447.
[580] *Autobiographies*, p. 47.
[581] *A Vision*, p. 8.

waters of the Great Mind and Memory' and that 'the symbols are not [Yeats's] personal symbols [...] but the universal symbols of the culture.'[582] The extent to which the discoveries of *A Vision* underlie Yeats's drama cannot be underestimated: the processes of thought out of which the philosophy of *A Vision* and Yeats's understanding of drama emerged were closely intertwined. I attempted to conceptualise Shakespeare's plays according to the system of *A Vision* so that the works of both playwrights could be looked at in relation to a single theoretical framework and so that, through extrapolation, Shakespeare could be considered in the same way that he was understood by Yeats. By considering them within this predetermined framework, more diverse results could be gained than would be derived from an analysis that followed a single direction from Shakespeare to Yeats.

The core of the Great Wheel in *A Vision* is the opposition between subjectivity and objectivity. Yeats, who understood life in terms of strife between opposites, explained conflict through the symbols of subjectivity and objectivity. Nevertheless it is clear that Yeats put more emphasis upon the former. The preference for subjectivity was his basic premise when he supported the supremacy of soul over self, or supernatural over natural, and the superiority of Celtic spirit to Saxon spirit. Moreover, according to F.A.C. Wilson, Yeats's subjective tendency was a feature of the tradition of 'heterodox mysticism' to which he belonged.[583] Wilson explains this by means of contrast with T.S. Eliot's objectivity:

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[582] Croft, Barbara L., pp. 156-7.
[583] F.A.C. Wilson, *W.B. Yeats and Tradition*, p. 15.

> Eliot, from Yeats's point of view, would be a classic type of the *objective* (or 'primary' personality): that is, he accepted the Christian procedure or purification through renunciation, and sensing human inadequacy and impurity tried to perfect his life by self-denial [...] Yeats thought of himself, however, as what he called a *subjective* (or 'antithetical' personality): that is to say, he preferred the road to visionary experience which leads through the sense of self-sufficiency and joy.[584]

But above all, the interest of Yeats as a dramatist in subjectivity functioned as the main reason for his choice of symbolist theatre against the naturalistic theatre which exercised powerful strength around him. In particular he objected to the 'soullessness' of realism.[585]

In Yeats's understanding Shakespeare was always on the subjective side. He said that, though in the Great Wheel Shakespeare (Phase 20) was more objective than Dante (Phase 17), he was 'still predominantly subjective'.[586] In his essay 'Emotion of Multitude' he argued for the superiority of subjectivity to objectivity with reference to Shakespeare's use of subplot. The subplot, according to Yeats, plays a crucial role in creating a better understanding of the main plot through the images of multitude it makes possible. Nonetheless, its value is underestimated because it is too subtle to be grasped easily, compared with the solar brightness of the main plot. Similarly the subjective aspect of man is neglected because our modern society thinks highly of only objective achievement. Yeats was able to find a special perception of the subjective and objective aspects of man in Shakespeare. Shakespeare was able to describe the subjective abundance of Richard II, who was deposed by the objective society, and the subjective

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[584] F.A.C. Wilson, p. 21.
[585] Ibid., p. 35.
[586] *Explorations*, p. 251.

emptiness of Henry V, who was remembered as a successful man in his historical plays. Yeats called the interlocking dramatic technique of setting two opposing characters against one another 'Shakespeare's Myth', which was closely associated with his technique of posing character against character to represent the conflict between subjectivity and objectivity. Furthermore 'Shakespeare's Myth', the outcome of his innovative reinterpretation of Shakespeare's historical plays became a potent supporting idea with which he argued for the superiority of Celtic to Saxon spirit.

Yeats's interest in the subjective subsequently resulted in the creation of a symbolic figure – the fool – as a representative of subjectivity. Shakespeare's fools – King Lear's fool as well as Touchstone and Feste – point out the foolishness of their masters through their wits, with the consequence that they show the inversion of conventional wisdom and folly. Similarly Yeats emphasised the wisdom of the fool by making him a symbolic figure, rather than a real character: he symbolises a subjective power, which is depicted as an ability to be connected with the supernatural in Yeats's plays. The fools surrender objective heroes, the Wise Man and Congal. In other words Yeats proved the strength of subjectivity through his fools.

Tragic joy might be explained as the fool's pure and aimless joy. Yeats was strongly impressed by the last sentences of Shakespeare's characters, where tragic joy is shown in the face of imminent death. He referred to

Cleopatra's 'last playing' with the Clown who brings her the asp; Timon's leisurely ordering of his own tomb; and Hamlet's cry to Horatio 'Absent thee from felicity awhile' in his writings because he recognised the attendant self-possession as evidence of the soul's supremacy. The tragic joy Shakespeare's heroes exhibited was the very power with which Yeats overcame the objective world. Tragic joy was the 'supreme aim'[587] Yeats strove to achieve in his work to the extent that he said it haunted him on his death-bed.[588] He tried to create moments of tragic joy in his plays. In *Deirdre* he presented the self-possessive trick by means of which the heroine cheated her enemy in order to complete her aim of committing suicide, which was comparable to Cleopatra's last scene. Finally, in his last play *The Death of Cuchulain*, he created the ecstatic line, 'I say it is about to sing' (183).

In relation to *A Vision*, tragic joy could be construed as a phenomenon that takes place when the soul passes Phases 27 and 28, the last two phases of the moon, shortly before it is dissolved into Complete Objectivity. Tragic joy is a shaping, creative joy, obtained as a consequence of overcoming human suffering. It requires an effort of renouncing the self and accepting 'what life brings', which is the characteristic of Phase 27, the Phase of the Saint. On the other hand tragic joy is an aimless joy because when the will or energy reaches its limit, 'it may become a pure, aimless joy'.[589] The aimless energy is the feature of Phase 28, the Phase of the Fool. As a result, Antony's foolish, grotesque death-scene could be explained according to

[587] *Letter on Poetry to Dorothy Wellesley*, p. 13.
[588] *Explorations*, p. 416.
[589] Ibid., p. 449.

Yeats's system. Although Antony is not himself a fool, according to Yeats's Great Wheel, to achieve his status as a hero, he must pass through one phase of foolishness. From this perspective other tragic heroes' last lines that are filled with self-possessive jokes could be deemed an expression of their last attempts to play in motley, chosen by their own will, to confirm the supremacy of the soul. Thus the most important thing Yeats found in Shakespeare was his ability to touch the soul. It was a great legacy for Yeats as a symbolist dramatist because the soul is, to him, a constant subject of drama and the only subject of symbolism.[590] Yeats said that 'Man can only love Unity of Being and that is why such conflicts are conflicts of the whole soul.'[591]

The strife between subjectivity and objectivity brought out the use of symbolic theatrical properties in order to embody the conflict on the stage.

Thomas Kilroy points out the necessity of understanding the theatricality in Yeats's plays:

> Happily, most commentators on Beckett's plays seem to arrive with a sense of the theatricalism behind them. It seems to me that most readers of Yeats's plays come equipped with the experience of the poems, the prose, the *Vision*. And it is not enough.[592]

As Kilroy puts it, in addition to the plot or theme, a grasp of theatricality is an essential factor in achieving an appropriate appreciation of Yeats's plays.

The threshold, among the various theatrical properties Yeats used, was

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[590] See *Essays and Introductions*, p. 370 and *Uncollected Prose by W.B. Yeats*, Vol. II, p. 52.
[591] *Explorations*, p. 302.
[592] Thomas Kilroy, 'Two Playwrights: Yeats and Beckett' in *Myth and Reality in Irish Literature*, ed. by Joseph Ronsley (Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977), p. 184.

employed mainly in his early plays. Though they were written before *A Vision*, they depicted a recognisable conflict between opposites because the strife between subjectivity and objectivity was already in Yeats's mind. The threshold played a major part in embodying the conflict. Though Yeats started with physical thresholds such as doors and windows, they gradually changed from concrete stage constructions to symbolic concepts to incorporate the hero's psychological conflict. For instance, in *The Land of Heart's Desire* the threshold served to reproduce economically two opposing worlds, such as supernatural and natural ones, or realistic and ideal worlds, while in *Deirdre* the threshold centred on the heroine's liminal state before her death. Although it is not possible to determine the use of concrete thresholds in Shakespeare's plays, there are, however, a number of symbolic thresholds marking the divide between opposing aspects, including the range of thresholds found in *The Winter's Tale*. In addition, Shakespeare's Cleopatra was a prototype for Yeats's Deirdre as a character in the liminal state of facing her own death.

The threshold was replaced in Yeats's plays by his distinctive use of the mask, particularly in his middle plays. The influence of Japanese Noh theatre cannot be denied in the creation of the Yeatsian mask. Nevertheless the mask was a functional successor of the threshold in that it also involved the conflict between subjectivity and objectivity, expressed as self and anti-self respectively. The concept of the mask was the basis of his philosophy, which was depicted in embryo in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and completely explained in *A Vision*.

Shakespeare used physical masks for masquerade scenes in plays such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. But the function of the symbolic mask can be extended to include role-plays, disguises and metamorphoses. Accordingly it was found that Shakespeare's characters offered varied examples by means of which the concept of the mask can be explained, and it was possible to find equivalent characters in Yeats's plays. In particular Edgar in *King Lear* is a perfect instance of the antithetical man who discovers or reveals his anti-self 'with extreme effort, when his muscles are as it were all taut and all his energies active.'[593] Young Cuchulain in *At the Hawk's Well* and Decima in *The Player Queen* also correspond to this category. On the other hand, the Young Man in *The Dreaming of the Bones* and Rosalind in *As You Like it* roughly belong to the category of the primary man who fails to create his anti-self: the Young Man refused to be transformed by assuming his tragic mask, while Rosalind remained conscious of her femininity despite her disguise as a man. However, they were each able to approach the point of transformation. The Young Man confessed that he almost yielded to taking the tragic mask, and Rosalind fulfilled her role as a man in spite of the difficulty of concealing her love for Orlando. It can therefore be seen that the assumption of a mask results in a metamorphosis of some kind, whether it be a simple physical change or a profound psychological transformation.

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[593] *A Vision*, p. 84.

A greater conceptual understanding was made possible through a consideration of Yeats's critical thoughts about Shakespeare as a dramatist. Yeats believed there to be a great contrast between Shakespeare the man, and the passionate characters he created. This caused him difficulty in placing Shakespeare at phase twenty-eight on his Great Wheel. Ultimately Yeats realised that Shakespeare created such passionate persons through his mask. Furthermore he attempted to explain the correlation between a dramatist and his characters. He wrote in his letter to Sean O'Casey [*20 April 1928*]:

> Do you suppose for one moment that Shakespeare educated Hamlet and King Lear by telling them what he thought and believed? As I see it, Hamlet and Lear educated Shakespeare, and I have no doubt that in the process of that education he found out that he was an altogether different man to what he thought himself, and had altogether different beliefs. A dramatist can help his characters to educate him by thinking and studying everything that gives them the language they are groping for through his hands and eyes, but the control must be theirs, and that is why the ancient philosophers thought a poet or dramatist Daimon-possessed.[594]

The realisation of the mask entailed the definition of Daimon as a supernatural being who leads a man to his own opposite.

The relations of the anti-self were examined further in the device of the play-within-a-play. Yeats used the device as a theatrical property with which to incorporate spiritual struggle into a play. The play-within-a-play is one of the anti-illusionistic devices that stimulate the audience's awareness of the theatricality of the main play. The Induction of *The Taming of the*

[594] *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, p. 741.

Shrew serves to emphasise the artificiality of the play-within-the-play in the same way that the short introductory dialogue of the two Attendants in *A Full Moon in March* does. The process of creating a new self was found in both Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, and Yeats's *The Only Jealousy of Emer* and *The Words upon the Window-Pane*. The fictional spectators in those plays discovered another self as a consequence of their responses to the play-within-a-play. In particular the medium in *The Words upon the Window-Pane* was found to be possessed by a new soul – Swift's soul – after the séance had ended. The medium herself may not be conscious of the change, but the audience are made aware of it with a striking shock.

One of the dramatists influenced by Yeats is Samuel Beckett. James W. Flannery looks upon Beckett as 'a product of the Irish dramatic movement' in the sense that 'during his formative years in Dublin he regularly attended productions at the Abbey'.[595] He summarises Yeats's specific influence upon Beckett:

> Indeed, a major study of Beckett's indebtedness to Yeats alone is called for with respect to their usage of double characters mirroring two halves of the same personality, their common literary and theatrical symbolism, their similar deployment of myth and ritual, and their common interest in the existential and mystical – as opposed to the social – destiny of man. [596]

Besides these facts, there are further parallel streams which flow jointly in the plays of Yeats and Beckett, in particular the exploration of the self or

[595] James W. Flannery, *W.B. Yeats and the Idea of A Theatre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 356.
[596] Ibid., p. 356.

the interest in subjectivity which, as I have tried to demonstrate, is a great legacy Yeats found in Shakespeare. In his essay 'Samuel Beckett: The Search for the Self', Martin Esslin points out the matter of the nature of the self brought out by 'waiting', one of the important themes in *Waiting for Godot*:

> The flow of time confronts us with the basic problem of being – the problem of the nature of the self, which, being subject to constant change in time, is in constant flux and therefore ever outside our grasp.[597]

While Beckett may have been reflecting Sartrean ideas about the non-existence of the self, he was also able to develop an appreciation of the self's mutability in the dramatic tradition he inherited from Shakespeare via Yeats's re-imaging. On account of the nature of the self, which is ever changing through time, 'the only authentic experience that can be communicated is the experience of the single moment in the fullness of its emotional intensity, its existential totality.'[598] Esslin argues that trying to capture 'the single moment' is the aim and objective of Samuel Beckett's art. Kilroy also has a similar view:

> What is pronounced in Beckett is the self, a self whose physical station, physical motion, incarceration, debilitation, is recorded time and time again is given striking visual emphasis as in the opening tableau of *Endgame*.[599]

Therefore it can be said that Beckett's art moves in the same direction as Yeats's because the idea of multiple selves or anti-selves instead of a single fixed self was Yeats's main concept, which he formed as a result of the

[597] Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), pp. 50-1.
[598] Ibid., p. 91.
[599] Thomas Kilroy, p. 189.

exploration of the soul. Yeats said:

> Young, we discover an opposite through our love; old, we discover our love through some opposite neither hate nor despair can destroy, because it is another self, a self that we have fled in vain.[600]

[600] *Explorations*, p. 571.

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