THE GARDEN, THE PASTURE AND THE BOG:

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS, JOHN HEWITT AND SEAMUS HEANEY

ON COLONIALISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

by

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Abstract

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The dissertation provides a three part discussion on the ways in which modern Irish poetry reflects Ireland's colonial history and the resultant problems in forming a national identity. Chapter One discusses the historical and critical relations between the three main ethnic-religious communities in Ireland: the Anglo-Irish, of whom William Butler Yeats (1863-1939) is a centrally important member; John Hewitt (1907-1989), one of the few poets from the Ulster Protestant community; and Seamus Heaney (1939-), the primary poet of the Ulster Catholic community.

Although Yeats was descended from English colonists, he is hailed today as one of the greatest modern poets of the post-colonial world. In his poetry, Yeats fuses a colonial-aristocratic view of the Irish landscape with an attempt to "revive" a form of nationalism which had never previously existed in Ireland.

John Hewitt and his community are separated from the Anglo-Irish by class and religion, and the dispossessed Catholics through a strong colonial non-conformist heritage. In his poems, Hewitt observes the Irish landscape as alien, but he also justifies his ancestral claim on the land by showing how his forbears gave previously "useless land" the "shape of use."

Seamus Heaney is a member of the minority Catholic community in Northern Ireland. Heaney worships the Irish landscape as a formidable goddess who demands that her native sons sacrifice themselves to her in order that she be restored to some pre-colonial "essence." By engaging in mental excavations of the landscape, Heaney uncovers Ireland's long colonial history. However, Heaney discovers that the simplistic divisions of politics and ethnic-religious identity are inadequate in describing his ever-expanding concept of Irish identity.

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Chapter One

"Permission to Speak:

Politics and Poetry in Modern Ireland"

> Of my nation? What ish my nation? Ish a villain, and a basterd, and a knave, and a rascal. What ish my nation? Who talks of my nation? (Shakespeare, Henry V III, iii)

MacMorris, the only Irishman to speak in any of Shakespeare's plays, points to the persistent and agonizing problem of national identity in Ireland. He is an odd character, for he functions in the play as both garrulous comic outsider and symbol of the cohesion of the embryonic English empire. His Irish accent is exaggerated in this early example of caricature so that he can be regarded by the English audience as ridiculous and thus harmless. Shakespeare wrote Henry V at a time when the Elizabethan conquests had finally succeeded in quelling the last pockets of organized resistance by the natives of Ireland to England's establishment of her first colony there. MacMorris, therefore, also serves as a calming stereotype of the Irish as obsequious and subordinate.

Four hundred years later, another Irish fictional character, Leopold Bloom, appears in James Joyce's Ulysses. Bloom is also both insider (Irish) and alien (Jewish), and

like MacMorris, he is interrogated on his national identity:

> --But do you know what a nation means? says John Wyse.
> --Yes, says Bloom.
> --What is it, says John Wyse.
> --A nation? says Bloom. A nation is the same people living in the same place.
> --By God, then, says Ned, laughing, if that's so I'm a nation for I'm living in the same place for the past five years.
> So of course everyone had the laugh at Bloom and says he, trying to make muck out of it:
> --Or also living in different places.
> --That covers my case, says Joe.
> --What is your nation if I may ask? says the citizen.
> --Ireland, says Bloom. I was born here, Ireland. The citizen said nothing only cleared the spit out of his gullet, and, gob, he spat a Red bank oyster out of him right in the corner. (272)

John Wyse and the Citizen in this excerpt from the "Cyclops" episode, suffer from a type of myopia that one suffers when afflicted with nationalist fervor. They are blind to the validity and humanity of Bloom who, unlike they, can see beyond the end of his nose. Bloom is seen as a threat by the group of drinkers, first, because he does not share their narrow field of vision, and second, because he is a Jew, and as such he threatens their eugenic vision of what constitutes a nation. Their definition of an Irish citizen excludes anyone who is not Catholic or anyone who has any connection to England or English culture.

In the first quotation, Macmorris is seen as an outsider in England because he is Irish. The English construction of ethnic difference between themselves and the Irish has its beginnings in their first incursions to the

island. And its traces are left in their first laws and writings there. In the twelfth century, the first Anglo-Norman explorers of the island came back to England with stories of the native population, most notably Giraldus Cambrensis ("Gerald of Wales"), a diplomatic explorer/traveller for the King.[1] When Giraldus accompanied Prince John on an expedition to Ireland in 1165, and wrote two tracts which provided scornful accounts of the native population, it became clear that the natives were perceived both as a threat to the possibility of Anglo-Norman rule and as a corrupting influence upon the civilized conquerors.

In 1366, the Statutes of Kilkenny institutionalized racism against the Irish. Anglo-Normans were forbidden from interacting with the Irish through

> alliance by marriage, fosterage, or concubinage; the presentation of Irishmen in cathedral or collegiate churches; the reception of Irish minstrels and other entertainers among the English; the acceptance of Irishmen into profession in English religious houses; the use of the Irish language, mode of riding and dress. (Harbison 18)

The statutes were intended to protect the relatively small Anglo-Norman population in the island from the "degeneracy" of mixing with the native population. They feared "the deterioration of a superior culture under the influence of an inferior one" (Bottigheimer 67). While the laws may look to a modern thinker like unabashed bigotry, they are in

fact intended as a prophylactic against the assimilation of the Anglo-Normans with the native Irish. The laws would have been unnecessary had the two groups kept themselves separate by instinctive inclination. The essence of this form of racism is the fear, on the part of the English, of losing their identity. The resultant anxiety needed to be quelled with a rational solution, in this case, apartheid.

In a similar sense, The Citizen feels threatened by the idea that a Jew could be as Irish as himself. The Citizen feels that his territorial identity is being blurred and could eventually be obliterated by Bloom's being included in its realm. Implied throughout Ulysses is the idea that Irish nationalism is identical with English nationalism of the kind adumbrated by Giraldus Cambrensis. Seamus Deane corroborates this view, arguing that Irish nationalism is "a derivative of its British counterpart... a copy of that by which it felt itself to be oppressed" (Nationalism 6). This unfortunate replication gave rise to a kind of interdependent stereotyping. And while the stereotype is established by the group in power, it has to create a stereotype of itself as well as of the other. The Irish were in this case that "other." The stereotype is, therefore, an essential component of nationalism, since it binds a communal sense of self in opposition to a constructed other.

When the Irish were being stereotyped by the English as

"Wilde and barbarous," the reciprocal implication was simultaneously being made that the English were "unfeeling" and over-cerebral. "Every power in nature must evolve its opposite in order to realize itself, and opposition brings reunion," wrote Giordano Bruno (Kiberd, Anglo-Irish, 3). The conquering English did this successfully throughout their empire, thereby creating an identity for themselves which was the inversion of whatever they chose to find in their colonial subjects throughout the world. Consequently the idea of "Englishess" was and is still instantly recognizable through multiple signifiers, whether they are employed in Hong Kong, Cape Town, New Delhi, Belize City, or Belfast. The semeiotics of power in the United States are infused with an inseparable link between "Englishness" and power; one need only leaf through any New York Times Sunday magazine to find that many clothing advertisements employ the instantly recognizable English country gentleman returning from a grouse shoot wearing articles by Brooks Brothers or Burberry's. The specificity of signifiers is remarkable: the shotgun, the conqueror's triumphant yet restrained, dignified pose, the obedient Labrador retriever. A walking tour of Liverpool or Manchester will quickly correct this fantasy, but its place in the world's imagination is fixed.

The image of the colonized is quite simply, and at times not so simply, the opposite of the that just

described. No wonder colonized peoples rush to refashion themselves as colonizers, much to the amusement of the real colonizers. In Irish terms, Henry Craik, in a letter to John Forster, put it precisely: "Was there ever an Irish man of genius who did not get himself turned into an Englishman as fast as he could" (Deane, Field Day 2:373).

The struggle to find a satisfactory national identity in the shadow of colonialism is always problematic, but in Ireland, which has endured English dominion for some 800 years, the problem penetrates all cultural activities, not least the production of literature. Today there continues, with ever-increasing fervor, a debate over what exactly constitutes "Irish Literature." Over the years the terms "Anglo-Irish," "Irish," or simply "British," have each carried a hidden political agenda. Seamus Deane points out that much writing which has been tagged "Restoration English Literature" or "Eighteenth Century English Literature" is in fact the work of self-proclaimed Irishmen. J.M. Hone and M.M. Rossi, in their 1931 biography of Bishop Berkeley tell us that "Berkeley, Swift, and even Congreve were all moulded by a nationality which has only now political recognition" (500-1). Goldsmith and Burke also belong in this grouping.

The reclaiming of her writers is a common ritual in a culture which is recovering from a colonial past. This century has come to be called the Age of Decolonization because of widespread rejection of imperialist rule in the

European colonies (Said 3). In the last three decades literary movements have sprung up in India, the West Indies, Latin America, and Africa, whose projects are, in part, to distance the native culture from the imperialist one. In these cultures, we easily think of the differences between colonizing and colonized peoples. One is white-skinned, the other, dark. One is "cold", "rational", and "calculating," while the other is "romantic," "passionate" and "generous". When we read V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, or Derek Walcott, we are aware of entering a colonial world from the point of view of the colonized. However, Irish literature until very recently has rarely enjoyed such serious cultural criticism.

Even in the "culturally-sensitive" world of academics, Irish literature is often subsumed into the canon of British or English Literature, or a quaint branch thereof. The crippling effects of this relegation are to render Irish literature merely a regional or liminal outpost of that apparently richer and more sophisticated literature produced in the familiar surroundings of London. One can, of course, rationalize that since the bulk of extant Irish writing was written in English, and the islands are part of a roughly homogeneous archipelago, there is little need to form a separate canon for literature written in Ireland, but this view denies not only England's colonial relationship with Ireland but also the separate history and culture which Ireland has produced for one and a half millennia. It also

has the effect of creating a false set of delineations, making the three poets in this study merely "British" poets. That all have been included at one time or another in anthologies of "British" poetry is evidence of persistent denial of history. And the three poets here discussed bear witness to the disfiguring effects of the forgetting of history.

According to the OED, the word "colony" comes from the Latin colonia, first used by the Romans as the

> proper term for a public settlement of Roman citizens in a hostile or newly conquered country where they, retaining their Roman citizenship, received lands and acted as a garrison...[there were] nine coloniae in Britain (634).

England, in turn, employed this term, in its strictest Roman sense, in her first colony, "Hibernia" as the Romans named Ireland. The Roman historian Tacitus reports that in A.D. 81 Agricola contemplated invading Ireland, but was dissuaded from doing so for unknown reasons. Ireland, Scotland and Wales became the fringe of Celtic culture which was elsewhere being quickly eroded by the Roman expansion. The remainder of the Celtic peoples, who, before the Romans came, controlled much of Western Europe west of the Rhine and north of the Danube, moved northwards and westward along the Atlantic fringes. This westward movement continued with the Germanic invasions and settlements of Britain which signalled the dawn of a distinct English culture.

The view that the British isles are in any way

culturally or historically homogeneous is erroneous because each invasion, whether by Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Viking or Norman, left its own unique mark on specific areas of the islands. In many cases only a few miles of sea or land divide regions which were either thoroughly colonized or left to the indigenous people. Thus while parts of the east coast of Ireland are visible on the horizon from both Scotland and Wales, the development of Irish culture is utterly distinct. To complicate matters, the histories of Scotland and the north of Ireland were intertwined on a number of occasions up until the Tudor conquests. In 1314, Edward Bruce, the brother of the King of Scotland, Robert, who defeated the English forces at Bannockburn, declared to the Irish whom he hoped to aid, "We and you and our people and your people, free since ancient time, share the same natural ancestry" (Lydon 143). Edward Bruce invaded Ireland in hopes to unite the peoples of the "celtic fringe" against the Anglo-Norman invasions. In turn, earlier Scottish history was greatly influenced by Ulster peoples who had easy access to the western Scottish coast.

Ireland is unique in Western European colonial studies because it is "the only Western European country that has had both an early and late colonial experience" (Deane, Nationalism 3). The initial conquest was a Norman (or "Old English") westward expansion during the twelfth century, which was limited geographically and militarily because the

Ireland of that time was not politically united, and therefore difficult to conquer effectively. But the Tudor and Elizabethan conquests three centuries later were better organized both in crushing resistance and planting the land with loyal English, and later, Scottish colonists. Eight centuries of colonial rule, which included the rigorous anglicization of the native population, almost succeeded in annihilating the native language and culture. Some would say that success was complete.

Still, the process of the reclamation of the Irish language and culture began in the second half of the nineteenth century, and it continues in many circles today among Irish communities of the diaspora. It was helped on the political front by figures like Charles Stuart Parnell, who led the campaign for Home Rule, as well as increasingly well organized agitation for land reform which would improve the terms of tenancy and reduce the rents paid by the Irish to absentee landlords in England. The movement to revitalize a largely lost native culture took the form of cultural movements led mostly by Anglo-Irish intellectuals who spearheaded an essentially Romantic movement in the tradition of Goethe to restore, or at least cultivate a widespread appreciation of, the ancient Celtic world.

By the 1880s what were originally movements for land reform and cultural revival were now a fully-fledged political party led by Parnell which sought Home Rule. While

land reforms began to take effect by the turn of the century the majority of those who lived in the major population centers knew little of their indigenous culture, language, or history. The leaders of what was later to become known as the "Irish Literary Revival" took it upon themselves to first reinvent Irish culture, and then hope that the people would feast on it and be immunized against what Yeats called the "filthy modern tide" which, he felt, had already polluted England and the rest of Europe. Yeats identified himself, in part, with the revolutionaries who would remove English rule by force. He subscribed in particular to the revolutionary school of his friend and mentor, John O'Leary, as well as through his adoration of the more militant Maude Gonne. They hoped that Ireland would achieve complete independence from England, despite the large numbers of Loyalists (descendants of eighteenth-century English and Scottish planters) in the northeastern corner of the island, and that the reunification of the island could be achieved without the impasse of the current power struggles.[2] But more important for many cultural nationalists was the restoration of Irish language and culture, espoused at the dawn of the Revival by Douglas Hyde, the founder of the Gaelic League.

For the members of the Revival, the political repossession of Ireland was essentially meaningless if the people did not also rediscover their lost cultural identity.

Their concept of the Irish identity lay in the history and culture of pre-colonial Ireland, the few remaining vestiges of which were to be found on the west coast, and particularly the Aran Islands off County Galway, much romanticized by a new breed of Irish nationalists best characterized by Joyce's Miss Ivors in "The Dead." Yeats and his romantic young protege John Millington Synge represented the Protestant libertarian wing of the cultural revival. But the cultural movement in the shape promoted by Yeats did not make a deep impression upon the treaty negotiations to end the war of Independence in 1921.

In 1922, when the treaty which liberated 26 of Ireland's 32 counties from British rule was signed, the statelet of Northern Ireland was formed.[3] It was thought by many at the time as a temporary compromise to a problem which would eventually solve itself: an arbitrary border was drawn so that within the north-east corner of Ireland the descendants of the colonists were guaranteed a majority of roughly two to one over Catholic nationalists.[4] The remainder of the Island was to be ruled by the newly formed government made up of those who had consented to the treaty. Much of the urban Protestant population remained in the wealthier suburbs south of the river Liffey in Dublin, seemingly unaffected by the riotous events, unlike their Catholic servants and gardeners. Deirdre Bair reports that the teenage Samuel Beckett and his quintessentially

Protestant Dublin family may have "feared instant rebellion and insurrection from their Catholic cooks, gardeners and chambermaids, and a general disruption in their lifestyle," but that "In fact, except for the political changes in Dublin itself, very little was altered in the day-to-day existence of most Foxrock families; their relations with servants and local shopkeepers went on as they had before" (27).

The leaders of the literary revival were also, for the most part, Protestants of comfortable south Dublin. Their promotion of certain aspects of Irish culture would, for a time, be encouraged in the newly formed Free State. But their reconstruction of Irish culture unfortunately excluded those who lived in Northern Ireland, where that culture was continuing to be dismantled. However, shortly after the treaty was signed, the government quietly abandoned the two major ambitions of reintegration of the national territory and the reintroduction of the Irish language. Yeats and his fellow Revivalists, who had considerably shrunk in number throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, looked on disappointedly at the general indifference which the government and the bulk of the population showed to their projects.

Despite this nagging problem, between 1922 and 1968 the Free State saw the development of a native literary movement which generated, at times, its own impetus, and which was

able to produce texts that took on concerns other than simply the question of nationality. In the 1930s a new breed of writers emerged who neither contributed fully to Yeats's vision of a cultural renaissance, nor looked to England and the continent for inspiration. Patrick Kavanagh's "The Great Hunger" and Flann O'Brien's At Swim-Two-Birds, for example, caused a stir in both Dublin and London for their attacks on the well-molded stereotype of the proper subject matter for the Irish writer. Macguire, the protagonist of Kavanagh's epic poem, is, if nothing else, an anti-hero who undercuts the Revivalist and widely accepted romantic notion that the rustic Irish are privileged to have some direct access to an authentic pre-lapsarian Celtic essence which ought to be preserved and propagated for the viewing pleasure of colonial antiquarians. The disfiguring deprivations of rural life and its traditions have the effect of deglamorizing Revivalist renditions of it. Perhaps more importantly, the rising popularity of Kavanagh marked a shift in the geo-cultural locus of the center of Irish writing from south to north. The formerly overlooked northerners began to attract attention.

The outbreak of violence in 1969 on the streets of Derry and Belfast reminded everyone who didn't already know it, North or South, that the process of decolonization was far from over. The state of Northern Ireland was founded on

a system of institutionalized apartheid. Since 1922, discrimination in the allocation of public housing, the gerrymandering of electoral wards, and the installation of a para-military police force contributed to a mounting resentment by the two-to-one Catholic minority which found its expression in the civil rights movement of 1968.

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was begun by a group of Protestant and Catholic university students in 1967. They called attention to discrimination against Catholics in housing allocation, and, inspired by their American counterparts whom they saw nightly on television news, they staged sit-ins to protest other government injustices, particularly the gerrymandering of voting wards to guarantee Loyalist control of municipal authorities. The demonstrations quickly grew, and eventually were attacked by the police and angry mobs of loyalists. By the summer of 1970, the police could no longer contain the spreading violence and British troops were called in.

One of the first institutions to be rocked by the shockwaves of this uprising was Irish historiography. Modern Irish historiography began in the 1790s with the publication of The Reverend Edward Ledwich's Antiquities of Ireland. It is an important work because it marks the first clear fork in the road of political interest in Irish historiography. Ledwich's work was an outright attack on a series of antiquarian articles and books which had come out

with the encouragement of the newly formed Royal Irish Academy, founded by a new breed of Anglo-Irish intellectuals who sought to study and collect pre-colonial Irish writing. Ledwich saw that such study undermined the Unionist status quo, which was founded partially on the belief that "the conquerors' superiority rested on their supposedly more advanced culture" (McDonagh, States 4). Ledwich's history was the first Unionist history to begin an essentially political debate under the auspices of historiography. Predictably, the parties in the debate dug in, and were labelled "nationalist" and "revisionist" by the historiographical community.[5] Unionist histories took the markedly paternalistic view that Ireland was enriched by her attachment, albeit by military force, to England. Ireland's problems were rarely explained as symptoms of colonialism, but as the results unfortunate twists of fate and historical circumstance. As Oliver McDonagh puts it, "The Nationalist-Catholic school saw the course of Irish history in terms of degeneration from an initial purity, whereas the Unionist-Protestants presented it in terms of a triumphant, if lengthy and incomplete, emergence from barbarism" (States 5). The nationalist historiographical responses to the Unionist histories began almost immediately, probably best represented by the writings of Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847). Later textbook versions were written by the Christian Brothers.[6] Their intended audience was the secondary level

Catholic student; they were to be found on the bookshelves of most Irish Catholic households, however, in a matter of two decades. One of the criticisms directed at these histories was that they tended to make plaster saints out of figures such as Padraig Pearse, revolutionary of the 1916 uprising.

Unionist histories tended to play down the catastrophic violence employed by England during Ireland's colonization.[7] They painted a picture of English rule as rational and benign in the face of a chaotic, uncontrollable situation, shifting responsibility from the shoulders of England for the tragedies of Irish history. While there was a clear need to present less simplistic views of Irish history, it quickly became clear that no history was value-free. In fact, it has been argued that ever since the nationalist-Revisionist debate got into full swing in the early nineteenth century, Irish histories have been essentially ahistorical and "It would be difficult to deny that all of them were politics by other means" (McDonagh, States, 6). The debate over which was the more 'correct' view of history came into sharper focus in the recent popular imagination only after the widespread bloodshed in Belfast and Derry in 1970.[8] Academic voices, once controlled and rational, were now impassioned in a desperate search for an "explanation" of the slaughter. When the international journalists were satisfied with their dramatic photographs and footage, they

rushed to the history departments of the universities to seek out the perspective of the tweedy dons.

They found two diametrically opposed interpretations of events: nationalist historians saw the violence in the north as the "inevitable" outcome of years of religious apartheid, while "revisionist" historians blamed the Catholic Church's educational system for indoctrinating a generation in the myth of a United Ireland. This debate had, and still has, little to do with the validity of each side's narrative of history, and has everything to do with the current crisis. A nationalist historian's account which might lend dignity to one of the dead revolutionaries was quickly tagged "I.R.A. propaganda." The media, less interested in historiography than in selling news, accused more latitudinarian perspectives of tacitly supporting the violent policies of the Provisional IRA, even if views such as those held by critics Declan Kiberd and Seamus Deane are pacifist. Old polarities and allegiances were merely digging newly intellectualized trenches, from which ideologues occasionally jumped up, fired, and retreated.

Dialogue was thus rendered seemingly impossible, especially in the mid-1970s, when it became clear that the governments of both Britain and the Republic of Ireland had adopted the revisionist stance. In the Republic, a law entitled "section 31" was introduced early in the 1980s which banned the appearance of any member or representative

of the IRA on the radio or television. This kind of censorship not only increased support from nationalists for the IRA, by rendering them gagged martyrs, but also led to the labeling by the government and media of all nationalist opinion, even the most pacifist, as support for "IRA terrorism." Irish nationalism had been successfully marginalized because it was perceived as threatening the status quo. If history, as the old adage goes, is written by the conquerors, then current historiography reveals that it is unclear who has "won."

Raymond Williams defines nationalism in a specifically late twentieth century sense:

> Nationalism has been a political movement in subjected countries which include several 'races' and languages (as India) as well as in subjected countries or provinces or regions where the distinction is a specific language or religion or supposed racial origin...but this is often masked by separating national feeling (good) from nationalist feeling (bad, if it is another's country, making claims against one's own), or by separating national interest (good) from nationalism (the asserted national interest of another group). (214)

Nationalism has come to be a dirty word in the last few years, especially in light of the Bosnian crisis, where it is used in concert with cryptic terms such as "ethnic cleansing." We are brought back to the double-speak of the Nazis, and we are correct in feeling uncomfortable with such terms. Our instinct is to look behind the curtain of language for the mob motivated slaughter. But in Ireland, the term nationalism is generally taken to mean those who

aspire to the reunification of the country, or some compromise which will remove British colonial rule and the apartheid associated with the regime which ruled Northern Ireland before Westminster's direct rule in 1971.

Bubbling beneath public discourse on the current violence in the North are centuries of fear and ignorance on the part of the each community there. Southern Protestants, almost entirely of English descent, were either landed gentry or absentee landlords residing in England. As a result, they came into little or no contact with the native population. Their high economic status meant that when independence came in 1922, they could either move to England, or remain in Ireland and continue to enjoy their wealth, which many did. Northern Protestants, on the other hand, were in closer proximity to, and were in many ways like, their Catholic neighbors because they were essentially from the same class, and as Presbyterians were for centuries, like Catholics, persecuted for their beliefs by the Established Anglican faith.

It was in the midst of a deadlock which silenced the state-controlled media from any open discourse on the issues which gave rise to frustration and that there gathered a collective of poets, playwrights, actors, literary critics and historians who organized themselves into what became known as the Field Day Theatre Company. The group was founded in Derry, just inside the border of Northern

Ireland, the city which in 1690 was besieged by the Catholic James II and liberated by the forces of the Protestant William of Orange. The group's members come from both sides of the sectarian divide in the North, and at first wrote and produced plays that gave voice to an otherwise mute set of perspectives.

The founders of Field Day are the playwright Brian Friel, the poet Seamus Heaney, both Catholics from Derry; the actor Stephen Rea, and poet Tom Paulin, both Protestants from Belfast. They were quickly joined by a host of others who hailed from various religious, political, and cultural backgrounds. Any student of contemporary Anglo-Irish Literature could hardly help thinking back to Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Synge's founding of The Irish National Theatre in Dublin at the beginning of the century. But there were vitally important differences: Yeats's project charmingly reinvented his own version, in dramatic form, of the more romantic fragments of early Irish mythological texts. His plays were picturesque masques which elevated figures such as Cuchulainn to Wagnerian heights.

One was immediately reminded of other "romantic" reconstruction projects such as that begun in the eighteenth century by James MacPherson, a Scot, who appropriated Irish materials and churned them out as newly discovered third century Celtic poetry. The Ossian Movement, as it was called, cashed in on the search for a Northern European

heritage as lofty as that which had blossomed in Greece and Rome. That search was being conducted by a number of philologists and writers throughout northern Europe. Goethe was one of its central figures. Yeats's plays were founded upon an aesthetic which is essentially Romantic, taking "pleasure in the notion that Ireland is a culture enriched by the ambiguity of its relationship to an anachronistic and modernized present" (Deane, Ireland 45) Yeats carefully blurred the line which separates Irish history and myth, so that the crises in 1916 and 1922 were not seen as resulting from the social and economic injustices of the day, but from a quasi-Jungian "essence" in the Irish character which had a penchant for cultural martyrdom; thus "terrible" could be connected to "beauty", and the leaders of the 1916 uprising magically had Cuchulainn in their midst.

On the other hand, Field Day's agenda is localized without being provincial, both particular and international in producing plays which in one way or another comment directly on the current crisis in the North, and producing metacommentary which opens up the possibility of self-criticism. Seamus Deane, one of the founding members of Field Day, explains:

> Field Day's analysis of the situation derives from the conviction that it is, above all, a colonial crisis. This is not a popular view in the political and academic establishment in Ireland. Historians in particular have engaged for more than twenty years in what is referred to as a revision of Irish history, the chief aim of which was to demolish the nationalist mythology [which]

> has lost much of its appeal and legitimacy save for those who are committed to the IRA and armed struggle. Revisionism defends itself against those who describe it as simply another orthodoxy...by claiming to have revealed such a degree of complexity in Irish and Anglo-Irish affairs that no systematic explanation is possible...Field Day regards this new orthodoxy with disfavor because it shows little or no capacity for self-analysis. Field Day sees art as a specific activity, but one in which the whole history of a culture is deeply inscribed. (Deane, Nationalism 6)

Having reintroduced historical and cultural discourse into the discussion of art, the Field Day Theatre Company seeks to wake audiences out of the nightmare of forgetfulness back into the remembrance of both history and its relation to the present, based on the psychology that remembrance and dialogue are better than amnesia and silence. Brian Friel's The Freedom of the City, for example, was first produced in the same city where its tragic subject matter -- Bloody Sunday -- had taken place a decade earlier. This play had the effect of opening up a poorly closed wound for the purposes of conducting a post-mortem on the entire tragedy. The British government investigation into the killings, led by Lord Widgery, was a remarkably successful attempt at historical erasure. The general public in England were convinced by the tribunal and the media coverage that no "massacre" had taken place. The nationalist community in Northern Ireland felt further alienated from the authorities, who they hoped would ensure that justice prevailed. On an aesthetic level, however,

Friel's play has been criticized as a too abrupt reaction to the tragic deaths in his home town. The dramatization of recent events is too much an act of rage for us to contemplate the tragedy it stages.

Yeats, on the other hand, offered his audience a more carefully crafted view of nationalist martyrdom. In Cathleen Ni Houlihan, armed struggle is motivated not by political or social injustice but by a seemingly innate response to the romantic siren-call of an old woman -- a personification of Ireland -- who thirsts for the blood of young men in order that she may be transformed into a beautiful young woman again. Yeats is accused by many Irish literary critics of writing dramas and poems in which the romantic imperative denies many of the social and political realities which motivate armed struggle. Friel's plays, seeming to respond to this criticism, deny the glamour and regenerative qualities of bloodshed, and underscore the power of economic and religious discrimination to motivate resistance, active or passive. This point illustrates again that literary criticism in Ireland is dominated by the ways in which Nationalists or Unionists read the works in the narrow context of their own immediate concerns.

The political scene of the 1980s was overshadowed by the crisis caused by the hunger strikes held in the Maze Prison, outside Belfast. The Nationalist prisoners who died in the hunger strikes were seen by many members of their

community as legitimate freedom-fighters who gave up their lives for the cause of removing British rule from Northern Ireland and improving the rights and living conditions of the minority Nationalist community there. Any reader of Yeats could hardly have resisted the temptation to utter "*another* terrible beauty is born,"[my italics] or that this was another turn in that gyre of his. But the nationalist community in Derry and Belfast were not afforded the distance which allows the observer to imagine a grander design in the face of the loss of life. A Yeatsian might have seen something positive in these deaths, but even Yeats recognized that bloodshed did not always possess the regenerative qualities it sometimes did in 1916; in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" Yeats reconsiders his earlier musings on the necessity of violence.

The British government and media interpreted the hunger strikes as a self-destructive and anachronistic ritual conducted by terrorists who were living out a fantasy of martyrdom. Clearly, each interpretation was over-simplistic and avoided the complexities that a more realistic analysis called for. Once again, however, a deadlock prevailed, in which members of the Nationalist community who supported the cause of the hunger strikes were censored from any media appearance, and the far from objective views of the British government filled the air waves. The events were discussed in university lecture halls with a nervousness which

canceled out any open discourse.

In the midst of this deafening silence, the Field Day Theatre Company turned to publishing a series of pamphlets by literary critics and historians from both sides of the "Nationalism/Revisionism" debate, including complex discussions of the current crisis from both sides of the sectarian divide. In using the medium of the pamphlet, they were self-consciously imitating their eighteenth century politically activist forebears. Nevertheless, The Times Literary Supplement of London, in perfect conformity with the revisionist stance described above by Deane, saw fit to label the writers of the pamphlets "the literary side of the Movement" [the I.R.A.] (O'Brien 31).

In the face of such criticism, Field Day went ahead and set up its own publishing company, and in 1990 undertook probably the most daunting project in the history of Irish letters: to edit and publish a survey of Irish literature from the sixth century, when writing was first introduced to the island, up to the present. The massive work, published in 1991, marks a triumph for the eclectic talents of the Field Day collective and a milestone in Irish literature. The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing: 550 A.D. - 1985 succeeded in being the first and only such anthology to include writing by both the Gaelic-speaking Irish and their various conquerors, hardly the work of the literary wing of the I.R.A.. The Field Day enterprise has been a success not

only because of the powerful convictions held by its founders and directors, but also because of the geopolitical nature of the project. On stage and in print, Field Day gave voice to an overwhelming, and specifically northern sense of frustration and abandonment. After the first eruption of violence in 1969, the Nationalist community in the north hoped that the government of the Irish Republic would make good on its claim to sovereignty over the entire island, by first getting involved in talks with Downing Street as a means of solving the crisis. But by the mid seventies, and more so in the eighties, it was generally felt in the North that the government of the Republic had quietly abandoned this commitment, and turned its sights toward Brussels with the goal of improving its own economic conditions through its joining the European Community. This became readily apparent when the Irish government failed to hold an appropriate celebration to mark the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising. No travel arrangements were made for the surviving soldiers the Uprising or their families. The "brief, sheepish ceremony" was read by many as another example of Nietzsche's quip that "amnesiacs have good strategic reasons for their forgetfulness" (Ni Dhonnchadha 1-2). The forgetting of the Uprising in the Irish Republic was rationalized by the government and media as an understanding that Easter 1916 had been appropriated by the Irish Republican Army. Northern Nationalists felt

especially abandoned because they no longer felt wanted by the citizens of the South, and were left aliens in their own land.

Bernadette Devlin-McAliskey is a lonely voice campaigning for the plight of Northern Nationalists while at the same time insisting on non-violent tactics to further that cause. In 1970, at 21, she was elected to the British House of Commons, the youngest member in the House's history. Today, she takes her campaign to the public podium and lecture hall in an effort to keep open vital discussion of the Ulster crisis, which the media have currently written off as an unending soap opera. She recently spoke for Northern Catholics before an audience of Southern Irish academicians. Speaking from a podium on the stage of the historic Abbey Theatre in Dublin at the Yeats Theatre Festival, Ms. Devlin pleaded:

> I'm Irish. I'm part of the culture and history of this island. I can't be anything else...I am a Northern Nationalist, virtually becoming an aborigine in my own country because my crime and the crime of my community is that I will not part with my identity...I sit north of the border and listen to people talk of my national identity as if I could be parted from it...I sit in County Tyrone and wonder if you people down here, given an opportunity, are going to go out...and determine by referendum that I am not a part of this nation..[making me a] stateless, nationless, homeless person. And if I don't belong to this nation, to what nation do I belong? (Flannery 4)

At the same time, Northern Loyalists feel a strikingly similar sense of abandonment by Westminster. The British

presence has always guaranteed the preservation of the status quo to the Loyalist community, but the British government has on numerous occasions attempted to force talks between Dublin, London, and Belfast, in hopes that a "compromise" could be reached. Since the British government has no set "policy" for a cure to the ongoing crisis, Loyalists fear, with good reason, that there will one day be a pull-out of British involvement in this, her first, and now, last colony. It is generally agreed on all sides that Westminster would be only too happy to take its troops and clear out of Northern Ireland; the prohibitive cost of maintaining an army of occupation would be eliminated, the lives of British soldiers would be spared, and the British government could spare damage to its international image. But Loyalists remind Britain regularly that she has a responsibility to them.

If Britain were simply to withdraw, many Loyalists fear that they would be left behind as exiles in a Catholic theocracy, such as many claim currently exists in the Irish Republic; tables would be turned and Protestants would be placed in the deprived corner currently occupied by northern nationalists.

Under current conditions, North and South, whereby the media is controlled by government censorship, and revisionism has been adopted as the "politically correct" ideology, there is little room for free inquiry into the

nature of the crisis. In claiming to take up a rational search for historical and current "fact," government, media, and academy are overlooking the role of myth and the needs of the immediate political crisis. This is a tragedy, because the pursual of historical "fact" adds little to our understanding of what motivates the conflicting Irish communities to fear, discriminate, and kill. A critique of how people view themselves in relation to history, how and why they build the wall of "otherness" around their neighbors, will yield more positive and useful fodder for those in search of a deeper understanding of the persistent crisis.

One of Field Day's main goals is to bring this kind of collective self-analysis into the public discussion of the crisis. Not only has Irish historiography failed to analyze the fear and distrust with which the warring communities see each other, but worse, it has allowed itself to fall into the same divisiveness that it pretends to analyze. Field Day is the first and only platform for a discourse on the awful ambiguity of identity borne by the Irish. An essential part of this discussion involves an analysis of historiography and its relation to culture. One of the most salient points arising from the publication of the Field Day pamphlets throughout the 1980s has been the exposure of the pervasive idea in Ireland that "the interpretation of culture is *not* predicated on the idea that there is some

universal quality or essence that culture alone can successfully pursue or capture" (Deane, Nationalism, 7). Instead, Field Day takes the currently unpopular view that art is a specific activity in which the whole history of a culture is deeply inscribed. It is for this reason that Irish poetry is the focus of the present study. History must always make central to its project the rejection of myth and the rigorous interrogation of fact. But poetry does not have to undergo the smothering process of rationalization that history necessarily must. As Robert Wilson puts it,

> A close reading of the 'texts' of a culture may...yield some knowledge that is not so readily available from other sources of inquiry. (xi)

The Irish do not perceive poets in the same way as, say, people in the United States perceive theirs. In Ireland a poet is not simply a mysterious marginal figure performing in a cafe by playing with words, rather a poet is seen as a mouthpiece for a community which feels itself to be mute. Furthermore, the poet is freer than the supposedly objective academic to express his or her irrational feelings of community loyalty, mythical and historical beliefs, as well as deeply embedded fear and distrust of the mythical "other." Poetry gives the poet permission to externalize an internal struggle.

Field Day has earned the respect of academicians throughout Ireland and Britain, even if they fear the

political and social ramifications of such discourse. In every sense, Field Day has almost single-handedly contributed to the idea that the study of Irish literature must be conducted inside of the canon known as "Colonial" or "Post-Colonial" literary and cultural studies. This carries within it the apparently dangerous and heretical notion that Irish literature is best understood when examined in light of the history of the current Ulster crisis. Field Day is the harbinger of a new era of Irish historiography and literary criticism. Until recently, these disciplines have been crippled by fears on the part of the writers of being labelled as mere Nationalists or Loyalists. It is hoped that these academic studies will have an impact upon the media, which have failed to contribute to public understanding both in Britain and the United States.

Catholic and Protestant writers from Northern Ireland are unilaterally astonished at widespread ignorance in Britain of the most rudimentary details of Irish history. Robert Crawford, a Presbyterian minister and scholar from Belfast, reminisces in conversations with the English public that they

> did not distinguish between the North and the South of Ireland; and had never heard of the difference brought about by the plantation of settlers in the North...they could not understand what the fighting in the province was about...it was illogical -- it was 'Irish'. (18)

While Irish bars in Boston and New York display a monolithic and simplistic view of the Irish as charming and pugnacious

nationalists, the broader view of the Irish conflict in the United States is controlled by the government's international policy of commitment to the political and economic link with Britain. As a result, the conflict is grossly over-simplified, with two controlling ideologies: the government's policy, which seeks to protect the alliance with the British government, and therefore rejects Irish nationalism; and that of Nor-AID, an organization which is committed to the armed violence of the I.R.A.. These binary views have, naturally, spread into the academy, since there is as yet, no viable alternative to them. While the fields of post-colonial and ethnic studies grow in colleges and universities throughout the United States, Ireland's history and literature are oddly excluded from this new discipline save, perhaps for institutions such as Notre Dame and Harvard which have enough faculty members who specialize in Irish studies to challenge the prevailing ideology. This gap in understanding needs to be addressed for reasons which are important not only for Irish studies in the United States, but also for the growing field of Post-Colonial studies.

So far, in the United States, colonial studies are understood to include "Third World" countries: literature from the Indian subcontinent, Africa, South America, and The Caribbean. It is a mistake to limit colonial studies to the "Third World": the unspoken requirement of this special

status deprives those colonized Northern Europeans of their own histories. In the United States academy, ironically enough, the distinction and appeal of Irish literature lies in Ireland's very backwardness and deviation from standard English culture. Ireland is charming because it is "exotic," but it is not deemed a victim-culture, therefore its colonial experience is denied. Matthew Arnold put this notion best when he argued that the Celts, or in today's terms, Irish Catholics, possess a vitality and essence which resists the modern world and its philistine ways.[9]

This study focuses on the problem of writing poetry in a country which is divided by the aftermath of colonialism. Yeats, Hewitt and Heaney are exemplary in that they unceasingly struggle to come to terms with their own identities. In doing so they manage to reveal the immateriality of identity politics -- the building block upon which the divisive politics of Britain and the Republic of Ireland depend to maintain the status quo. Each poet endures the interrogation of both his own community and the watchful literary critics, who often judge poetry using an aesthetic measure controlled by the prevailing politics of the moment, so that Heaney's popularity varies depending upon how directly he addresses the northern crisis. Many Irish poets simply ignore the current political impasse in the North, some for fear that they will offend and alienate, and some who wish to be free to enjoy other parts of their

identities. Patrick Kavanagh wrote of an outgrowth of this problem:

> For a man in Ireland to have the label 'poet' attached to him is little short of calamity...If he looks like having too much scope in his little corner marked poet he will be still further narrowed by having an adjective in front of poet -- such as Country poet, Catholic poet, and so on...He is in no way to be taken seriously. (28)

Since so many poets express views which are dangerous to the maintenance of the current regime, it is important in the world of politics to have the views of poets rendered irrelevant. Those who choose to write about the conflict pick up their pens with the knowledge that the force of the individual will must endure the pressure of readers who look to the poet to "represent" their views, and critics who are only too ready to condemn a deviation from the politically correct view of the problem.

W. B. Yeats and Seamus Heaney have already received international acclaim for their interpretations of Irish history and myth. But John Hewitt is recognized only in Northern Ireland as an important poet and critic. Irish poetry carries within itself centuries of Irish history, and in the present political crisis, it is poetry which needs to be reread with a view toward considering, among other things, this notion of "Irishness" which has been proven to contribute to many social and historical misunderstandings. Hewitt upsets the relatively simple division between Gaelic Irish peasants and Anglo-Irish gentry, a division which has

controlled much of the world's view of Irish history.

In Transitions (1987), Richard Kearney argues that

> Modern Irish culture is larger than the distinct ideological traditions -- nationalist, unionist or otherwise -- from which it derives and which it critically interprets... However critical Joyce...Heaney, [and] Friel may be apropos of tradition, it is largely the nationalist tradition that is in question...I have no doubt that similar tensions between tradition and modernity exist for those contemporary Irish writers who seek to revoke or revise what we might term...unionist culture. Some obvious examples would be...Hewitt, Mahon, Longley. (17)

Kearney goes on to argue convincingly that it is dangerous to be seduced by the notion that Ireland has three distinct traditions which never intersect. As is argued in Chapter Two, Yeats's idea of tradition is one that is arbitrary and imaginary.

Denis Donoghue, in the essay "We Irish," from the book which bears the same title, discusses the three poets here in question together, claiming that each poet's work, Heaney's in particular, is invigorated by his interaction with politics and violence. Each poet has been forced to form a poetic response to the political tensions which constantly "aggravate" him. Donoghue does not, however, discuss the ways in which various forms of violence also virtually choke Irish poets.

Seamus Deane describes the current relations between Irish history and literature in terms first adumbrated by Hayden White in The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation (1987):

> It is possible to write about literature without adverting in any significant way to history...yet both literature and history are discourses which are widely recognized to be closely related because they are both subject to linguistic protocols which, in gross or in subtle ways, determine the structure and meaning of what is written... these [protocols] always have an ideological implication... In Ireland , however, the two discourses have been kept apart, even though they have, between them, created the interpretation of the past and present by which we live. (Deane, Ireland 45)

Each of the poets studied here has spent his life being charged with the responsibility of "representing" the community to which he belongs. W. B. Yeats took on the role of champion of the people with conviction and zeal, in that he is unique. It is difficult to imagine the young Yeats at work today in the world of political censorship and seemingly endless sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. No doubt, Hewitt and Heaney have wondered what the great Yeats would do or say.

An important feature of Irish poetry which differs from most other twentieth century Western poetry is the meticulous attention which the poet pays to history. In a radio interview conducted in 1986, Czeslaw Milosz describes precisely this kind of environment when talking about his home:

> Q: In the United States poets tend to center their writing on themselves. I don't have a sense that your poems are that way.
>
> A: Somewhere in Dostoyevsky you read that what a man mostly wants is to talk about himself...This subjectivization is not so strong in Central

> Europe, the part of Europe that I come from -- Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary -- because there it is counterbalanced to some extent by historical experiences; the individual appears upon the background of history of the twentieth century, and upon the background of history in general, and his tendency towards subjectivity is mitigated. (Milosz 144)

It is no accident, then, that many contemporary Irish poets, especially Heaney, have found in Eastern Europe an analogue for their experience of writing in Ireland. All three of our poets report again and again the pressure exerted on them by their respective communities to speak on their behalf as if they were the sole advocates of their people.

Ireland's long bardic tradition has always given poets a special social status. This is because traditionally the bard both composed and recited poetry on the history and legends of his people, and as such has always been charged with crafting and articulating the consciousness of the community. Even today, in recognition of this tradition, Ireland has a special tax exempt clause for poets and artists.

Ireland's bardic history began with the demise of the old Church and secular schools, which inherited the role of the druids, but were destroyed by the Viking invasions of the eleventh century. Beginning in the early twelfth century new schools of learning and scholarship, sponsored by wealthy literary families, sprang up throughout the country. During their heyday, the bards were the central cohesive force in the preservation and propagation of Irish

literary culture. The bardic schools survived the Norman invasions of the twelfth century and were not entirely destroyed until the Cromwellian land settlements in the 1650s.[10]

Even after the disenfranchisement of the Irish, the role of the bard was shifted onto new professions, existing as part of an underground hoard of resistance to English domination. The teachers and priests in the hedge schools preserved Irish culture through their continued reverence towards learning and scholarship.[11] This reverence carried into literary studies and philology, which under any other circumstances would have been symbols of authority and autonomy, but in Ireland they embodied subversion and resistance to English colonialism. Furthermore, during the years following the Treaty of Limerick in 1691, which saw the institutionalization of widespread land confiscations, Irish poetry mourned the dispossession. In times of independence and colonialism, poetry in Ireland is never disengaged from social and cultural commentary, and can thus be employed as a barometric gauge of the socio-historical climate. And in times when political discourse is outlawed by law or decorum, "Art," according to Herbert Marcuse,

> is perhaps the most visible return of the repressed, not only on the individual, but also the generic-historical level ... Aristotle's proposition on the cathartic effect of art epitomizes the dual function of art: both to oppose and to reconcile, both to indict and to acquit; both to recall the repressed and to repress it again - 'purified'. (144)

Poetry, then, has a dual role in a politically repressed culture. It must embody resistance against the powers that be, but, ironically, it also diffuses the passion of resistance because of its built-in cathartic effects. And as we shall soon see, during years of dispossession, Irish poetry created an idealized pre-colonial past and a future inspired by the resultant nostalgia.

The phenomenon of art's having the ability "to indict and to acquit" can be seen in Yeats's "Easter 1916". Yeats consciously adopts the bardic role and constructs his own interpretation of the political crisis in the present tense: "a terrible beauty is born." The audience enjoys the revolutionary uprising in its aestheticized form, and having done so, they can then "forget it." Yeats invoked the spirits of long-dead Celtic heroes like a refurbished Druid high priest, who simultaneously crafted nationalist, provincial, and international poetry.

As in the Russian and Czech nations, in Ireland poets are given a special status and prestige. For a half century Yeats was a public figure in Ireland and internationally. He had the ability to enrage, cause public debates and even riots. It is hard for us to imagine this kind of thing happening in New York City in the nineteen-nineties where in most cases art is rendered politically irrelevant. The reverberations of Yeats's work are still cause of much public debate in Ireland today. It is remarkable to observe

the passion with which Yeats's critics try to shatter his reputation, mostly because of his refusal to stay out of the world of politics and nationalism. The cost of this reputation is high: all three of the poets here presented have suffered the scrutiny and criticism of both politicians and critics. And in Ireland, some of the leading critics also happen to be politicians and journalists.

Yeats was born in upper middle-class Dublin in 1865 to a Protestant English merchant family that had settled in Ireland during the plantation of the South after the Cromwellian land confiscations in the seventeenth century. He made a career out of erasing the radical differences between the dual nature of his identity; for him, the colonial Anglo experience is enriched by its interaction with the Irish, and vice-versa. In Yeats's historical and mythical vision, the Anglo-Irish had created for him a distinct national identity which both included him in the Irish race and protected him from the discrimination which they suffered. However, he also wanted to be included in the Irish race, as much as Cuchulainn or any of those pre-lapsarian Celtic mythical heroes he so adored and emulated.

The second poet, John Hewitt, was born in Belfast in 1907 to a devoutly Methodist family which emanated from the lowlands of Scotland during the plantation of Ulster in the mid seventeenth century. He died there in 1987 after spending the previous two decades of his life encouraging

Ulster artists and writers in his role as a writer in residence at Queens University, and founder of many Ulster-based artists' associations. Hewitt's identity is such that he must come to terms, like Yeats, with the knowledge that his ancestry is essentially colonial. Also like Yeats, Hewitt at times justifies his identity by reaching back to confront the ghosts of his ancestors. In his early work he looks back at the plantation of Ulster to find himself, but he later recognizes that he has lost direct access to the "pure" English language. He has become a marginalized British subject, looking homeward mournfully at that to which he formerly belonged. Like Stephen Dedalus in A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man, who becomes aware of the distance between his own version of the English language and that of the English accented Jesuit, Hewitt is aware that while colonial, he has now taken up roots on this shore which is partly home, partly foreign. His Anglo-Scottish ancestry, non-conformist faith, and habitation in Ulster all provide him with a distinct sense of community which is defined in part by its differences from his Catholic Gaelic neighbors.

Hewitt's mother came from a strongly evangelical family who were deeply involved in the famous "Year of Grace" in 1859, a year when a wave of evangelical fervor swept over Protestant Ulster, the effects of which are still felt today in the language employed by Protestant leaders, most notably

the Reverend Ian Paisley. While his surname has English origins, the ancestry of both Hewitt's parents is Scottish, as is that of the bulk of Ulster Protestants. Although from Kilmore, County Armagh, a small market town surrounded by some of the richest farmland in Ulster, Hewitt's paternal grandfather lived in Scotland for a time, where Hewitt's father was born. The poet remembers a "Scots timbre" in his father's speech. Hewitt's father was a strong non-conformist:

> In his disapproval of alcohol he was uncompromising and un-Irish. His own father [Hewitt's grandfather] resigned from his Orange Lodge when it was agreed to permit consumption of strong drink..[and] actually returned the wedding presents that were given to him by the wealthiest of his mother's relatives, who had some connection with the liquor trade. (Warner, Hewitt 2)

Hewitt himself said, "the vigorous element of teetotalism still has the power to nudge my elbow at any bar," and Hewitt's grandfather is purported to have boasted "No Hewitt ever married a Papist or kept a public house" (Warner, Selected, 4).

Readers of early Irish mythical tales, such as those contained in the "Ulster Cycle," will be aware that Ulster has always had a culture and history quite distinct from the other provinces of Ireland, in part because of the strong historical connection in ancient and modern times with Scotland, a mere eighteen miles from the north-eastern Ulster coast. Up until the late Middle Ages, the history of Western Scotland is deeply influenced by the peoples of

Ulster. Early in the seventeenth century this pattern was reversed when the last of the rebellious Ulster clans were finally crushed by English militia and their lands were given over to reformed Scottish immigrants who signed oaths of allegiance to James I. Whereas in the rest of Ireland the ownership of land was given to upper middle-class Englishmen who had connections to the landed gentry, Ulster was settled by poorer farmers from Scotland and Northern England. This fact set a deep difference in class between the mainly Anglican Protestants who colonized the south of Ireland and those who were to be given small parcels of land in Ulster, and who were virtually all Presbyterian in their faith.

In a symposium on Irish Poetry held in 1974, Hewitt declared,

> I'm an Ulsterman of Planter stock. I was born on the island of Ireland, so secondarily I'm an Irishman. I was born in the British archipelago and English is my native tongue, so I'm British ... This is my hierarchy of values. (Warner, Selected 6)

The Irish Protestant identity straddles what history and culture have called oppositions. The established "Irish" identity, which has made Catholicism virtually mandatory, comes into conflict with Scottish Puritanism, but over hundreds of years of cohabitation some of distinctions of dialect and culture have become blurred. The hierarchical order of identity and loyalty is here so precise because of

the overwhelming weight that sits on these seemingly irrelevant details. What emerges is a tension between two urges. Hewitt "feels" an allegiance to his ancestors and the Protestant people of Ulster; however, he also knows, because of his sense of place, that he is an Irishman.

It was in his adulthood that Hewitt took a keen interest in things Irish. He studied Irish literature and history, and travelled much in the rural and poorer parts of the island. Hewitt's identity as a scholar or Irish literature came into frequent conflict with his loyalist identity in his native Belfast where, according to Marianne Elliot, "Protestants deny the use of the word "Irish" to describe themselves, for they see that word as having been hijacked by extremist Irish nationalists for their own purposes" ("Inside Ulster" 10).

The Scottish and Ulster brand of non-conformism does not foster the craft of poetry among its brethren, so it is easy to see why the Irish poet John Montague has described Hewitt as "the first (and probably the last) deliberately Ulster, Protestant poet" (Warner, Selected 2). Hewitt rejected his religious background, and spent most of his adult life struggling to overcome the limitations which this had placed on his artistic and professional freedom. In his thirties Hewitt and a group of friends who were interested in the arts founded a progressive arts group known as the "Ulster Unit." The group imitated the leftist aesthetic

politics of the Irish poet Louise MacNeice and England's W. H. Auden. As a would-be director of the Belfast Museum and Art Gallery, Hewitt was turned down because the Unionist board of directors of the museum apparently could not tolerate Hewitt for "besides being a Communist, I had numerous Catholic friends, play-actors and the like" (Hewitt, Threshold 21). Ironically, Hewitt escaped baptism into his faith because his father accused their local minister of being "too Catholic" (too "high church" in his leanings), a case of non-conformism reaching its logical end. Hewitt remembers "This escape has given me a sense of liberation. Spiritually, I have felt myself to be my own man, the ultimate Protestant" (Warner, Selected 2). Although Hewitt was "Unbaptized...enquiring and agnostic, [he] was to fashion his own myth out of diverse elements, though he retained a Protestant and Puritan temper, and held firmly to the radical side of the non-conformist tradition" (Warner, Selected 3).

But Hewitt's identity, as important as religion is in the Irish landscape, was also created by a series of negations of the stereotypical perceptions of Irish Catholics: *non*-drinker of alcohol, *non*-Catholic, and *non*-Irish-speaking. The Ulster Protestant is ethnically and linguistically so close to his Catholic counterpart that the fine border of difference must constantly be reinforced. This is why, in Ulster, religion is an essential component

in the definition of one's identity, for no other emblems of colonizer and colonized exist: no dark skin, no distinct language or accent. Foreign tourists in Ulster are therefore understandably shocked and puzzled when school children, by way of introduction, will inquire the religious affiliation of any stranger.[12] What outsiders see as almost invisible differences between Ulster Protestants and Catholics, are in fact vital identity tags. Recent studies of these phenomena by sociologists and psychiatrists have shown subtle markers to exist where two almost indistinguishable ethnic groups live in close quarters.

Although the artist is always to some degree an outsider in his community, climbing outside it in order to see it, Hewitt's rejection of his religion at an early age, and later adoption of socialism as a credo, isolate him from both his own and the Catholic communities, but they also describe him in some ways as a typical Ulster Protestant. Since there are so many faiths in the non-conformists tradition, it is difficult to find unity through the emblem of religion. Mary Holland, conducting a study of some of the ways in which the Belfast Loyalist community has changed over the past 25 years, reports that "There are 23 different Protestant churches in the Shankhill Road, each offering a different view of the Divine Truth. Even allowing for the fact that the defining characteristic of Protestantism is the individual's relationship with God, this makes for

intense fragmentation" (1: 11).

While Yeats' poetry celebrates, with bardic authority, his membership in two communities which he unites at least on the imaginary plane, Hewitt's poetry is filled with doubt, with a sense of non-belonging, with distrust, with the pointing out of his differences from others: "What comes through most clearly is his detachment from city people and country people and [his] loneliness...yet for Hewitt roots in a place or in the past [are] a vital source of his poetic imagination" (Warner, Selected 7). The Belfast boyhood and the non-conformist background that helped shape Hewitt's temperament and the themes of his poetry also influenced his style and manner of writing, which are controlled by a "deliberate plainness in the language." He defends his style in "I Write for...":

> I write for my own kind
> I do not pitch my voice
> that every phrase be heard
> by those who have no choice. (1-4)

Seamus Heaney was born in 1939, the year in which Yeats died. Harold Bloom finds an "overt struggle with the dangerous influence of W.B. Yeats" in Heaney's work (xiv). One of the many ironies inherent in such a loaded statement comes from the fact that although Yeats and Heaney are both "Irish" (in the loosest sense), each comes from a community which could hardly be more foreign to its counterpart. Heaney was born into a Roman Catholic farming family in rural County Derry which is, since 1922, one of the six

counties comprising the British-held Northern Ireland. He belongs, then, to the same minority community of which Bernadette Devlin speaks. Of the three poets, he possesses the longest line of Irish ancestry, yet his sense of identity is burdened with a tragic sense of reluctance, guilt and failure.

The partition of Ireland in 1922 led to a situation whereby Catholics in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland found themselves to be suddenly a minority of just under 40%. The border was drawn in such a way as to ensure a majority of the loyalist (largely Protestant) vote which would maintain English rule in what was seen as this valuable region of the island.[13] While his Catholic counterparts in the Irish Republic found themselves, for the first time in eight hundred years, to be free of English rule, their northern counterparts were suddenly a minority in a state whose majority were loyal to the crown. Many members of the new Northern Irish Government were also members of The Orange Order, a vehemently anti-Catholic society among whose most sacred activities is to celebrate every July the Twelfth, William III's victory on the Boyne. Thus Northern Irish Catholics felt not only abandoned by the south, but also greatly threatened by the Protestant government which now ruled them.

As a Gaelic Irishman Heaney's sense of nationhood seems concrete; it is, in fact, reinforced and more clearly

defined by its colonization.[14] In one of his first published poems, "Requiem for the Croppies," Heaney takes on the role of the bard of his community, a community which, because of the border, included only those Catholics living in Northern Ireland. His role as bard is both undercut and reinforced by the continuing crisis in Northern Ireland. For all intents and purposes, Catholics in Northern Ireland are still engaged in the long struggle begun by their forbears during the Tudor invasions. Their sense of isolation from the Republic only adds to a deep sense of adherence to their traditions and culture. Heaney views -- or rather, feels -- Ireland as does the young hero in Yeats's play Cathleen Ni Houlihan, and is conscious of the danger of this tug at the nape of his neck. He hears the demanding call of female personification of nationalism to free her from English rule. She is at once seductive, demanding, and blood-thirsty. He then transcends this feeling through the negotiation that is poetry. In Heaney's position, the urgency of that distancing quality that writing brings is great because he has consciously thrown in his lot with feeling, and like Jacob, has nodded his assent to a wrestling match with what I, or Joyce, might call this bitch-angel.

Attempts by northern Catholics to protect and repossess their occupied land have historically failed, so Heaney and his fellow Northern Irish Catholic poets have to endure an

oppressive sense of guilt, dispossession and failure.

Seamus Deane, a peer of Heaney, says,

> It is a deep instinct, the reverence of an acolyte before a mystery of which he knows that he is also the celebrant ... his [Heaney's] guilt is that of victim, not of victimizer. In this he is characteristic of the Northern Irish Catholic Community. His attitude to paternity and authority is apologetic -- for having undermined them. His attitude to maternity and love is one of pining and also one of apology -- for not being of them. Maternity is of the earth, paternity belongs to those who build or cultivate upon it. (Deane, Celtic 175)

The modern Western popular perspective is always in danger of slipping into a view of the Ulster conflict as merely another pitiful example of under-evolved humans allowing their religious fervor to turn violent. The media in Britain and the United States tend to associate the conflict in Ulster with their equally erroneous view of the Middle-Eastern crisis, often confusing Belfast with Beirut, because in both cases youths are seen throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at troops for reasons which seem preposterous to the rational Western mind. England's opinion of the ongoing crisis in the north is to wish that Ireland would, by some miracle of plate tectonics, float a few hundred miles into the Atlantic and sink. A.A. Gill, reviewing a special series of television documentaries on the Northern Ireland crisis in London's Sunday Times, echoes the irritation behind this view:

> There are no current affairs in Ireland, just more fresh, bloody, twitching history to be added to the bubbling pot...anywhere else in the world you

> can just have an opinion, but with Ireland, like some ancient Celtic king, you've got to recite your ancestry and the deeds that permit you to speak. (10:2)

Irish Poets, critics, and academics, many of whom look to English universities for their livelihood, must come to terms with this malaise. They can make themselves popular by corroborating the Naipaulian view that Ireland has created its own mess, and the imperial power is absolved of responsibility. The alternative is to go into a protracted battle to educate against a flood-tide of misinformation and lack of interest.

Each of the three poets here presented is painfully aware of his image in John Bull's bigger island. Nevertheless, each attempts to make from the raw materials around and within him a vision of Ireland without following, physically or imaginatively, the well-worn path of exile. Yet each has experienced forms of exile which have had the effect of heightening his consciousness of nationality in spite of the historical forces which have the effect of fragmenting and alienating him from his identity.

The ten year old Yeats suffered the taunts of fellow school boys in West Kensington, London, where his family had recently moved. Hewitt has experienced the double isolation of living in England and being perceived as just another Irish immigrant, the nuances of his Northern Protestant identity erased by ignorance. And Heaney, after he moved to County Wicklow, experienced both the relief of escape, and

the estrangement of being a Northern Catholic on the outskirts of Dublin.

Chapter Two

The Garden Where No Praties Grow: Yeats's Post-Colonial Project

> *A great writer is, so to speak, a second government in his country. And for that reason no régime has ever loved great writers* (Alexander Isayevich Solzhenitsyn, 28).

Seamus Deane points out that the word 'tradition' has two meanings. The first, 'continuity', and the second, 'surrender' or 'betrayal' (Celtic Revivals 14). This ambiguity is perfectly embodied in the Irish rural custom of the elderly patriarchal farmer surrendering his farm to his newly wedded son and moving into the "west room" of the house. He is both surrendering his position and maintaining continuity for the rest of the family.

Conventionally, the word 'tradition' carries the only the first of these meanings. In England, for example, the word conjures up images of the great halls of Windsor Castle decorated with portraits of the royal lineage, or the pageant of "trooping the colour" at Buckingham Palace. If a nation has a soul, then surely it dwells here, the impressed onlooker thinks. This is tradition in the affirmative: there is no sense of "surrender or betrayal." That England's history is one of division and conflict matters less than the unifying sense that there is an England which

predates its own history. Tradition in every part of the nation is expressed, for example, through loyalty to the crown. But today, with nationwide economic hardship, the demise of the Empire, and members of the royal family publically stepping off their pedestals, an uncomfortable awareness of the fragility of that tradition is erasing what was thought for centuries to be chiseled on the pillars of StoneHenge.

In Ireland, however, the word 'tradition' has never been invested with as much blind faith as elsewhere. The Irish notion of tradition is complicated by the fact that the meaning of tradition differs according to whether one belongs to the Anglo-Irish, Scots-Irish, or Gaelic Irish community. The traditions of the conquerors are relatively well documented and have strong links with the neighboring imperial power. And the characteristic colonial penchant for meticulous record keeping means that there are vast numbers of written records of the earliest explorations and conquests of the country. This richness contrasts with the widespread destruction of Irish culture, a dismantling which became the official foreign policy of the English rulers as early as the twelfth century. The native Irish tradition is, therefore, one which can only be imaginary because it is riddled with a series of absences, surrenders, and betrayals.

Since the establishment of the Protestant Ascendancy,

of which Yeats's ancestors were a part, the very concept of an Irish tradition has always carried a subversive undertone because it contradicts the erasure of Irish language and culture by English authorities. Ironic, then, that the man most strongly associated with the restoration of native Irish culture should be descended from English settlers and be proud of it.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the new middle class in Dublin and Belfast were rapidly modernizing and distancing themselves from everything Irish, because it was deemed poor and defeated. Yeats, on the other hand, embraced all things Irish, and created his own brand of cultural nationalism with a bohemian flavor. While many of the native Irish had learned to reject the rural West and its superstitions in preference for modern European sophistication, Yeats espoused a version of Ireland in the same manner that his fellow Pre-Raphaelite artists had embraced medieval art.

Yeats feared that by the turn of the century the Irish would become a nation of "West Britons." We know from "The Dead" that Joyce was also concerned, from the safe distance of Paris and Trieste, with the cultural direction his country would take. Remember that Gabriel Conroy is accused by the nationalist Miss Ivors of being a "West Briton" for his writing for the London-based Daily Express and because he prefers to vacation on the Continent:

> --And haven't you your own land to visit, continued Miss Ivors, that you know nothing of, your own people, and your own country?
> --O, to tell you the truth, retorted Gabriel suddenly, I'm sick of my own country, sick of it! (Portable 206)

Gabriel is attempting to escape from the oppressive psychological environment composed of constant reminders that his country is not his own, and the unceasing and demanding call of nationalism embodied in Miss Ivors, an *enfant terrible* version of Cathleen Ni Houlihan. Miss Ivors diagnoses Gabriel as suffering from cultural self-hatred, to be treated by a healthy hiking tour of the Aran Islands. Joyce, of course, is making a thinly veiled critique of Yeats, Synge, and the entire Literary Revival's project to stem the "filthy modern tide" flooding Ireland. Joyce would seem to be saying that it cannot be stopped, while mourning the cultural and personal estrangement of Gabriel Conroy from his country and his wife, who is an embodiment of the West. Gabriel distracts himself from the wearying demands of his country by turning his gaze away from the west, to the psychologically freeing east and the south.

One of the problems with the cultural and ideological distance between the leaders of the Revival and their native audience was the Anglo-Irish penchant for romanticizing the native culture, especially the "unsullied" people of the rural west. The process contrasts with the native Irish distaste for all things Irish. That it was Anglo-Irish

Protestants who often led the way in publicly celebrating Irish culture says much about their own need to belong in a land where they felt a distinct sense of otherness. That the indigenous people eventually followed the lead taken by the colonists is a tribute to the colonial erasure of native cultural self-esteem. Apparently "native" and "authentic" Irish customs and manners and folklore were worn by descendants of the colonizers in an antiquarian drag show which temporarily resolved any ambiguity in their identity. This was not a novel ritual for the Anglo-Irish, they had been doing it for hundreds of years.

By the time Yeats was born, the Anglo-Irish community had a two-hundred-year-old tradition of refashioning Irish culture in order to convince themselves that they were native. English colonizers in the late seventeenth century carried with them to Ireland and the Virginia colonies a relatively stable tradition of continuity based on a monarchy and the ownership of land. When the English set out on their colonial ventures, they had already established in their minds a strong sense of identity as a political unit with the singular purpose of expansion and increase. The planters were for the most part English merchants and farmers to whom the low-priced Irish land and cheap labor afforded the status of aristocracy, although in England they were regarded with some disdain by the gentry. As Desmond Guinness puts it, "they were considered English in Ireland

and Irish in England" (3). Edmund Burke describes them as having formed "a plebeian oligarchy" in which they were "not sufficiently the people to form a democracy; and...too numerous to answer the ends and purposes of an aristocracy" (304).

In the decade following the "Glorious Revolution," the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland underwent a number of changes in their perception of their own national identity. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the majority of the members of the Ascendancy were Irish-born or bred, yet clearly saw themselves as representing "English interest" in Ireland. David Hayton points out that

> [In] the early eighteenth century Irish Protestants did not have a clear and unqualified perception of their Irish nationality. They did not refer to themselves as Irish all of the time, and their notions of who, exactly, comprised the "Irish people" were in the process of transmutation from the acceptance of a Catholic "nation" to a belief in a Protestant one. (146)

By the 1740s, however, they had developed economic and political interests which separated them from the motherland, and in the aftermath of the furor over Wood's Halfpence, all but the most devout loyalists began to feel united in their economic victimization.[15] Furthermore, a number of cultural developments left the Protestant Ascendancy feeling less English and sorely in need of a distinct language of culture and identity. The instability of their identity was exacerbated by their suffering the indignity of being identified as Irish, in the pejorative

sense, through the development of the stage Irishman.

After the establishment of Restoration theatre, the stage Irishman quickly became a recognizable figure, a foolish and contemptible peasant speaking a gibberish which attempted to sound dignified and English, as is the case with Macmorris in Shakespeare's Henry V. Some of the greatest Restoration playwrights were themselves Anglo-Irish; Farquhar and Steele participated in developing the type of the stage-Irishman. The greatest irony in the development of this stock character is that in the early eighteenth century he began to appear in the guise of the Irish landlord as well as that of the lowly Irish peasant. For the English public, the important distinction between the Anglo-Irish and Gaelic Irish began to disappear. This crisis of identity was solved in a number of ways which aided the formation of a new sense of nationalism, the very feeling which was being stripped from the members of the Ascendancy.

First, prominent Irish mythical figures were appropriated in such a way as to render them "Protestant," and as alien as possible from the native Gaelic Irish population. These figures were then given a make-over so as to render them more dignified in the eyes of their Anglo-Irish creators. At the same time each year both Protestants and Catholics joyfully celebrated St. Patrick's Day. For the Catholics, the celebration represented one of the few

fragments of their sense of tradition. But for the Anglo-Irish St. Patrick was appropriated and rerobed as an essentially "Protestant" saint. The Anglo-Irish rationalized that they were, in effect, restoring the "true Anglican Church since the early Irish church resisted the influence of Rome" (Hayton 151).

Many Anglo-Irish antiquarians also took a deep interest in Celtic mythology. They often equated fragments of the ancient culture with those found in Greece and Rome, thus finding another way to "celticize" themselves without coming too close to the Gaelic Irish whom they had displaced. They used the deliberately latinized term "Hibernia" for their newly invented and unified culture, and soon felt safe enough to use the previously taboo term "Irish" in describing themselves. Thus the Protestant Ascendancy were able to call themselves the "Irish nation" to the complete exclusion of the native population.

The eighteenth century saw the strengthening of English rule in Ireland: no longer did the English feel that they had to build castles and fortresses, instead they built ornate mansions with names like Coole Park, Powerscourt, and Bessbrooke. These were the first colonial houses in Ireland which did not require battlements or defenses. Members of the Protestant ascendancy could feel at home, without stockades to remind them that they were in a foreign and hostile land. Thus the Ascendancy had these fine houses,

vessels in which to carry their own sense of tradition as continuity, now that they had appropriated a culture distinct from that of England. The houses were designed and decorated according to standards that were distinct from their English counterparts. The Anglo-Irish also began renaming Irish towns as part of the conscious Anglicization of Ireland: DunLaoghaire became Kingstown, and Derry became Londonderry. Further legal suppressions of Irish customs and culture kept the two cultures at a comfortable distance. By 1709 the suppression of native Irish culture, language, and religion was instituted with what became known as The Penal Laws: Catholics were prohibited from purchasing, inheriting, or acquiring any land through marriage, and from holding any public office.

The indigenous people of Ireland, on the other hand, who were still resisting membership in the Established Church, were tolerated so long as they did not pose a threat to the new Protestant nation. "Throughout most of its existence, the Protestant nation was secure in the knowledge that the Roman Catholic majority of Ireland was politically non-existent" (Boyce 123). Thus the native Catholic population never organized themselves into a political unit in the full sense of the term until the 1830s, when Daniel O'Connell, the first popular leader of the Catholic emancipation movement, began to campaign under the aegis of a "Catholic nation."

It was, in fact, the Presbyterian leaders of the United Irishmen who led the uprising of 1790, who had the most inclusive and unified concept of Ireland. Theobald Wolfe Tone, the leader of the 1798 rebellion, insisted upon the Presbyterian libertarian ideal that Catholics and Protestants unite in their vision of a united island independent of English rule. However, many in the ranks of the United Irishmen increased the pressure to exclude Catholics from this plan. The Orange Order, founded in 1795 in County Armagh, was one of the most unified and extremist expressions of this pressure. Its membership were mostly Anglo-Scottish Planters whose class as tenant-weavers with little property gave them none of the security of the Anglo-Irish gentry. They consequently feared the loss of what little hegemony they had through open competition with Catholics. Thus an essential component of their vision of maintaining power in Ireland was the rigorous separation of Catholics and Protestants in order to maintain their unstable oligarchy.

The Fenian Movement was a later development of the United Irishmen, since its vision was an Irish nationalism free from sectarian and clerical ideologies. The problem with the Fenians was that they did not have the membership of Presbyterians like John Mitchel, the founder of the newspaper The United Irishman, who was the last of a long line of Protestant Libertine thinkers to lead a non-

sectarian movement. One of Yeats's life-long projects was to give to the Irish people that which he felt they most lacked: a sense of cultural and historical continuity. Yeats saw the brokenness of the Irish tradition in relation to his own Anglo-Irish ancestral tradition, one which gave him a unified and stable sense of continuity. Unlike many of his Anglo-Irish peers, Yeats adopted the identity of native Irish culture, and he moved outside the relatively secure blood link with his English mercantile ancestors who had settled in Dublin in the eighteenth century.

In adopting the badge of Irish identity, he simultaneously sought to enliven the Irish people with the spirit of cultural pride and to expand the imaginative possibilities of his own identity. In order to do that, however, he first had to reshape and repackage Irish myth and folklore in such a way that it would appeal not only to his own sensibilities but also to those of the Irish people. The pursuit of the latter goal created many of Yeats's greatest difficulties as a public poet. The legacy which he left Ireland was a vision of a nation enriched with possibilities, for the poet and the public man were equally involved in the cause of restoring history and culture to a colonized nation, and consequently giving the Irish the possibility of a future. His imagination created a collage of mythical and historical images which expanded the confines of both the Anglo-Irish and the native Irish

identity, to create a vision of both cultures living harmoniously.

The Irish would not realize this ideal. Yeats's vision is still only a possibility because the Irish rejected his offers of a new Yeatsian Ireland, a project much criticized then, and especially now, for reasons which are both political and aesthetic.

Yeats's commitments to Ireland were what Seamus Heaney calls "selfless and disciplined," a currently unpopular view among many of the most audible literary critics on both the Unionist and Nationalist side of the current political divide (Deane, Field Day 2: 784). The gift he offered the Irish was the idea that they ought to be involved in the project of reconstructing their own culture during a time when the public consciousness sorely lacked any such concept. Yeats did not so much fix his focus on the history of Ireland's disenfranchisement as on what he believed to be the source of Ireland's most valuable difference from the rest of modern Europe -- its rich history of Celtic myth and folklore.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century a number of philologists and scholars, some of the most influential of them German, took an impassioned interest in early Irish texts.[16] The collection of these writings and their subsequent translation contributed greatly to the sense that an irretrievable past was now within the grasp of

interested parties. And Yeats wasted no time in employing early Irish myth for two important purposes. The discovery of a literature, now available in English to those, like Yeats, who did not read Irish, led the poet to greener mystical pastures for his poetic work, but it also gave the man a greater consciousness of Ireland's long literary and folk history. Yeats embarked on a half-century-long reworking of Irish mythological figures who became vital symbolic characters in his entire poetic output. The second purpose was Yeats's intense and generous, though in its earliest expression, diffuse, love of his country. He realized that Ireland could be both culturally reenfranchized and historicized through the connection of early and modern mythological and heroic figures. That Cuchulainn stalked through Dublin's General Post Office with Padraig Pearse in Easter 1916 meant to Yeats that, naturally, time was a thin membrane separating two Irish heroic figures who properly marched in unison with one national consciousness. Yeats did not, however, put myth and folklore to work for the cause of building a nation's goose-stepping pride, as some critics claim. Instead he offered a humiliated and maligned people the chance to expand their imagination of themselves beyond the social, economic, and cultural prison walls within which they had existed through centuries of colonialism. Yeats's nationalism was not destructive, but restorative: it was

aimed at uniting a divided people.[17]

Yeats managed to create from the tension between blood identity (Anglo-Irish) and his adopted identity (Irish) a vast body of poetry which embraced not only these, but also his identity as an international modern writer and statesman. Yeats's poetic works, from The Wanderings of Oisin (1889) to the posthumously published Last Poems (1939) has been referred to not so much as separate collections of poems written within specific periods, but rather as a series of collections, each of which is a chapter in a unified narrative structure. Hugh Kenner asserts that Yeats was "an architect, not a decorator; he didn't accumulate poems, he wrote *books*" (Finneran 13). The narrative arrangement of Yeats's entire poetic *oeuvre* makes more visible the shifts in the locus of his identity from the enthusiastic young bard seeking to save Ireland's soul to the enraged satirist who attacked the failure of will on the part of his contemporaries to help fulfill his projects, and then to the more solitary and stately national bard.

Yeats has been thoroughly canonized as one of the fathers of European modernism. However, he is not a member of that sect of "high" modernists which includes Eliot, Pound, Stevens, and Williams. As Hazard Adams puts it, "by his own accurate account [Yeats] was a modern romantic" (ix). This romanticism included a commitment to a series of specific political policies which would shape Ireland's

political and cultural future. This fact has caused many critics to attack Yeats, some claiming that not being what they have determined to be a "true Irishman" (i.e. Gaelic-Irish and Catholic) Yeats did not have the right to continue the colonial relationship of the Anglo-Irish to Ireland. Others claim that Yeats's politics are nothing short of fascism, a claim that is little more than an attempt to erase the important difference between poetic and political utterance.

The young and notoriously iconoclastic James Joyce was a harsh critic of Yeats's commitment to the Irish and felt that it threatened the very integrity of his artistic purpose:

> No man, said the Nolan, can be a lover of the true or the good unless he abhors the multitude; and the artist, though he may employ the crowd, is very careful to isolate himself. This radical principle of artistic economy applies specially to a time of crisis, and today when the highest form of art has been just preserved by desperate sacrifices, it is strange to see the artist making terms with the rabblement. (Archive 79)

Today, Joyce is celebrated as *the* writer of the people in Ireland, while Yeats is widely assailed as the epitome of aristocratic Anglo-Irish elitism. So it is ironic to observe the elitist side of Joyce here criticizing Yeats for his embracing the concerns of the masses, concerns which Joyce felt to be his sole domain. He did not so much disagree with the idea of an Irish literary revival as with the fact that Yeats was its leader. Joyce's complete

rejection of any direct engagement with the Irish, most explicitly expressed in The Day of the Rabblement (1901), from which the above passage is taken, is contradicted by his heated involvement in the public debate over Yeats's theatrical experiment, most notably The Countess Cathleen which stirred much political controversy at the time. Most of Joyce's subsequent essays on Irish culture were to be safely disguised by his publishing them in Italian or French, and in those he is more generous to the Irish and Irish history. Some might be shocked at the vitriol in Joyce's attack when he goes on to say in the same essay that "Mr. Yeat's [*sic*] treacherous instinct for adaptability must be blamed for his recent association with a platform from which even self-respect should have urged him to refrain" (Archives 79). The artist could only lose by trying to appeal to a public who had not the capacity to understand or appreciate the modernist's vision. The public were to be treated *en masse* as the proletariat, thus rendering them irrelevant. Yeats would almost have agreed with Joyce's view by 1913 when he mourned that "romantic Ireland's dead and gone."

Since Joyce's Ireland was never a romantic place to begin with, it is easy to understand his disdain, considering his background in the social and cultural starvation of turn of the century Catholic Dublin, brilliantly recorded in Dubliners. In Joyce's view, a

spiritually paralyzed people could not be saved by a mere artist, even if Joyce was later to fashion himself as the Irish messiah who would "forge in the smithy of his soul the uncreated consciousness of his race" with a little help from his three graces: silence, exile and cunning. That Yeats went further in his involvements with the public than any of his contemporaries does not make him an inexperienced dreamy-eyed politico. A uniquely national creative energy coursed through his veins, an energy which feasted upon myth and folklore, and it seemed natural to Yeats to open it up to his people. His agenda was eleemosynary and disciplined, in the sense that he wanted to give something to the Irish which could benefit them on a cultural, and consequently a socio-political level, and himself on an imaginative level. His self interest lay in the less than private wish that he be more than a poet in the shadows, that he should be appreciated for his public efforts. Yeats possessed a valid certainty that he could be the leader of the movement spurred by the cultural nationalism which he so passionately espoused.

Yeats is also a poet who became directly involved in Irish revolutionary politics after meeting and immediately admiring John O'Leary in 1889, who the same year introduced him to Maude Gonne. His commitment to militant politics dwindled by the turn of the century, and in 1924 he was elected to the senate of the newly formed independent Irish

government. Yet his national identity, of which he seemed confident, became the irritating grain of sand around which he would secrete his poetic responses. The pearl which grew is one of the great jewels in the history of Irish poetry, for Yeats wrote self-consciously as an Irishman in the tradition of a number of adopted spiritual ancestors including the Ulsterman, Samuel Ferguson, to whom he alludes in "To Ireland in The Coming Times":

> Nor may I less be counted one
> With Davis, Mangan, Ferguson. (17-18)[18]

Yeats was not only creating a poetic lineage of like-minded Irish poets and revolutionaries, he was also careful to include in that ancestry Protestant Anglo-Irishmen like himself, as well as Catholics. Thomas Davis (1814-45), a middle-class Protestant Trinity College student, founded and wrote for the nationalist magazine The Nation and led the Young Ireland Party. James Charles Mangan (1803-49), a Catholic, was probably the most influential Irish poet for Yeats. He was the quintessential romantic who used Irish and German folkloric sources; he composed the nationalist lyrical allegory, "My Dark Rosaleen," the prototype for Yeats's Cathleen Ni Houlihan. Sir Samuel Ferguson (1810-86) was a Protestant lawyer, poet, antiquary and translator of Irish folklore. "To Ireland in Coming Times" sets a tone which was to continue for the rest of the poet's life: he was to found a literary tradition which fostered the idea

that to be Irish one did not need to be Gaelic and of Catholic ancestry. After the 1920s, when many Catholic organizations espoused a purging of opinions which did not conform to strict conservative guidelines, Yeats's multicultural ideas took on a subversive flavor. As a result, Yeats suffered accusations that he was anti-Catholic and therefore anti-Irish. As Richard Ellmann remarks,

> It was as an Irish poet that he aspired to become known..He is Irish; he is also anti-Irish in an Irish way...Ireland is a symbol for the World, and he is caught between estrangement and love for both. (Identity 4-5)

We can assume this to mean that Yeats, as a "characteristic" Irish writer, has a less than covert dislike for his country's bourgeois and unromantic leanings, a trait which Ellmann would have us believe is found in most, if not all, Modernist Irish writers. There is much evidence to support this view. We can think of Joyce's "symbol for the world" -- Dublin, which gives birth to and then paralyzes its citizens; or the characters in Beckett's Trilogy, recognizably Irish, but estranged in French, who rail against a host of absences, the greatest of which is the absence of any palpable identity. The paradigm for the majority of modern Irish writers is spiritual starvation and deprivation, expressed in a literary primal scream which drowns out its causes. But this is where Yeats stands out among his literary peers: we are struck by an uncharacteristic abundance, generosity of spirit, and

remarkable willingness on his part to save his country not only from London, but also from Rome. Yeats's early romanticism therefore strikes a sharp incongruity against Ireland's famine-ridden and tortured imaginative landscape drawn by Joyce and those who deglamorized "romantic" Ireland.

The Modern Irish poet can never escape the dogging questions of his identity, both personal and national. As Harold Brodkey and Alfred Kazin struggle with the question of Jewishness, conscious that they must struggle with ever present and destructive stereotypes, so the Irish poet is cornered into asking himself what sort of thing an Irishman is outside of the realm of stereotype. Yeats responded to these internal but urgent interrogative voices by first declaring a series of Cartesian certainties. The resultant poetic voice is one which carries both unprecedented nationalist authority, a triumphant affirmation of the Irish cultural identity, and a gnawing sense of disappointment that the actuality of Ireland did not live up to his imaginative ideal.

That the father of the Irish Literary Revival was in many ways as much an outsider as an insider is mitigated by the fact that Yeats rejected much of the Anglophile politics of his Anglo-Irish community, most of whom were devoted to maintaining British rule in the entire island, and chose instead to belong, for a time, to the revolutionary Irish

independence movement in association with the Irish nationalist John O'Leary. But he was misunderstood and consequently rejected by the new people-nation because of his liberal ideas, his distaste for Roman Catholic clericalism, and his aristocratic attitudes. As Edward Engleberg points out,

> the Celtic Revival offered the poet two rather differing points of interest which eventually he would have to reconcile -- the peasant or the king; and...Yeats's new enchantment with some of the recent *symbolist* principles of art made the pursuit of certain sympathies for the common peasant a rather uncomfortable and strained effort. (34)

Yeats's interest in folklore kept him close to the world of "peasants" but his affirmation of *symbolism* and its hostility towards the middle class distanced him from them. This conflict became more acute when the "Free-State" was formed and ruled by a largely middle-class Catholic Irish government. The new government quickly abandoned its goals of restoring lost Irish culture to itself and has, over the past seventy years of its existence, sought to "modernize" the island in opposition to Yeats's project of cultural restoration. Yeats tried to resolve this conflict by creating a vision of both the colonized and colonizing communities coexisting in the new nation: "Preserve what is living and help the two Irelands, Gaelic Ireland and Anglo Ireland so to unite that neither shall shed its pride" (Explorations 337). Yeats succeeded in uniting the two islands on the imaginary plane through his artistic

impregnation of Ireland. While the fruits of this union had vigor on an artistic level, the people of Ireland, on a political and cultural level, were to abort its social and cultural potential.

Yeats differs from all Irish poets before and since because of his intense relationship with not only the literary community, but also with the entire population of Ireland. He expected much of both communities and is the ultimate example of a poet who, by sheer force of will, affected his audience, which quickly broadened from a small circle of admirers in London and Dublin to an international readership. Yeats wanted to express his solidarity with a people who did not share his colonial background, and who appreciated his dramatic romanticism so long as it did not insult the most conservative Catholicism. He wanted to awaken in the Irish people a spirit which, he believed, would transform them, their country, and eventually the world. In a letter to Yeats, the Ulsterman AE (George Russell) reported in messianic tones the growing national spirit:

> The gods have returned to Erin and have centered themselves in the sacred mountains and blow the fires through the country. They have been seen by several in vision, they will awaken the magical instinct everywhere, and the universal heart of the people will turn to the druidic beliefs. I note through the country the increased faith in faery things. The bells are heard from the mounds and sounding in the hollows of the mountains....Out of Ireland will arise a light to transform many ages and peoples. (Deane, Field Day 2: 541)

These words were, no doubt, Celtic music to Yeats's ears. He was being heralded as the leader of this spiritual uprising which veiled serious political ramifications. Three years before he received the above letter from Russell, Yeats had found his artistic purpose on a newly politicized level. His nationalist apprenticeship with John O'Leary, who led the soon-to-be-militant Fenian movement, was an enlightening experience.[19] O'Leary's politics were perfect for the cautious Yeats, who was not wont to join any revolutionary organization with wild abandon. In 1891 O'Leary founded the Young Ireland League, which Yeats immediately joined. It was the first of a series of fringe literary-nationalist groups which attracted those disillusioned with the world of divided party politics. The Young Irelanders were non-sectarian and invited people from all political parties to join in what they saw as a new and edifying nationalist movement. For Yeats, the Young Irelanders had a manifesto which paralleled his own. They insisted upon the restoration of the country's pride in its cultural tradition, the absence of which had produced a crisis of identity "reflecting the growing Anglicization of the country, the disappearance of traditional ways of life, of the Gaelic tongue, and the industrialization of the north-eastern part of the island" (Boyce 233). This is where Yeats saw himself as a link between the political and artistic.

It was not out of public pressure that Yeats politicized his work, rather it was out of his own enthusiasm. As we shall see, in later years Irish poets felt much greater pressure from the public to address the crisis of national identity. But Yeats was free "to turn artistic production into a fully autonomous, self-referential endeavor" (Wolin 209). One of the biggest problems facing Yeats and the members of the literary revival was fostering a reading audience. The leaders of the revival were not of the same mind as the general population of the island. They were, as Terence Brown puts it,

> mostly Protestant by background and agnostic or indifferent by inclination, while sometimes closet anti-Catholics had to be careful not to alienate by too obvious an anti-clericalism the majority they wished to influence. (xxix)

And the Irish reading audience needed to be middle-class in order to understand the content and tone of the writings of the revivalists. Fortunately, there was a new and growing number of Middle-class Catholics with strongly Nationalist leanings. According to David Boyce,

> The literary revival, however, was not one that embraced or even interested the mass of the Irish people, Catholic or Protestant...It was essentially an affair of the intellectuals, for there was no substantial middle-class outside Belfast and Dublin to sustain a literary movement. (233)

And Yeats himself made no secret of his antagonism at least for the Catholic education system and the damage he thought

it did to the Catholic population. He could see that while the growing Catholic middle class meant an increased membership in the Revival, it also meant that Catholic sensibilities remained a barrier to the acceptance of his liberal, even bohemian motifs. The problem, as Yeats saw it, lay in the inability of Catholics to be exposed to liberal artistic ideas because of the conservatism of the educational system:

> The education of our Irish secondary schools, especially the Catholic schools, substitutes pedantry for taste. Men learn the dates of writers, the external facts of masterpieces and not sense of style or feeling for life...Catholic secondary education destroys, I think, much that the Catholic religion gives (Autobiographies 304).

It was in the last decade of his life that Yeats applied himself directly to the improvement of the Irish educational system, recognizing that after a lifetime of public controversy he had found a social institution which did not wince at the sound of his voice. Yeats also recognized that one of the reasons for the conformist trend among the majority of Irish artists and writers, a conformism which choked their creative talents, was the social pressure exerted on them by their community to address the political and social upheavals of the time:

> The antagonist of imaginative writing in Ireland is not a habit of scientific observation but our interest in matters of opinion...All fine literature is the disinterested contemplation or expression of life, but hardly any Irish writer can liberate his mind sufficiently from questions of practical reform for this contemplation. Art

> for art's sake, as he understands it, whether it be the art of "Ode to a Grecian Urn" or of the imaginer of Flagstaff, seems to him a neglect of public duty. (Explorations 158)

Yeats's astute detection of an atmosphere from which many chose to flee reveals one of the many reasons that many artists and writers went into exile. Yeats is one of the few who remained to fight a hydra-headed beast which possessed the country not only from without but also from within. It is only from a position of some psychological freedom that such a statement can come, though the anti-revivalist movement in the 1940s, led by Patrick Kavanagh, went a long way toward broadening the artistic elbow room of the Irish writer.

Yeats had the advantage of being raised in a comfortable Anglo-Irish household, then as a young child, being transplanted to London, where the Irish part of his identity became painfully clear to him when he learned the stigma attached to the Irish in England. Rather than take the most obvious defensive measure of anglicizing himself as quickly as possible, Yeats bound himself to the memories of his idyllic life in Sligo, a place he vowed as a child "never to leave." His early and later experiences in London, both as a resident and a visitor, were to remind him of his otherness as an Irishman. Unlike most other Irishmen in London, Yeats welcomed the differences between himself and the English. It was early in his twenties that Yeats

began to celebrate the rural customs of the Irish as a radical alternative to the modernized world which he was vehemently to oppose. His childhood belief in fairies, which came from rural Sligo, did not become an embarrassment to him in his adult life. He rather paraded it as what Seamus Heaney calls, "a badge of identity for his own culture, something that would mark it off from the rest of the English-speaking world, he found this distinctive and sympathetic thing in the magical world view of country people" (Preoccupations 101).

Many of his contemporaries found these beliefs to be ridiculous, an attitude which Yeats, the lover of opposition, invited. In his early and later work, the poet invokes through nostalgia a Wordsworthian commitment to his childhood imagination. In "The Meditation of the Old Fisherman" from Crossways we have what becomes a characteristic Yeatsian penchant for pastoral nostalgia translated into the Irish idiom:

> The herring are not in the tides as they were of old;
> My sorrow! for many a creak gave the creel in the cart
> That carried the take to Sligo town to be sold,
> *When I was a boy with never a crack in my heart.*
> (5-8)

Yeats also grew up in an Ireland which was politically

divided along sectarian lines. In the 1860s, Fenianism was the only movement committed to non-sectarian politics, but it was publicly rebuked by a new and staunchly Romanocentric Church led by Cardinal Paul Cullen, who felt that the hierarchy of the Roman Church was threatened by the revolutionary character of the Fenians. Land Reform and Home Rule were the two major political movements which challenged the hegemony of English rule, but Ireland was still attempting to recover from a series of disastrous potato famines, the worst in 1846-7, in which almost one million people died, and another one million emigrated to England and the United States. The catastrophe of the famine destroyed the political machine built by Daniel O'Connell in the 1830s, leaving the native population in political disarray for decades to come.

A. Norman Jeffares describes the young Yeats who was studying art in Dublin as "A raven-haired young man [who]...sought to bring together Protestant and Catholic elements in Ireland in a national literature" (Donoghue, Integrity 21). It is no wonder that growing up in land divided and overburdened with its own history Yeats sought unifying symbols. Yeats searched for a poetic voice which was sounded both authoritative and visionary. His search began not in the world of Irish party politics, or even in his own childhood, but in the world of Irish, Greek and Indian mythology. The young poet took a keen interest in the

supernatural which at first drew him to the doctrine of Theosophy, and Indian mythology, featured most notably in his first collection, Crossways (1889). This emphasis was in contrast to the Ireland of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which was quickly being swept into the world of modern industrialization, called by Yeats the "filthy modern tide." He took an intransigent stance on the issue of Ireland's relation to the modern industrial world: she was to remain closely tied to her mythic past without compromise to the modern. His poetic beginnings reflect this view, though he had not yet articulated it with the vehemence that was to possess him later in his life.

His meanderings through the canon of Irish mythology show that he selected characters onto whom he could project his own identity problems. Yeats adopted and reshaped characters who search for, but never find, an identity which they can find fulfilling. In "The Wanderings of Oisin" Yeats reworks the Irish mythological story of Oisin, the son of the warrior Finn. Yeats read a translation of one version of the myth, the poem by Michael Comyn called The Lay of Oisin in Tir Na Nog. However he made a number of significant changes to Comyn's version. Instead of journeying to The Land of the Young, Oisin, in Yeats's poem, finds himself journeying among three islands, one of dancing, one of victory, and the last of forgetfulness. Richard Ellmann maintains that

> On the personal level, they represent Yeats's idyllic boyhood in Sligo, his subsequent fights with the English boys in West Kensington because he was Irish, and his daydreaming adolescence on Howth (Identity 18).

In this narrative poem there was an encounter between the hero, Oisin, and Saint Patrick. The Fenians, the name given to the people to whom Oisin belonged, were a band of hunters who belonged to a social order which predated Christianity. Oisin goes on a journey to "Tir Na Nog" (The Land of Youth), where time is suspended in relation to earthly time. He exists in that time for three hundred years without experiencing the process of aging. When he returns to his people he finds that the old order has been replaced by the new order of Saint Patrick, who addresses Oisin in dialogue:

> You who are bent, and bald and blind,
> With a heavy heart and a wandering mind,
> Have known three centuries, poets sing,
> Of dalliance with a demon thing. (1-4)

Oisin's response fits into the *ubi sunt* genre, as do many of his early romantic poems. The speaker, Oisin, looks about him in vain for the familiar figures and customs of his people, to which Patrick responds, "You are still wrecked among heathen dreams." The poet's identification is with Oisin, the lost wanderer without identity from that "godless and / passionate age" (216). The words are Patrick's, demanding that the dying hero relinquish his heathen ways and pray for the Christian salvation of his soul. We also

know that while Patrick may have used the words "godless and passionate" pejoratively, Yeats saw passion and godlessness, in the conventional sense, as positive virtues in the face of outworn and despiritualized Christianity. The young Yeats "had grown to hate science...and made a new religion...almost an infallible Church of poetic tradition" (Jeffares 4).

Although Oisin never gives in to Patrick's pleadings, neither does he feel that he belongs in Tir Na Nog. This, Yeats's first published narrative poem, sets the tragic theme of the hero belonging to an ancient, lost world, and thrown by circumstance into a fallen modern world. Oisin is one of the first examples of the mythical Irish hero thrown upon the "filthy modern tide," and resurrected to be mourned over by the priestly Yeats for his new national vision. The doctrine of the mask and the idea of the self repelled by its "dread self" finds its germ in this poem, and its dialogic form is developed to a more complex argument in "Ego Dominus Tuus," written in 1915.

In "The Song of the Happy Shepherd" the first poem in Crossways (1889), the speaker, an Arcadian shepherd, mourns for the "antique joy" of the old world, one which can sustain itself only through dreams. But now in the modern world of "Grey truth," and empirical materialism, dreaming is impossible, replaced by rational and scientific investigation, a practice which only proves that "dead is

all their human truth." The poet has created in both poems an opposition between the ancient and modern worlds, as Hazard Adams puts it, "Arcadian dreaming is opposed to materialist theorizing" (37).

The companion pieces to the Arcadian poems are three poems which focus on themes from Indian mysticism, much of which Yeats learned from his interest in the speeches of Madame Blavatsky at the Theosophical Society. The first to mark the shift from Arcadian and Indian themes to Irish is "The Stolen Child." The speaker, a fairy, offers a human child escape from the inevitable tortures of the world. The alternative is the magical world of the west of Ireland, in particular, Yeats's beloved County Sligo. The radical quality of this poem is the authority that Yeats can lend the fairy speaker who, wise to the travails of conventional human existence, succeeds in luring the young listener:

> Come away, O human child!
> To the waters and the wild
> With a fairy, hand in hand,
> For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand. (9-12)

The words of the fairy also affect the reader on two levels: our ear is enchanted by lines such as "In pools among the rushes / That scarce could bathe a star" (30-31), but we also experience the notoriously poor and Gaelic-speaking west of Ireland in a radically new way, not as Conor Cruise

O'Brien would see it: "backward, associated with poverty and defeat," but as the valuable remnant of a way of life which industrialized England had lost (States 52-53). In dignifying those humiliated aspects of Irish culture Yeats is also dignifying the adopted part of his own identity. His priestly power to enchant is what sets him apart from his peers, for he manipulated Irish themes like clay in his hands with the combination of a colonist's arrogance and a bard's reverence.

In 1889 Yeats met Maude Gonne, the woman who was not only to become the object of his romantic love, but also a symbol of Irish patriotism. He wrote his play The Countess Cathleen for her, and persuaded her to become involved in spreading the news of his National Literary Society, but she was to prove more committed to direct action to remove English rule from Ireland. While she rejected Yeats's romantic overtures, she remained in his professional life as a symbol for his idealization of Ireland.

In the 1890s Yeats further developed his adaptation of Irish mythological figures in the dialogue form. In "Fergus and the Druid" we can see an externalized argument which is taking place between two parts of Yeats's own identity. Fergus is Yeats the reluctant politicized leader, while the Druid is Yeats the transcendent sorcerer who, though physically powerless, possesses the power of wisdom. Fergus pleads with the Druid that he be released from the burdens

of his kingship in preference for the wisdom that the Druid possesses:

Druid. What would you, Fergus?

Fergus. Be no more a king
But learn the dreaming wisdom that is yours.

Druid. Look on my thin grey hair and hollow cheeks
and on these hands that may not lift the sword,
This body trembling like a wind-blown reed.
No woman's loved me, no man sought my help.

Fergus. A king is but a foolish labourer
Who wastes his blood to be another's dream. (21-28)

The use of dialogue allows us to see the internal struggles of the poet who wishes to be public, but like Fergus, finds the crown of public scrutiny to be heavy, and in the end wishes to withdraw into the solitude of wisdom. This poem describes Yeats's conflicted commitments to himself and the public, whom he still felt he needed to culturally seduce in order to feel that he had succeeded as a poet. The poem also predicts his later gradual withdrawal from the struggle with the general public who misunderstood the poet's work.

Yeats wrote "To Ireland in Coming Times" not as a political manifesto, which many have been too quick to suggest, but as a kind of performative utterance which by its very words placed the poet in a tradition and united him with a series of like-minded poets. It came also as a response to criticism from John O'Leary and Maude Gonne for writing "insufficiently Irish poetry" (Unterecker 77). The young Yeats was often given to composing lines about himself as a hero already dead, but immortal in the cultural imagination. This, more than anything, appealed to Yeats: he was making up for any lack he felt in his Irishness. If he were to enter the collective consciousness with "Davis, Mangan and Ferguson" he would be immortal. At this point in his career, he was making a defense of his patriotism by placing himself in the nationalist literary tradition, but in The Rose as a collection he would transcend the limitations of nationalism to seek eternal truth in "the red-rose-bordered hem."

A number of events in the next decade of Yeats's life were to teach him the bitter lesson that his art could not, even in the most indirect way, challenge the authority or doctrine of the Roman Church. The first event to warrant a public attack was the staging in the Antient Concert Rooms in Dublin of The Countess Cathleen in 1899. He first offered to write the play for Maude Gonne as early as 1889, shortly after they first met. It is the first of Yeats's

works to combine his mystical beliefs in the form of a nationalist morality play. In his Autobiographies Yeats later wrote of the play that the central figure, the allegorical Countess, sells her soul

> to certain demons for money that the people may not be compelled by starvation to sell theirs. She dies. The demons had deceived themselves, had trusted to bond and signature, but God sees "the motive and not the deed." My error was doubly dangerous, for I had put the thought into the mouth of an angel. (251)

Copies of pamphlets were circulated condemning the play as heretical. The by now cyclical conflict between Irish nationalism and the fact that the general population had internalized the authority of the Roman Church was to prove impossible to resolve, and it was a war which would claim many valuable victims. For example, Ireland's insistence upon the strict adherence of her public figures to Catholic morality was the greatest single reason for the fall of Charles Stuart Parnell, the last Anglo-Irish hero to unify the vast majority of the Irish people in the cause of Home Rule.[20] Regarding the controversy of The Countess Cathleen Yeats later remarked that "In using what I considered traditional symbols I forgot that in Ireland they are not symbols but realities (Autobiographies, 252). Yeats was soon to learn the harsh lesson of public ingratitude, and for a time he would rage upon the heath like his own beloved King Lear. Yeats was to discover that his character was "a compound of warring personalities," one generous towards the

public, the other furious at their indifference towards his efforts (Unterecker 87).

In 1902, when the widely appealing Cathleen Ni Houlihan was staged, Yeats was received as the nationalist dramatist *par excellence*. He was also careful in this play not to offend Catholic sensibilities. His beloved Maude Gonne played Cathleen, a mysterious old woman who is magically restored to youth and beauty when Michael, the young man whom she persuades to fight for her land, goes out and sacrifices his life for what turns out to be the cause of his country's freedom from English domination. The audience was greatly stirred, and the play could not have been timed better as a simple and popular allegory of the spirit of Ireland thirsting for the blood sacrifice of her young men. In his old age Yeats pondered in the poem "The Man and the Echo," "Did that play of mine send out / Certain men the English shot?" (11-12). The words are not said in self-aggrandizement, but with sincere self-examination: if he felt triumphant that he had combatted the cliche that literature has no direct effect upon political events, would he not have said "That play of mine sent out / Many men the English shot," without a questioning tone? Yeats the playwright had now endeared himself to a large Irish audience. He was to begin to enjoy unprecedented international recognition. In 1907 another public row erupted after the opening performance of John Millington

Synge's The Playboy of the Western World. Yeats discovered the young Synge in Paris in 1897 and encouraged him to go to the Aran Islands for subject matter. On the fourth night of the play, after police had to be brought in to silence a crowd who at times blew trumpets to drown out the actors, Yeats called a public meeting to personally defend the play. To his disappointment, "no man of all literary Dublin had dared to show his face at the public debate" (Jeffares, Yeats 157). Only Yeats's own father came to the defense of his son, who recorded the event many years later in "Beautiful Lofty Things":

> My father upon the Abbey stage, before him a raging crowd:
> 'This Land of Saints', and then the applause died out,
> 'Of plaster Saints'; his beautiful mischievous head thrown back. (2-4)

Synge felt that the play restored sex to Irish drama but that people were so shocked that they "saw sex only." The Catholic nationalist public perceived the comedy as an insulting portrayal of the people of Ireland's rural West whose idealization had been of late firmly fixed in the public's mind. To humanize these people by sexualizing them led many members of the public to feel betrayed by Yeats who did not, like the majority, subscribe to the myth of Irish sexual abstinence which by then had become a sacred cultural

norm. Ironically, Yeats's Cathleen Ni Houlihan probably helped contribute to the international public's romanticization of the rural West.

Yeats found an escape from this exhausting public controversy by embarking upon a lecture tour of the United States later the same year. It earned him a substantial sum of money and secured his place in the international literary world. Furthermore, the Abbey Theatre, the first national theatre in Ireland, had by 1911 earned international respect and toured in the United States, though not without more controversy of the kind suffered over the staging of Playboy. Yeats was beginning to be toughened by his experience in the world of politics, and as a result at this time he distanced himself as much as possible from that exhausting and frustrating world, which, had he allowed it, would have sapped him of his precious energies.

Yet the private man could not help making constant comments on the decay of nationalism in Ireland. In the section of his Autobiography appropriately entitled "Estrangement," written in 1909, Yeats wrote:

> There is a dying out of national feeling very simple in its origin. You cannot keep the idea of a nation alive where there are no national institutions to reverence, no national success to admire, without a model of it in the mind of the people. (334)

Yeats composed "Pardon, Old Fathers" in December 1913, two and a half years before the tumultuous events of 1916

and the Anglo-Irish war that followed. It is a prefatory poem to the collection entitled Responsibilities, a gathering filled with much finger-pointing at himself as well as others. The poems in this collection are both external and internal rhetorical exercises whose goals are to unburden the weight of self-expectation and to lend dignity to those parts of the poet's identity which he feels has been humiliated. He is moving spiritually away from his earlier romantic poetry. But always conscious that a smooth transition in his vast design had to me maintained, Yeats also performed what Raymond Williams calls "his muffled, nuanced treaty with...the celtic twilight" (Modernism 34).

Each poem contains an argument centered around the relationship between the poet and his ancestors, both familial and spiritual. When the speaker chants "Romantic Ireland's dead and gone" he is both condemning the unheroic present and mourning for that part of his soul which thirsts for the like of his dead friend, O'Leary. Yeats's inner disappointments with Ireland are externalized and transformed into a political manifesto.

In the prefatory poem, the speaker communes with his dead ancestors. In apologizing publicly to his ancestors, he is elevating them, and in turn, himself. The spirits of his ancestors are infused with mystery and dignity. We are finally introduced to them with a casual, anecdotal air which is a mere foil for the caricature he sketches of each

of them. When the speaker asks forgiveness for having fathered nothing more than books, he is performing an act of dramatic self-admonishment which has the conciliatory effect of a theatrically public apology. While he pleads that his writings should suffice to a jury of seemingly unforgiving ghosts, he is also aggrandizing himself before his enemies.

This is the first of many poems in which Yeats mythologizes his ancestors. It is also placed in a collection which marks Yeats's entry into a world in which he felt he had to guard jealously his cultural and ancestral property. A few months earlier George Moore had published "Vale," an attack on Yeats's and Lady Gregory's Irish Literary Revival. Moore unleashed his spleen on Yeats because of a speech which Yeats had made attacking Ireland's middle class for their failure to give financial support to the construction of a gallery on the river Liffey to house a large collection of impressionist paintings belonging to Sir Hugh Lane, the nephew of Lady Gregory. In that speech, Yeats attacked everything which he saw as middle class, inadvertently insulting the sensibilities of Moore and George Russell (AE) who were in the audience. Moore points out in no uncertain terms in "Vale" that Yeats's ancestry is lower middle class, with "millers and ship owners on one side, and on the other a portrait painter of distinction" (113). Moore was attempting to flush out Yeats's folly from the rhetorical undergrowth and shoot it as it flew. The

attacks and counter-attacks between Yeats and his contemporaries would have been more at home in the age of Dryden, but this was itself a flamboyant age in which each member consciously invoked members of that earlier wit-barbed community, each bound to the other by his differences in political and aesthetic allegiance. Unfortunately this jousting had all the seriousness and little of the playfulness of the earlier Augustans.

A. Norman Jeffares insists that, "Pardon, Old Fathers" "weighed the new politicians against the old heroes and found them sadly lacking" (Commentary 115). We, of course, find this theme played out in the first poem in the collection, "September 1913," wherein "romantic Ireland's dead and gone." This is a clever way to escape the pains of the present and feel that one does not really belong in this modern, commercial, and heroless age. The speaker first points to one of his ancestor's colonial privileges:

> Pardon, old fathers, if you still remain
> Somewhere in ear-shot of the story's end,
> Old Dublin merchant 'free of ten and four'. (1-3)

The poem has an eschatological beginning in the second line - "the story's end." Yeats knew that the reign of his own people was soon to be over and he invokes the ghosts of his ancestors both to rebuke and forgive the son turned prodigal for not having yet produced an heir. The first "old father" invoked is Jervis Yeats, a linen merchant who

died in 1712, the first of Yeats's ancestors to settle in Ireland. Apparently the "ten and four" was a sales tax from which certain Dublin merchants were exempted. This is one of many instances in which Yeats's poetic license amends fact in the quest to make his point more convincing; his prose, however, avoids the risks of embellishment. The point still stands: his ancestors were English merchants who entered Ireland via Dublin, enjoying the privileges of colonists. He recognizes this, and does not apologize for it, since he will later show their generous contributions to Ireland.

Yeats's great-grandfather, John Yeats (1774-1846) was the Church of Ireland rector of Drumcliffe, County Sligo, in whose graveyard Yeats is now buried. The rector was a friend and ally of the Irish revolutionary, Robert Emmet (1778-1803) who led the rebellion of 1803, aborted by the English garrison, its leaders executed. Yeats's great-grandfather was briefly implicated in the rebellion and was detained by the troops for a short time. That Yeats should invoke this ancestor is not only a means of elevating the scholarly side of his family and denying the mercantile side, but also a vindication of the poet's own revolutionary sensibilities, though there are no genuine rebel leaders in Yeats's lineage.

The speaker does everything in his power to contrast the old middle class, whom he labels "merchant and scholar,"

with the new, whom he calls "hucksters." Out of context, this might merely look like more ammunition for those critics who accuse Yeats of outlandish snobbery and elitism. But when seen as a response to the attacks of George Moore, Yeats's dressing up of his ancestors is a ritualistic but spiritually vital establishment of pride in ancestors, and therefore in himself. This is more than mere fanciful self aggrandizement, it is a defense of self-esteem through the employment of a narrative device of mythologizing one's ancestors. To do otherwise, that is, to denigrate his ancestors, would be a violation of what Yeats saw as the necessary obeisance to one's lineage. As Richard Ellmann puts it,

> One of Yeats's favorite methods in Responsibilities is to pose the experiences of the present against these shadowy judges and their high, non-mortal standards...by seeing his experiences through their eyes...he imparts majesty and authority to his comments on his time and his own affairs. (Identity 114)

Yeats does not seem to care that the next ancestral figures cited, "A Butler or an Armstrong" fought on the side of William of Orange against James II at the Battle of the Boyne. It only matters to him that they are his, that they are dead, and that they were heroic. Rather than hand pick those ancestors who matched a publicly sanctioned set of politically correct qualities, Yeats includes those ancestral ghosts who were part of the subjugation of Ireland. He leaves himself open to ridicule from those

simplistic Irish nationalists who depend on identity politics to determine whether one can fit the proper mold of the "true and pure" Irish citizen. The mention of the Battle of the Boyne at the center of the poem also marks a shift from the lofty and heroic to the more frivolous delight in a great-uncle, who, according to family lore, "leaped overboard/After a ragged hat in Biscay Bay." What marks all of Yeats's ghosts is their passionate intensity: they are never lukewarm.

Finally, the poet turns to his own father's ghost, that "silent and fierce old man" who stands out from the others because he is seen at a mere breath's distance, the infuser of passion, the inspirer who set Yeats's "boyish lips to say, / 'Only the wasteful virtues earn the sun'." The previously playful tone is shattered by this intimacy which leads us to the final and naked plea:

> Pardon that for a barren passion's sake
> Although I have come close on forty-nine,
> I have no child, I have nothing but a book,
> Nothing but that to prove your blood and mine.
> (19-22)

For Yeats, the dead take on a mythical role quite separate from their active lives on earth. This is especially true of Yeats's most important spiritual ancestor the tragic hero, Charles Stuart Parnell. The invocation of Greek myth was common among artists seeking a spiritual

lineage, but Yeats transformed more recently dead Irish heroes, such as Parnell, O'Leary, Davis, Mangan, as well as his own ancestors, into mythical figures of Greek stature. Their deaths rendered them ductile for the artist's hand, and while he painted them with the drama of Michelangelo, he stoops to beg their exoneration, resigned to relinquish the imaginary for the real. It is as much a plea for self-forgiveness that he could not feel worthy of inclusion in what he saw as a glorious canvas. Perhaps nowhere more vehemently does Yeats launch a direct attack upon those whom he felt had certain responsibilities and had abdicated them than in "September 1913." Here the lyrical Yeats is dead and gone, and the spleen-filled Yeats has found a voice, though its music strikes a dirge-like chord:

> What need you, being come to sense,
> But fumble in a greasy till
> And add the halfpence to the pence
> And prayer to shivering prayer, until
> You have dried the marrow from the bone;
> For men were born to pray and save:
> Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
> It's with O'Leary in the grave. (1-8)

The poem was appropriately first published in the Irish Times, a newspaper then and now the daily staple of Ireland's educated classes. It is precisely with this class that he was so bitterly disappointed. The specific source

of his rage was the refusal on the part of the Dublin Corporation to help fund a gallery for Hugh Lane's paintings.[21] Plans for the gallery were scrapped shortly before he composed this poem. The attack centers on the failure of this new class to rise above the rudiments of petit-capitalism and their general preoccupation with middle-class respectability. The meanness of the image of "halfpence to the pence" and "prayer to shivering prayer" adds to the characterization of the Irish as having given birth to a class with as much cultural and political ambition as that of a corner shopkeeper.

Yeats discovered an ability in verse to express "scorn and anger, using bitter political rhetoric," and perhaps it was no accident that the previously pacifist poet was now, under the instruction of Ezra Pound, learning how to fence (Jeffares, Yeats, 199). But at the same time he was to work out more effectively his doctrine of opposites and the mask. In contemplating this theory he came up with immortal thoughts like,

> We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but out of a quarrel with ourselves, poetry. Unlike the rhetoricians, who get a confident voice from remembering the crown they have won or will win, we sing amid uncertainty; and smitten even in the presence of the most high beauty by the knowledge of our solitude, our rhythm shudders (Memoirs 331)

The Great War of 1914-18 went by virtually unacknowledged by Yeats, who made little or no direct reference to it in his poetry. In a letter to his father in

September 1914, Yeats expressed the disturbing conviction that England was paying the price for having despised intellect. But in a more pacifist tone, he goes on to say that the war would probably end in a draw, making the warring factions destitute "though not too poor to spend what is left of their substance preparing for it" (Letters 588). The puzzling Yeats of contradictory and obtuse epigram is always corrected by the man of startling common sense and objectivity. The Irish public felt differently. John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Party, encouraged his supporters to enlist. Over 100,000 Irishmen went to the front to fight and die on the side of England. The Home Rule Bill, which had received the royal assent only a month before England's entry into war, was now postponed indefinitely, the negotiations to be reopened during peacetime. On the surface this delay seemed to have put the entire nationalist movement on hold.

On Easter Monday 1916, Yeats was enjoying a visit with friends in Gloucestershire. In Dublin, the Irish Republic was declared. The center of the city was occupied by Republican forces who held out for five days against a barage of shelling from British forces, who had gunboats on the river Liffey firing at the epicenter of the insurrection, the General Post Office on what was then Sackville Street. At the end of the uprising, which had very little support from the Irish general public, some five

hundred were killed and the leaders arrested. In the ensuing weeks fifteen of the leaders were court martialed by the British militia and executed. They included Padraig Pearse, the poet and school teacher; Thomas McDonagh, the critic and university lecturer; James Connolly, the socialist labor leader; and John McBride, Maude Gonne's estranged husband. Yeats's friend, Constance Gore-Booth, now Countess Markiewicz after her marriage to a Polish count, was condemned to death for her part in the insurrection, but at the last moment her execution was stayed on account of her sex. Sir Roger Casement was arrested in County Cork for his part in bringing arms from Germany for the insurrection and later hanged in Pentonville Gaol, London.

This grouping of artists, writers, teachers and intellectuals who had taken up arms against the insurmountable British militia had known that their chances of victory were slight, but they nevertheless stood together in the name of the removal of British rule. Yeats was horrified by the events, not just because he knew intimately a number of those executed and imprisoned, but also because the event was a reminder that the cause of Irish nationalism no longer merely involved literary meetings and arguments about the role of art in public morality.

Yeats must have been sharply aware of his role, however indirect, in the events leading up to the uprising. As D.

George Boyce puts it,

> The presence of McDonagh, Plunkett and Pearse in the inner council of the IRB, and their Role in planning the easter rising, links that entreprise with the literary movement of the 1890s: and some have seen the rising as 'almost as much a monument to the Irish Literary Renaissance as to the Irish Volunteers.' (307)

Literary symbolism came naturally to those who fought in the uprising, especially Pearse, who, one year earlier at the funeral of the veteran Fenian O'Donovan Rossa eulogized as if to predict the events about to happen, "Life springs from death and from the graves of these patriot men and women spring living nations" (137). While this kind of rhetoric is akin to that in Cathleen Ni Houlihan, that is, bereft of any irony, Yeats now had to revise his previous stance towards those now dead, especially those whom he had criticized in the preceding years. In his Autobiography, for example, Yeats mentions a meeting with Thomas Mc Donagh in 1909: "Met with McDonagh yesterday -- a man with some literary faculty which will probably come to nothing through lack of culture and encouragement" (331). He was to take a more deferential approach to the same McDonagh, who was executed one week after the uprising:

> This other his helper and friend
> Was coming into his force;
> He might have won fame in the end,
> So sensitive his nature seemed
> So daring and sweet his thought. (26-30)

Among the many restorations that occurred as a result of the uprising, one was Yeats's faith in Ireland. His unpretentious tone and lyrical pathos mark a radical turn of events in the life of the poet as well as the man. The revolutionary and poetic Yeats were restored by death in the manner of Yeats's own creation, Cathleen Ni Houlihan.

The recurrent metaphor of change in the first two stanzas is made ironic, for it is the refusal to change on the part of those who died which distinguishes them from other, ever-changing, natural events. Yeats admired the intractable qualities of the leaders: qualities which transformed them from real living people into eternal symbols for their nation. On a political level, Yeats must also have recognized something radically different about this particular uprising:

> The rising cleared up a few political ambiguities, for it was distinguished from earlier rebellions and insurrections by the character of its participants: whereas the leaders of previous rebellions, like those in 1798 and 1848 were Anglo-Irish, the work of the Anglo-Irish in revolt against the English part of their inheritance...1916 was a rebellion by members of the Catholic nation, and one that did not incur the odium of the hierarchy...the devout Catholicism of the leaders and the men of 1916...was one of the most striking aspects of their personalities. (Boyce 310-11)

In effect Yeats was for the first time directly uninvolved with a major event in the movement for Irish independence. As an Anglo-Irish Protestant, he was estranged from the uprising, but he could also sympathize

with the leaders, most of whom he knew personally. He could certainly understand their widespread unpopularity among the Irish people until they became martyrs. Yet he was at a distance from them, and in the poem he tries to convince us that somehow he has a nagging sense that he, too, is involved:

> I have met them at close of day
> Coming with vivid faces
> From counter or desk among grey
> Eighteenth-century houses. (1-4)

The speaker's insistence upon beginning with the first person singular asserts his involvement with the events, before, during, and after. His mention of "grey / eighteenth-century houses" adds to the feeling of the "casual comedy" of everyday mundane life, a foil for the impending sacrifice and drama. But it also includes the Anglo-Irish, through the architectural allusion, in the entire event. Those eighteenth-century houses embodied English imperialism to the revolutionaries. What would seem to be incongruity is another example of Yeats's subtle insertion of his imagined Anglo-Irish tradition into revolutionary events.

Yeats always tried to be above politics, but this poem's powerful evocation of the uprising and the transformative effects of formerly peaceful people taking up arms against a great imperial power also forced Yeats to set

a distance between himself and those who died. Yet no one among the Catholic population could capture the drama, the political, and the historical significance of the event while maintaining a vital tension between the personal and the political throughout a poem. The first stanza's arm's-reach closeness to the characters is transformed through the metaphor of the unchanging and heart-hardened stone in the third stanza to the cathedral-ceiling publicity of the final stanza's

> And what if excess of love
> Bewildered them till they died?
> I write it out in verse --
> MacDonagh and McBride
> And Connolly and Pearse,
> Now and in time to be,
> Wherever green is worn,
> Are changed, changed utterly:
> A terrible beauty is born. (72-80)

The poem contain Yeats's characteristic other-worldly resonance without the employment of his rather dense Theosophical theories. As such, his confidence in the real and worldly has been restored by the act of sacrifice: it is no longer an unrealized possibility to be repeatedly acted out in Cathleen Ni Houlihan. The five months which went by between the events and the poem's composition were filled with a remarkable turnaround in the public's reaction to the

revolutionary leaders.

The public outrage over the executions was to inject new life into the movement for independence. Yeats's earlier hypothesis that blood needed to be spilled to regenerate the nation's spirit proved to be true. If Yeats had any doubts about his place in Irish history, he should have relinquished them after the publication of "Easter 1916." It is both a self-humbling and self-aggrandizing response to the rage and disappointment of "September 1913," and as such, it makes a worthy apology for his earlier venting of spleen. The publicity surrounding the publication of "September 1913" and this retraction made Yeats more of a public figure, increasingly conscious of a larger and more receptive audience: private poetry has become public rhetoric.

No other poet or public figure, Gaelic-Irish or Anglo-Irish has more humanely eulogized the deaths of men who were at once artists, national revolutionaries, and personal friends of the poet. In turn, Yeats rediscovered a new poetic style combining lyricism and everyday speech, Nationalism and Unionism. Richard Ellmann is correct when he asserts that the poem "satisfied both the nationalists and the anti-nationalists (Identity 144). Binary opposites are finally united in a poem which uses as its central metaphor the stone in the midst of the stream. By its very steadfastness, the stone, like those who fought and died,

caused fundamental change. The poem satisfies the need on the part of Ireland to mark this event with all the personal, spiritual and nationalistic significance it could carry. It also satisfied Yeats's need to be reconciled to his commitment to his country, as well as to the Anglo-Irish tradition. He manages this multicultural trick through the use of the stone metaphor, for he begins the last stanza with

> Too long a sacrifice
> Can make a stone of the heart
> O when may it suffice? (57-59)

The immovable stone, which was affirmative and unifying in the third stanza, has now been rendered emblematic of irrational and over-passionate people who sacrifice too much (181). Now they are seen as perhaps mistaken in their stone-hearted steadfastness. A Unionist reading of this line would conclude that Yeats was criticizing those who sacrificed themselves as being less than rational, and therefore less than fully human. Thus a poem which is widely held as the great tribute to Irish nationalism contains within it readings which are Unionist.

The poem marks a relatively short interlude of an unstable peace between the poet and his people, for Yeats was to continue in his quest to fix the place of the Anglo-Irish in the history and soul of Ireland. The Irish would not have it, and their only expression of nationalism took

the form of what Yeats saw as a small-minded adherence to Catholicism.

In 1919, two years after he married George Hyde-Lees, Yeats moved into his restored Norman tower, Thoor Ballylee, just two miles from his beloved Coole Park. The restoration of the tower and the adjoining cottage as a home for the stately aristocrat and his English wife struck a chord of alienation from the masses once again. Yeats may not have been conscious of it, but in marrying a young Englishwoman and installing her in what was for all intents and purposes a castle, he was imitating a centuries-old practice among the English gentry in Ireland. It takes little imagination to realize the resentment of the majority of the people who had not the capacity to understand Yeats's radical ideological differences from the Protestant Ascendancy which produced him.

In 1909 Yeats wrote in his journal:

> This house has enriched my soul out of measure, because here life moves without restraint through spacious forms. Here there has been no compelling labor, no poverty-thwarted impulse (225).

The house is Coole Park, the home of Lady Gregory, where the two spent much time orchestrating the Irish Literary Revival. It is, paradoxically, one of the bastions of the Protestant ascendancy and the wellspring of the cultural movement which was to spur the Anglo-Irish war that culminated in a British withdrawal from all but six counties in Ireland. Yeats followed in the footsteps of his Anglo-

Irish forbears in two vital ways: first, his sense of tradition is embedded in the colonial idea of property ownership, and second, he continued in the Anglo-Irish tradition of refurbishing the remnants of early Irish culture for the purpose of validating his own identity. In essence, as Richard Ellmann argues, "Man, according to Yeats, is a being who is always endeavoring to construct by fiction what he lacks in fact. Born incomplete, he conceives of completeness and to that extent attains it" (Ellmann, Identity, xviii-xix). So Yeats got what he wanted, even if only imaginatively: he had one foot in the Protestant ascendancy camp -- well-shod in fine leather -- and the other, hobnailed -- in the Irish nationalist camp. But this nationalism contained a special blend of mythical fervor and aristocratic values, the inevitable result of which was the surfacing of Yeats's now often-cited fascistic tendencies. His national identity was divided between adopted nationalist leanings and a more deeply ingrained ascendancy mentality; between what he wished himself to be as an Irish leader and how he in fact felt about Ireland and the Irish.

In "Ancestral Houses" Yeats's allegiance is torn between the aristocratic values of his ancestors and the knowledge that as the last vestiges of the Protestant ascendancy crumbled, the new Catholic middle-class Ireland was emerging. The poem also describes Yeats's colonial

relationship with the Irish landscape, one which his ancestors inscribed with decorative gardens, fountains, and walks. It is the first in a series of poems published in 1923 entitled "Meditations in Time of Civil War." The tone of this series is somber and elegiac. But this is also Yeats at his most political and contemporary, a far cry from the younger lyricist who invented a fantasy world of Celtic myth. The speaker creates a pastoral vision of the vessels of the Anglo-Irish tradition while also seeking to justify the inclusion of the ascendancy in the power structure of the new Ireland, which at that time was an autumnal colony. His attitude towards the land itself is paternal, for as Seamus Deane would put it, "that which is Unionist or Protestant, belongs to paternity, the earth cultivated" (Celtic Revivals, 175).

In the first stanza, the speaker encapsulates the classic "trickle-down" theory of conservative economics, though here it is expressed in terms of cultural values: "Surely among a rich man's flowering lawns, / Life overflows without ambitious pains" (1-2). This is a poem which celebrates the transformation of land from its "natural" shape for the maintenance of the aristocratic order. We are in an Ireland which Yeats knew intimately: the formal garden which hid the more distant plantation, as seen through the elegant Georgian window pane. From this privileged perspective, he imagined the "Big house" to be a vital

component in any "proper" hierarchical social structure.[22] The "rich man" serves the poor by his very position at the top of the ladder, serving both as a model and a priest through whom values overflow and nourish the rest of society.

Nature herself is put to work, but not for commercial profit. She must "Never stoop to a mechanical/Or servile shape, at other's beck and call" (7-8). Instead she must be cosmetically altered to conform to colonial aesthetic principles. And this artificial pastoral view of nature is seen through a well-ground lens which blurs the messy political realities of the pasture and those who tend it. Only under these conditions, asserts the speaker, can nature be "useful." So, the analogy goes, the formal garden, commercially *useless* land, is a fountain of life for the debased, or commercially *useful*, surrounding countryside.

The key word in this rhetorical riddle is the first, "Surely," for this suggests both doubt and pleading. The speaker pleads the case of his ancestors in this first stanza, and indicts them further on. The audience for this "hearing" are, presumably, the new Irish government, which was made up largely of middle-class farmers and shopkeepers who could not possibly understand the complex rhetoric here employed. Thus the poem must be private, not public, rhetoric. The audience here is Yeats himself, the conflicted colonist/nationalist.

Yeats feared, with good reason, that his aristocratic values would be "beaten into an unnatural," or worse, commercially useful, shape--at "the beck and call" of an artless culture. Yeats's fears are well-founded, for the hands of the new Irish government were more prone to "fumble in a greasy till" than preserve their own culture. Yeats's colonial aesthetic is less Protestant than aristocratic, for it rejects the Dissenter's utilitarianism and embraces the colonial comforts of the Big House and garden.

The most striking paradox in this first stanza is in the claim that the aristocratic garden is a source of life's vitality even though it is far from "natural" in its shape. However, the labor which facilitated this vitality was provided for the ascendancy by the very people -- the peasant Irish -- who now sought the overthrow of the "planted hills" and "the rich man's flowering lawns."

The image of life overflowing into a basin is one familiar to the aristocracy: the ornamental fountain. This expensive toy, used to adorn the gardens of the rich, the speaker tries to convince us, is to be praised by the lower orders because it showers down life not only on the rich, but also on the poor who built it.

The second stanza introduces two opposing symbols, the first upholds the idea of the cultural cornucopia of the manor house, but the second recognizes the emptiness of that same house. The first image, "The abounding glittering jet",

is a recurrent image in Yeats's poetry, and it symbolizes for Yeats, according to Norman Jeffares, "an almost fierce joy in mere living" (268). This contrasts sharply with the image of the sea-shell, which symbolizes "the lovely emptiness of wealth" (Ellman, 169). Yeats's attack on bourgeois values becomes clearer through the use of the sea-shell, for it is vulnerable to the trampling boots of the artless philistines who Yeats feared would rule the country.

Yeats also employs the sea shell as an important symbol in his early poetry. In "The Song of the Happy Shepherd" the first poem in Crossways (1889), we are urged to "Go gather by the humming sea / Some twisted, echo-harboring shell, / And to its lips thy story tell" (35-37). The shell is set in opposition to the learning of "starry men" and the world of empirical science, for it can be the receptacle of the truth "in thine own heart." According to T.R. Henn, the sea-shell also represents Yeats's beloved Sligo, the home of the Pollexfens, for Sligo literally means "The place of sea-shells" (74). But for Jeffares, Yeats's use of the image of the sea-shell comes from his reading of Shelley's "The Revolt of Islam" in which the image of the sea-shell as a sign of vulnerability is juxtaposed with the image of the fountain, as it is here (269). The sea-shell, like the ancestral house, has no public or collective value. The idea that the ancestral house could be reduced to a "sea-shell" rings true, for the Coole Park estate was sold

by the government of the Republic of Ireland "in 1941, to a local builder for the price of its stone" (Donoghue, Anglo-Ireland 37).

In the third stanza, the speaker's ancestors are elevated higher, and called "violent and bitter men" while their descendants are reduced to being mice. In other words, out of the brutality of the colonization of Ireland the great houses were built, as if their very existence justified the brutality of the regime which built them. The speaker insists that the houses embody a sweetness which "all long for", a "gentleness none there had ever known." The words "all" and "none", we must assume, refer to the native Irish who were kept at a distance from the "gentleness" of the great houses. They longed for this sweetness even though they were not themselves aware of that desire. The speaker also implies that despite the violence and bitterness of the patron and architect, the end result is nevertheless beautiful, a "sweetness" has been born of violence. Is this more of the "terrible beauty," first coined in "Easter 1916"?

Here is one of many instances where Yeats uses "violence and bitterness" as complements. Here he suffers from nostalgia for a more heroic age which, he believed, was enjoyed by his Anglo-Irish ancestors. Yeats's admiration for the violent builders of these houses is centered on their all-important passion, something their descendants had

lost through generations of comfort and disengagement from the primal "violence" and intensity of their forefathers. The "filthy modern tide" has diluted their passion, rendering them mice. Specifically, we must assume that Yeats was pointing his finger at those Anglo-Irish landlords who, during the Irish Civil War, were happy to sell their estates and return to England.[23]

The central dilemma posed by the poem comes into sharper focus in the penultimate stanza. We can gloss this with "What if the gardens, lawns and gavelled paths of these houses are indifferent as to whether we are great or violent." In speaking as "We," the speaker is defending both himself and his ancestors. He aligns himself with the "violent and bitter men" who erected these houses, not their weakened descendants. The enemy of bitterness and violence is timidity, a condition from which Yeats did not suffer.

The "gardens where the peacock strays" are memories of Yeats's friend Lady Ottoline Morrell's house and garden, near Oxford, according to A. Norman Jeffares (268). The speaker's connecting English and Anglo-Irish great houses and their living feathered garden decorations has the effect of both elevating the Anglo-Irish house by its association with another in England and rendering the ancestral house as an utterly foreign object in Ireland. The colonial vision is always reaching back to the motherland for a point of reference or comparison. But the invocation of Juno and her

peacocks reminds us of Yeats's Vision, wherein he claims that the scream of the peacock signals the next turn of the gyre. But here the peacock does not scream; all is sleepy and dangerously unheroic. The question here begins to focus the speaker's assertion, which we can interpret, "Maybe all of this comfort and luxury are destructive to the strong, heroic blood of each generation."

As with many of Yeats's "public" poems, the speaker asks a series of questions which, through inductive reasoning, the reader is supposed to answer. But in "Ancestral Houses" the implied answers are never clear. For he seems to be saying that beauty and wealth -- the fountain of life itself -- are created by the passion of violence and bitterness. However, he then turns this position around to refute the previous statement: "but this beauty and comfort become corrupted when too long disengaged from those earlier passions which created them." This all implies that another cycle of violence and creativity is called for. In the final stanza, a question of the penultimate is reiterated in a more confident tone of defense. The speaker is careful to replace the word violence with "greatness" in an all-out tribute to the imagined heroism of the dead Protestant ascendancy:

> What if the glory of escutcheoned doors,
> And buildings that a haughtier age designed,
> .....

But take our greatness with our bitterness? (33-40)

What at first appears to be an admonishment of colonial violence ends up being a defense of it. The speaker pleads the case of his ancestors by creating a colonial aesthetic which elevates functionless beauty as a creation of a violent but more heroic age. This aesthetic has credibility in the age in which it was written because Yeats's tradition was now one which belonged in the past. He recognized that the manor house now represented, as Denis Donoghue puts it, "the enslavement of the strong to the weak" (Anglo-Ireland 38). But Richard Gill maintains that while the Big House was "paradoxically, dying as a social actuality" it also was, because of Yeats's work "reborn, transfigured as a symbol. Divorced from the nagging injustices and complexities of its local history, the house came to represent a humane order of culture and civility, a state of community beyond the circumstances of nation or class" (168). Yeats also recognized that inherited wealth needs violence to protect it from disintegration, but also recognizes that this violence will never be able to protect it from eventual decay. We are reminded of the world described in Elizbeth Bowen's novel The Last September in which the heroine, Lois Farquar, wanders in the emptiness of the abandoned Big House. Its gardens and groves, conscious of their foreignness to the surrounding countryside shrink

in fear:

> Looking down, it seemed to Lois they lived in a forest; spaces of lawns blotted out in the pasture and dusk of trees. She wondered they were not smothered; then wondered more were they not afraid...The house seemed to be pressing down low in apprehension, hiding its face...It seemed to gather its trees close in fright and amazement at the wide light lovely unloving country, the unwilling bosom whereon it was set. (95-6)

The demise of the world of the Big House with the comings and goings of the British garrison, of canceled afternoon teas, is one mourned by a host of Anglo-Irish writers, of whom Yeats was the devout congregant and priest. It was, as Terence Brown puts it, "Yeats's genius to realize that at that moment of Anglo-Irish collapse he could so celebrate a class that its demise would be seen not simply as a fact of history but as an event that threatened the death of a culture" (Ireland 133).

This poem and its companion pieces are a remarkable outflow of the attempt on Yeats's part to "fit in" to the new Ireland. He struggled to come to terms with the history of his ancestors, but also he wanted to be counted with those revolutionaries who began the process which gave birth to the new state. But Yeats felt ambivalent about this new Ireland, as the state felt about him. His work in the senate of the Free State from 1922 to 1928 was a time of unprecedented service on the part of a man who never even declared himself a politician or public servant. Elizabeth Cullingford tells us that Yeats himself underestimated the

degree to which he served the country through his senatorial seat, and that by the end of his term he was "worn out by the seemingly endless fight against mob Catholicism" (197). Terence Brown argues convincingly that religious practice was the closest encounter most Irish Catholics and Protestants had with high culture (Ireland 130). The intensity of adherence of the general population to their faith made religious preference more than mere religious practice. Ireland was, and unfortunately still is, a place where the badge of religion carries more weight than any other aspect of the people's identity. The shift from identification with a religious group is hard to shed in favor of identification with the idea of a unified nation of people born in the same place. Consequently, religious polarization continued to increase despite Yeats's call for a new non-sectarian nation. In a letter to Olivia Shakespear in 1928, Yeats argued that the religious intolerance of the Catholic population was "ignorance organized under its priests," while "unorganized and largely terrified intelligence looks on helpless and angry" (Letters 747).

While the Irish rejected Yeats's vision of Irish culture, they elected him a senator. In 1925, three years after the signing of the treaty which gave the south of Ireland independence, Yeats sent a letter to be read before the Irish senate appealing to the leaders of the newly

formed Free State to turn around a government ban on divorce. At this point in his career, Yeats was finding himself more urgently setting out to defend his Protestant heritage, which only alienated him from the more staunchly Catholic leaders of the new government. A.N. Jeffares points out that "at this period, Yeats was discovering his Anglo-Irish inheritance" (Commentary 265). But it is no accident that he should pursue this side of his identity and seemingly make a sudden turnabout in his leanings. In resisting the encroaching Roman Catholic theocracy's government ban on divorce in the Free State, Yeats bound himself proudly to his Protestant Anglo-Irish forebears by publishing an 'undelivered speech' in March 1925:

> I am proud to consider myself a typical man of that minority. We against whom you have done this thing are no petty people. We are one of the great stocks of Europe. We are the people of Burke; we are the people of Grattan; we are the people of Swift, the people of Emmett, the people of Parnell. We have created most of the modern literature in this country. We have created the best of its political allegiance (Jeffares, Biography 265).

This speech has been cited by many of Yeats's critics to paint him as an Anglo-Irish authoritarian. Seamus Deane, for example, criticizes Yeats for invoking the names of Burke and Swift, insisting that he was "inventing" a lineage which would blur the distinctions between two traditions, one colonial, the other colonized (Celtic 14). However, when seen in the context of the divorce debates and the authoritarianism of the Catholic-run government, his speech

is utterly justifiable. Yeats upheld the rights of minorities against what Elizabeth Cullingford calls "the tyranny of the majority" (183). Protestants, women, and the poor were all helped by Yeats's senatorial efforts. His struggle against the rising conservative clericalism in the late 1920s led him into a more rigid defense of the Protestant libertarian tradition against "compulsory Gaelic, the refusal of divorce, and censorship" which "were making reunification with the North impossible" (Cullingford, 182). His vision of a united Ireland with tolerance for minorities had little support, and was another chapter in what could only be seen as a tragic narrative.

When Yeats turned his sights away from direct involvement in politics in the early 1930s he was embittered for reasons which are understandable considering the laborious efforts he had made to convince Ireland that his cultural plans would be beneficial for the future of the country. That he attacked the Irish democratic government, which he felt had failed to take proper leadership in rebuilding a new nation, by way of his momentary admiration of Mussolini's version of fascism, says more about his personal disappointment than any tendencies toward fascism on his part. As Elizabeth Cullingford argues "Yeats's interest in fascism was initially motivated by his desire to corroborate the historical speculations formulated in A Vision. He had the recurring idea that a "red terror" would

stalk Europe, and after his hearing of the atrocities meted out by the Bolsheviks, his disdain for communism began to grow. His equation of Marxism with modern scientific materialism was more of that "filthy modern tide."

The last years of Yeats's life are a sorry battle between the man and the masses. His increased disdain for the world of politics caused him to publish outrageous attacks on the decay of intelligence under democracy in his deliberately provocative On the Boiler (1938). The result was an increasing rift between Yeats and the bulk of political and literary thinkers in Ireland. This rift has increased over the past three decades. The leading literary critics in Ireland have been revising Yeats not so much as a poet, but as a public figure. The revision of Yeats has been concurrent with the revision of such events as the Easter Rising of 1916, and the Anglo-Irish War of 1920-21. In short, this revision has taken the form of blunt denials not only of the necessity of these events, but often of their very existence.

Yeats was reinterred under Ben Bulben with full state honors in 1948, nine years after his death and burial in Roquebrune, France. Today he is assailed by what we might call a literary Unionist backlash. He is being held at least partially responsible for the violence of the I.R.A., since he is often cited as encouraging the dangerous business of Irish nationalism. Some Nationalists also

attack Yeats as little more than another decadent aristocratic English colonist who wished to "go native" in order to find an identity. There is a grain of truth in both statements, but neither does credit to the breadth of Yeats's efforts and generosity. He produced his own brand of nationalist poetry which resonated internationally, and was used as the template for subsequent postcolonial cultures throughout the world. That Yeats served the Free State population through his public work as a senator and as Ireland's greatest poet laureate is a tribute to his commitment to an idea of a nation which has yet to be realized.

The chief of Yeats's critics is the statesman, politician, and literary critic, Conor Cruise O'Brien. His attack began at the same time when many literary critics of the post-colonial world who had celebrated the liberation of Algeria, Palestine, Iran, among others, revised their histories to report that these countries would have been better off had they remained under colonial rule. In the early 1970s, when the specter of figures like Idi Amin and Pol Pot began to darken the skies of the old colonies, Western critics began to deem the former colonial governments more stable and benign than these frightening new military regimes. Early in the nineteen sixties, Conor Cruise O'Brien was one of the champions of decolonization, but by the nineteen seventies he began to cite the

narratives of V.S. Naipaul because they corroborated the idea that the colonized and not the colonizers are to blame for the social and economic ailments which plague their post-colonial wastelands. The publication of O'Brien's book States of Ireland in 1972 marked what Declan Kiberd calls a "new consensus in the media" (9). In effect the western media took their cues from writers like O'Brien, who exonerated colonial guilt from Western governments for the bloody messes in Africa and Vietnam. Yeats was the next logical victim of this shift against post-colonial literature.

With the late 1970s it began to be fashionable for the intelligentsia of Irish critical circles to undermine Yeats not only as a poet, but as a valid political voice in Ireland. O'Brien's was the first of a barrage of attacks against Yeats, whom he felt had been appropriated as a sage by a new and threatening form of Irish nationalism brewing in Northern Ireland. This then rendered Yeats fair game for a number of attacks on various fronts: he was an elitist, a dreamer, a dangerous fascist, and a supporter of the kind of violence which now plagues Northern Ireland.

The tone in this, as in all of O'Brien's writings on not only Yeats but any form of Irish nationalism, be it Protestant or Catholic, is disdainful. He argues that "the weight of evidence suggests that he was... a cunning passionate man" ("Passion" 151). In other words, Yeats was

not a poet who kept to the proper place of poets, away from politics. O'Brien goes on to produce a racist critique of Yeats, arguing that his "Hatred of England had been with him early; hatred of the 'base' in Ireland now joined it. The two hates represented an intensification of the normal dualism of the Irish Protestant" ("Passion" 157).

O'Brien claims that Yeats was dangerous because he deliberately got mixed up in Irish revolutionary politics. But he is mistaken in his view that Catholics had the monopoly on Irish nationalism. In fact, "Irish Republicanism had its basis in libertarian Presbyterian thinking, and influenced both American revolutionary thought and the United Irishmen, founded in 1791" (Deane, Field Day 602). Incidentally, the United Irishmen were almost entirely Protestants descended from Scottish and English planters. The Irish historian, Maurice Goldring, identifies the probable motive for O'Brien's two-decade long attack on Yeats in a memoir of a meeting he attended between O'Brien and the last survivor of the 1916 uprising, Sean McEntee:

> Conor Cruise O'Brien, as is his wont, provoked McEntee with a sweeping statement: '1916 was a mistake,' he declared. Sean McEntee replied, 'Maybe it was, but I'm glad I was part of it." McEntee's daughter, Maureen added with superb clear sightedness, 'Conor, your grandfather was a member of the Irish Parliamentary Party. You were part of the elite. My father was the son of a publican. He would never have become minister without 1916. We would not have a fine house, his children would never have been to the best schools.' Ruefully, Conor Cruise O'Brien replied, 'Exactly, your people pushed mine aside.' (143)

The identification of O'Brien with the defeated colonial status quo in the middle east, Africa, and Ireland is grounded in the much rued loss of power on the part of his own ancestors. O'Brien writes from a position of complete identification with his forefathers. This is more than another case of what Harold Brodkey attributes to "the point of the critic...to demonstrate his mastery in the contemporary moment;" O'Brien's vitriolic attacks are not so much rather domineering literary criticism as they are political self-promotion. And political self-promotion is exactly what O'Brien accuses Yeats of all along.

Many essays and dissertations elucidate the differences between Yeats's and Joyce's versions of Irish nationalism. It is argued that Yeats pursues an aesthetic which glamorizes Ireland's differences from the rest of modern Europe. Joyce denies that glamour. What Yeats and Joyce share, however, is a mourning for the lost possibility of an Ireland where high culture would be respected. If Yeats failed, it was because he was overly enchanted with that romantic Ireland and blind to the necessary inclusion of Ireland in the materialistic modern world. He was, however, remarkably astute and correct in his fear that an overly Catholic government would alienate the Ulster Protestant population, and thus destroy the possibility of a united nation of Irish people, Protestant and Catholic. Yeats knew that Ulster's Protestant population needed to be wooed into

joining what they feared might be a priest-ridden Catholic state.

Central to Yeats's credo was the idea that creativity and vitality are born out of conflict. Much has been written about William Blake's passionate influence on Yeats, certainly he would have found in Blake an advocate of this creativity/creation myth. But there is more than simply a mystical dimension to Yeats's concept of conflict. As Seamus Heaney puts it "There is surely political meaning, at once realistic and visionary, in his sense of life as an abounding conflict of energies" (Field Day 790). While Yeats's political and cultural failures are well documented, it is rarely said that he succeeded, on a symbolic level, in winning for himself an identity which overcame the divisive politics of English imperialism and Irish identity. His vision for Ireland, while rejected by the government, is still more inclusive and tolerant of minorities than any yet offered by a politician.

When the young Yeats began his first job in London earning "pennies for a cup of coffee in the afternoon" by editing the stories of William Carleton, he virtually starved himself rather than work on anything other than what he termed "the tradition of Ireland" (Memoirs 32). The quaint image of the young Anglo-Irishman in the streets of London committed wholeheartedly to his native country's culture contrasts sharply with that of the enraged senator,

forty years later, railing against the Catholic theocratic policies of the newly formed independent government. In his early life, he was a representative on a political and cultural level for a country almost colonized out of existence. His life-long goal of giving Ireland back to itself contrasts with his desperate but deeply sincere attempts to save Ireland from its own cultural self-hatred. In his heartfelt but somewhat presumptuous "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" (1939), W.H. Auden argues that "The words of a dead man / are modified in the guts of the living" (Norton 2299). The words ring true today, as Ireland demolishes and reconstructs a new Yeats whenever the current political climate demands it. Yeats is another historical victim of trenchant revisionism. While the Irish tourist board reaps the benefits of the Yeats industry, many of her politicians and academics assail Yeats's politics and the nationalism he so passionately espoused. Yeats's tragic disjunction is that he had too much imagination and his people too little.

The poem most strongly associated with Yeats's passing into "the human mind again" is "Under Ben Bulben." It is used as fodder by those critics who see only Yeats the elitist who wrote,

> Irish poets, learn your trade,
> Sing whatever is well made,
> Scorn the sort now growing up
> All out of shape from toe to top,

Their unremembering hearts and heads

Base-born products of base beds. (68-73)

The confrontational polemical Yeats is chosen over the lyrical, resonant individualist. The former is Yeats the poet, the latter, Yeats the man. "Under Ben Bulben" was completed on September 4, 1938, five months before Yeats's death, at a time when he still had the energy to fight his public battles. The poem's didactic tone does little to eulogize the whole poet and man.

Yeats completed "Cuchulainn Comforted" just two weeks before his death. It is an outgrowth of Yeats's play The Death of Cuchulain. The speaker narrates the events immediately after the death of Cuchulain,

A man that had six mortal wounds, a man

Violent and famous, strode among the dead. (1-2)

In the underworld a group of shades observe the heavily-armed novice in their world and approach him, offering pieces of linen with which he is to make a shroud for himself. They promise to sing for him, but before they do the leader among them tells Cuchulain that they are the souls of men who are "Convicted cowards all by kindred slain / 'Or driven from home and lift to die in fear' (332). And when the souls sing

They sang, but had nor human notes nor words,

Though all was done in common as before,

They had changed their throats and had the throats of birds. (23-25)

That the cowards' voices are transformed into the voices of birds suggests the commonality of all celestial creatures after their sordid human existence. In his prose draft for the poem Yeats writes that the men sang "like linnets that had been stood on a perch and taught by a good singing master" (Jeffares, New Commentary 410). The image is a hopeful one for a man facing death, for it promises that death will bring unity and harmony in the manner temporarily celebrated by King Lear and Cordelia before the latter is executed: "We two alone will sing like two birds i' th' cage" (V iii 9). This final recognition of the great democracy of death surely cancels out any of the pompous struttings performed by the public Yeats during his lifetime. That Cuchulain must be forced to wear the same garments as these former cowards is a tribute to his final humility in death, something which an elitist Yeats would not have the capacity to recognize. It is more fitting to look to Yeats who, when faced with death, aligned himself most strongly with Cuchulain, the warrior who like Yeats himself, took on heroic single-handed battles with the elements and eventually succumbed, and in death who wrapped himself in a shroud in communion with a group of slaughtered cowards. The tragedy in this is that Ireland's national poet and Nobel prize-winner was left to invoke an ancient

fallen hero as the final symbol of himself.

Chapter Three

The Defeat of Victory:
John Hewitt's Identity of Negations

Tourists visiting Northern Ireland wishing to see the shrines of the Ulster Protestant community should visit Belfast's Sandy Row or Derry's Fountain district. These neighborhoods contain perhaps the finest examples of Protestant folk art. In each of Ulster's Protestant neighborhoods a gable wall is set aside for the painting of murals depicting one or both of the most sacred historical events in the Loyalist collective memory. The first memorializes William of Orange on his white horse triumphantly crossing the river Boyne, a sword held aloft in his right hand. A second mural usually depicts a scene from "The Relief of Derry" when the walled city was besieged by James II and finally liberated by the Williamite ship, the *Mountjoy*. A cheering triumphant crowd is shown standing on one of the city's battlements celebrating the arrival of the liberating ship which ended the five month siege. William, for all intents and purposes, is a saint for the Protestant community no less in stature than Patrick for Irish Catholics. And the Siege of Derry contains all those elements central to the collective identity of Ulster's Protestants: a people cultivating and taking control of the

wilderness with Bible and sword but besieged by hostile and ungodly natives and a papist monarchy, but eventually winning out against all odds proving divine Providence. We are reminded of the writings of the Puritan settlers in the American colonies, their strict adherence to strict Calvinism, and their enduring faith that they are the elect.

John Harold Hewitt is an anomaly both as an Ulster Protestant and as an Irish poet. The Calvinist rejection of all things imaginative and artistic makes him liminal in his own community, and as an explorer in the world of Irish culture he becomes increasingly conscious that he is an outsider. As a non-conformist by inheritance, he carried on his tradition by refusing to comply with many of the cultural norms of his own ancestors. Through a series of deliberate negations, Hewitt discovered that his identity was distinct from the Gaelic Irish, the Anglo-Irish, and the Scottish and English ancestors. In his early twenties, for example, Hewitt formed an association with a group of young painters who, in the tradition of Wordsworth and his friends, experimented with what Alan Warner calls "plain living and high thinking," a bohemian organization tempered by a Puritan disposition (Selected 3). Hewitt's involvement with movements for social justice continues his father's religious sense of social duty. But his commitment to Communism and a stubborn insistence upon interacting with Catholics separates him both from his family and his

community.

Hewitt has none of Yeats's authority or certitude of who he is and where he belongs. Whereas Yeats puts the ever-present question of identity to work for him, Hewitt at first overlooked the discomfiting question, only then to spend the ensuing five decades confronting the painful dilemmas of the Ulster Protestant identity. His reluctant journey into history is facilitated by his early admiration for Yeats's poetry. But his journey to find his identity matured from the simplifications of the Protestant/Catholic division to an awareness of the historical confines of the Ulster Protestant identity. It is in his native Ulster that he finds one of his first direct physical connections with Ireland itself, through his love of the Ulster landscape, but also through a closer look at the scars which history has etched on his community, such as their persistent sense of living in a colonial stockade.

Hewitt's awareness of and response to the sectarian crisis in his native Belfast began when he was a young boy, and it is always in his thoughts as an irritation that will not go away. His verse is a tool which he uses to appease the conflicts between his allegiances to his people and himself. Hewitt takes a valiant and imaginative series of stances which resist the prevailing views of his community, while remaining loyal to his ancestors. In attempting to define Hewitt, Edna Longley employs a series of negations,

insisting that Hewitt

> should be remembered neither as an apologist for the 'planter,' nor as standing outside the 'Irish' tradition...He disconcerts the mutually convenient tradition of 'two traditions' and his ideal of community transcends anything either vested interest has yet to come up with...He said,'I may appear Planter's Gothic, but there is a round tower somewhere inside, and needled through every sentence I utter.' (18)

That tower to which he refers, is importantly, not the square Norman one which Yeats made his home. It is instead a Celtic battlement in which the invaded sought refuge from Viking attacks in the ninth and tenth centuries. Hewitt therefore identifies with both the Celtic and colonial stockade mentality. As a non-conformist in the theological sense, Hewitt rejected the faith of his parents in preference for his home-spun version of socialism, so he continued his tradition by betraying it.

The history of Ulster Protestants and their relationship with the native Irish, the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, the English government, and the monarchy, describes a people who feel that they are the elect, who attach themselves to the person of the monarchy, but who also fear the loss of their freedom through the dominance of the Roman and Established Churches. It was Yeats's ancestors who had for centuries hegemony over Hewitt's.

As Ulster Protestants in the twentieth century, Hewitt and his community must come to grips with two depressing facts: most Irish Catholics see Ulster Protestants as the

defenders of an oppressive form of religious apartheid, and England, who Protestants see as owing them loyalty, now look upon Ulster's Protestants as merely another brand of the ever-troublesome Irish.

With a history and culture that has attached itself to religious fundamentalism and has always felt persecuted by the Established Church, one would think that Hewitt's identity would be more rooted in Ireland than that of Yeats and his aristocratic Ascendancy, but when exiled in the English city of Coventry because he was refused a position at the Belfast Museum for his leftist tendencies and his friendships with Catholics, Hewitt reflected:

> In my experience, people of the planter stock often suffer from some crisis of identity, of not knowing where they belong. Among us you will find some who call themselves British, some Irish, some Ulstermen, usually with a degree of hesitation or mental fumbling. Living as I do in the Eastern Midlands, when I hear an Irish voice in a public place, I frequently salute the speaker. If he or she comes, as is most often, from the Republic [the south of Ireland], the response and acceptance of identification is instantaneous. If, however, the person challenged is from the Six Counties [Northern Ireland], the response is usually subdued or reluctant. Frequently, from the place or circumstances of the encounter, I can be fairly sure that the person I address is a Roman Catholic, then the reluctance is very marked. (Howard 42)

That the fear and distrust resulting from the ethnic division between Ulster Protestants and Catholics should travel abroad tells something of the magnitude of that division. Being so put on the spot, Hewitt understandably

fears the consequences of having his identity dragged out of the ethnic closet, even when abroad: there is the never-ending fear of finding oneself revealed in the wrong company. The overwhelming tension of hiding decades of inculcation with prejudicial views of the "other" community results in a provincialism hardly equalled elsewhere in Europe. A number of Hewitt's poems release some of that tension by giving voice to it. But another pressure persists for Ulster poets, and to a lesser degree all Irish poets, to show their allegiance to their own people, and at the same time to try to present themselves to the outside world as working to create a more integrated, if only imaginary, Irish community.

The segregation which Ulster Protestants and Catholics have experienced for centuries requires that the artist in search of a vision of unity make considerable imaginative leaps. While Hewitt's work reveals that he had this capacity, he is also quick to acknowledge the gravitational pull exerted by his background, especially in the way he views the Catholic community. An important part of Hewitt's upbringing was a schooling which inculcated in its pupils a cultural identity quite distinct from that of his Catholic neighbors. Robert Crawford, a contemporary of Hewitt, reminisces that

> At school I discovered that there were no Catholics and that they were educated separately. My best subject was history. I loved hearing about the exploits of the British, which was the

> main diet, and hoped one day that I would see and work with members of the great British commonwealth of nations. The sense of adventure, fair play, fighting qualities and courage of the British, as portrayed in our history books, made me proud, for our history teacher stressed that we were British and not Irish. Indeed, the story of Ireland's struggle against the English was only mentioned incidentally, and when eventually I went to Trinity College, Dublin, my southern friends were amazed at my ignorance. (18)

The distrust and hatred for each other which Ulster Catholics and Protestants often harbor have their roots in what is nothing less than ethnic difference constructed over four centuries. The conflict in Northern Ireland is often misunderstood as a religious war, but in fact, according to sociologist Daniel Goldman, it is, like many other conflicts around the world, ethnically based:

> Ethnicity, unlike race, is less a matter of a common gene pool than of a shared history, perceptions, and group identity. Some of the strongest ethnic divides run between people of the same stock, whether in Bosnia or Northern Ireland. (C1)

Furthermore, outsiders to Ulster often make the mistake of seeing Ulster Protestantism as a monolith. But, as Marianne Elliot puts it, "the Presbyterians' heightened sense of persecution is as old as that of Irish Catholics," so the Protestantism of Yeats and the upper middle-class Ascendancy is Episcopalian, whereas the Presbyterian faith of the planters in Ulster has for centuries feared domination both by the Established and the Roman Churches (Watchmen 14). That shared history has bonded a distinct community, one

whose temperament is comparable in some ways to the early Anglo-Scots planters in the Virginia colonies, and in other ways, distinctly Scottish in the Calvinist tradition of John Knox.

Hewitt's family subscribed to a radical form of Methodism, made evangelical after the "Year of Grace" which hit Ulster like a fever epidemic in 1859. While Hewitt deferred to the sensibilities of his ancestors, maintaining that "No Hewitt ever married a papist or kept a public house," he also describes himself as breaking with that tradition at the age of twelve when he made friends with a Catholic boy who had just moved in with his family next door to the Hewitts, an event which he says "began my fifty years' involvement in the story of our country's past and the rights and wrongs of it" (Threshold 14).

One of Hewitt's primary struggles is that between what he feels and what he thinks he ought to be: a tension between the elemental demands of the link to one's community and ancestry, and the more rational recognition that a more inclusive community ought to be built, even though the building blocks of that identity are either missing or indigestible. Hewitt also recognizes that by a series of negations, he and his community need the Catholic community in order to know who they are. We are reminded of the quip by Giordano Bruno that "each force in nature needs to create its opposite in order to know itself" (Kiberd, Anglo-Irish

4).

As is evinced in many of his poems, Hewitt also struggles with the need to find a language of nationality. He is estranged from the "motherland" of England and uncontaminated English, but he is also not a member of the Gaelic Irish people. In his early poetry he does enlist in the Yeatsian school of loudly declared nationalist certitude in order to drown out the background noise of doubt and ambiguity. But the encroaching realities of divided, enraged, and terrified Ulster bleed into his work and infuse it with a growing pessimism which produces some of his finest poems.

He grew up as a member of a community which has been living in Ulster for almost four hundred years, but which has always depended upon the support of both Buckingham Palace and Westminster, the colonial centers. There has always been the fear on the part of Ulster Protestants that one day London will no longer want to offer this support, and some of the more vociferous leaders, most audibly the Reverend Ian Paisley, remind Westminster that it owes a debt to its loyal subjects in Ulster. Today, however, the British government seems less committed to the protection of the Protestant status quo, and is putting pressure on Loyalists to accept power-sharing with the Catholic majority in the entire island. But Ulster Protestants distrust the authority of Dublin for a number of reasons, some rooted in

history, others in mythology. Jonathan Bardon describes Protestant fears of a Catholic authority around the time of Hewitt's birth when the modern colonial crisis began in earnest:

> Protestants visualized a Dublin government putting education entirely in the hands of the Church and forcing their children to attend Catholic schools and reserving public employment entirely for Catholics. Such fears, together with a widely held belief in their own moral and racial superiority, made Protestants unwilling to accept the rule of Catholics who, while they make 'excellent soldiers and servants when under strict discipline,' were judged utterly incapable of protecting hard-won prosperity and Protestant liberties in the north. (407)

Many Irish Catholics, both north and south, do not consider Hewitt and other members of the Ulster Protestant community to be Irish. What is more, many Ulster Protestants deny that they are "Irish" and proudly call themselves British. As a result, Hewitt is put on the defensive when his audience has a preconceived and usually hostile or ignorant notion of Ulster Protestants. Mary Holland argues that Ulster Protestants are "caricatured across the world as bigoted rednecks" (1: 11). Hewitt and his community do not exhibit those stereotypical traits that are recognizably "Irish" in the Anglo-American world: the seemingly compulsory "wearing of the green," singing of traditional folk ballads, the consumption of alcohol, and so on. Declan Kiberd puts it that "The ignorance of Ireland among English people is considerable, but the ignorance of Ulster Unionism among English liberals is almost total"

(Anglo-Irish 14). We have already seen how the English stereotype of the Irish grew out of the construction of otherness directed at the native Irish during the period of early colonization and conquest. But the stereotype in more recent times has failed to exclude those members of the Ulster Protestant community who greatly resent their inclusion in a group from whom they feel separate and superior. According to J.C.C. Mays, "The experience of the Protestant in Ireland repeats in exacerbated form the experience of any Irishman in the context of the British Isles" (30). Ulster Protestants feel that the English owe them the privilege of being at the very least acknowledged as a people with a long history of loyalty to the Crown. Since this acknowledgment has not been received, the resentment towards England is great:

> The Ulsterman is, I believe, less understood in England than even than the Southern Irishman. You frequently hear him called an "Ulster Scot." Were I an Ulsterman, this would make me see red. It is so ambiguous and untrue...if upwards of three centuries of Irish life do not make a people Irish what, I would like to know, does? (Morton 31)

So the Loyalist is caught in a web of misunderstanding on the part of the English and rejection on the part of Irish Catholics. Writers such as Hewitt, Derek Mahon, Tom Paulin, Stewart Parker and Michael Longley are seen as deviations from the Irish "norm." Since they complicate the widespread simplistic view of Irish history as a mere conflict between Ireland and England, they are rendered invisible outside of

Ulster. Fortunately, poets and artists from both sides of the barbed wire began to form a single community in the nineteen sixties, especially when larger numbers of Catholics began attending Queen's University, Belfast, traditionally a Protestant enclave. Seamus Heaney became aware of the poetry of Ulster Protestants at Queen's:

> The poetry of Louise MacNeice, W.R. Rogers and John Hewitt...has been an exploration of the Ulster Protestant consciousness. All three men were born to a sense of 'two nations' and part of their imaginative effort was a solving of their feelings towards Ireland, a new answer to the question that Macmorris asked Fluellen in the Globe theatre almost four hundred years ago:'What ish my nation?' (Preoccupations 32-33)

This natural intermixing of undergraduates helped bring a more latitudinarian climate so that writers like Hewitt and Seamus Heaney now cooperated in forging a literary community which did not simply overlook history and conflict, but grounded itself in giving voice to both difference and commonality.

Today one of the many fears circulating within the Ulster Protestant community is that the British will withdraw their claim on the territories, abandoning their loyal subjects to what is seen as a Catholic theocracy. That the Republic of Ireland is still largely controlled by laws which are shaped by Catholic sensibilities does not help to allay Protestant fears. But the resistance to sharing power with the Nationalist-Catholic population on the part of Protestants also has a more instinctive source.

The Protestant libertarian tradition in Ireland was the wellspring of early revolutionary thought, best displayed by the eighteenth century thinking of the United Irishmen as well as the authors of the United States Constitution, many of whom had close ethnic ties to Ulster. Furthermore, the ignorant appeals for reason on the part of foreign diplomats carry little weight while the annual sounding of the Lambeg drums on the twelfth of July brings together a people who have always felt embattled and besieged.[24]

We may ask why the Anglo-Irish planters in the south accepted the end of British rule there in 1921 without resisting with the vehemence of their counterparts in Ulster. The answer is that the Anglo-Irish were a tiny minority by the time the new Free State won independence from England. Those who remained with apparently English accents, customs, and religion, made up only 7.4% of the population in the new Free State in 1920 (Brown, Ireland 107). Those middle and upper middle-class landowners who chose to remain were the recipients of the most generous land settlements in the post-colonial world. Some of those who stayed were modest farmers, gathered in the three counties of Ulster which remained in the Free State after partition.[25] The emotional gravitational center of these lay across the border in the state of Northern Ireland.

In reading the work of Hewitt, we become sharply aware that we are no longer in the manor houses of Yeats's people,

the Anglo-Irish, who, for the most part, settled to the south of Ulster. This is a result of quite a different social organization of the northern colony, so that the rather simple arrangement of relatively wealthy English landlords separated from the poorer Irish by the walls of the manor house is complicated in the North by there being little difference in class between the colonizer and the colonized:

> The Ulster Plantation was unlike the earlier plantations in Ireland. It involved the positive importation of English and Scottish settlers rather than a simple change at the top. This led to the economic subjugation of the native Irish who were confined to less productive land and forced to pay higher rents and forced to accept shorter leases than the imported settlers. Lower-class Protestant settlers and native Irish consequently lived in a proximity unknown elsewhere in Ireland. (Elliot, Watchmen 6)

Furthermore, many of the English and Scottish planters found themselves in Belfast, which by the middle of the nineteenth century was the largest industrial center in Ireland. Belfast's booming textile industry was begun by the Anglo-Scottish planters, many of whom lived in the city in close proximity to poorer Catholics. By the turn of this century, Belfast also boasted the largest shipbuilding docks in the world, and was the birthplace of the ill-fated *Titanic.* Much of Britain's First and Second World War fleets were built in Belfast's shipyards. However, employment in the shipyards was the sole domain of loyal Protestants. Catholics, who were and are a minority in Belfast, suffer

higher unemployment, generally hold unskilled jobs, and make lower wages than the average Protestant. While the government has implemented many programs to equalize this trend, there is still little change.

The authority of the Catholic Church has always been cited by Ulster Protestants as a central reason for refusing to enter into any political or social partnership with the Republic of Ireland. While many of the reasons for this resistance are immediate and self-evident -- the outlawing of divorce and abortion in the Republic -- the history of Presbyterianism in Ulster also plays an essential role.

In August 1970, after the outbreaks of violence in Catholic Nationalist areas of Belfast in response to the Northern Ireland government's introduction of internment without trial, a handbill began to circulate in Protestant areas of Belfast; it proclaimed "...the enemies of our Faith and Freedom are determined to destroy the state of Northern Ireland and thereby enslave the people of God" (Eliot, Watchmen 5). The phrasing and usage make it hard for outsiders to believe that this flier could have been printed after the seventeenth century. The fact that it was printed in Ulster is more important than its timing, for the self-conscious employment of corner-preacher seventeenth century language is key to understanding the threat to liberty felt by Ulster Loyalists from Catholicism.

In 1993, the Opsahl Commission found that

> certain core differences between Protestants and Catholics emerged time and time again, in particular the centrality of religion to the identity of Protestants...The bogeyman for...Protestants [is] the Catholic Church itself. The fear of Catholicism, not simply as a religion, but as a powerful political system, exists at every level of the Protestant community and its implications feed directly into the crisis. (Eliot, "Inside Ulster" 21) [26]

Since historical memory exerts such a remarkable pull on the Ulster consciousness, we must understand some of the essential facets of the history of the relations between the English and Scottish planters and the original inhabitants of Ulster. This history is surprising, for it is not another colonial cliché of monstrous conquistadors slaughtering and disenfranchising helpless indigenous victims. Many of the settlers brought into Ulster from Scotland and England by the English authorities were themselves victims of religious discrimination. They were mostly Dissenters from the established Anglican faith, and as a result they were to suffer many humiliations at the hands of laws designed to enforce allegiance to the English Church. Hewitt aligns himself with the Catholic community at one point in claiming that as a Dissenter he and they are united in their victimhood at the hands of the Established Church.

This is no accident since in Ulster religion has always carried a greater weight than elsewhere in Ireland in terms of the definition of community identity. Margaret McCurtain argues that this had consequences not only on the identity

of the settlers, but also the natives:

> Ulster became and was to remain a place where religious conviction became woven into the strands of political life and government, and the fate of Ulster at every later turn of Irish history was inextricably bound up with evangelization. Ulster identity...became unsure of its deepest roots, one aspect of which was its Gaelic past. In any case the native culture was grappling with the metaphysical problems of its religious and cultural roots at a time when the visible institutions which enshrined its deepest values were passing away. (379)

The plantation of Ulster after the Tudor and Elizabethan conquests was relatively rapid: "by 1641 of the three and a half million acres which make up the six counties, Protestant settlers owned three million...by 1660, the Catholic Gaelic aristocracy had the last of their land confiscated" (Crawford 21). But the dispossessed natives did not go away, and were a persistent threat in that they were all around their conquerors, to whom they now paid exorbitantly high rents and felt a deepening hostility. This is what sparked the "dominant characteristic of fear" in the settlers (Crawford 21). In 1641 the Gaelic Irish staged a rebellion in Ulster, slaughtering many settlers. This was followed by the brutal campaign of Cromwell, a leader who, himself a Dissenter, had particular sympathy for the settlers in Ulster. Cromwell's overwhelming defeat of pockets of Gaelic resistance led to the cementing of the more simplified Protestant/Catholic division. "He also reinforced the non-conformist beliefs of Protestants, and they fully accepted the Protestant civil liberty, equality,

and democracy that he proclaimed" (Kee 44).

While the settlers, especially the Scots, had a penchant for intermarrying with the native population, with whom they shared a common Gaelic culture and history, they were forbidden to do so by special laws enacted by English authorities for fear that "the whole settlement would degenerate into an Irish colony" (Crawford 22). However, early in the eighteenth century, the English authorities sought to put a check on the rising powers of the Presbyterians in Ulster, and in 1704 the Test Act was enacted, requiring that all holders of public office take the sacrament according to the Established Church, since they "distrusted the Presbyterians' Republican tendencies and questioned their loyalty to the Crown" (Crawford 46). Presbyterians and Catholics alike were therefore excluded from the power structure.

The hostility of the Established Church took many forms other than the Test Act. Presbyterian ministers were forced to pay tithes to the Anglican Church, and were refused permits to build Presbyterian churches on the land of Episcopalian landlords. They named their places of worship Meeting Halls in an effort to get around this law.

In essence, therefore, Presbyterians were justified in having a siege mentality:

> the Presbyterian experience of the eighteenth century...is product on two antagonistic forces -- their position in law and the propaganda treatment of them as "no church" by the Ascendancy, and as

> 'foreigners' by Catholics. (Brown, Whole Protestant 8)

And it is the siege which is a central component in the Ulster Protestant self-image. No event has come to be commemorated with more passion than the Siege of Derry in 1689, because its uncanny circumstances reinforced the Calvinist idea that God was on their side, as with the Israelites captive in Egypt:

> The siege of Derry in 1689 is their original and most powerful myth. They seem to see themselves in that, and since then, as an embattled and enduring people. Their historical self-vision is of endless repetition of repelled assaults, without hope of absolute finality or fundamental change in their relationship to their surrounding and surrounded neighbours. (McDonagh 12)

The siege of Derry is the key to the Ulster Protestant imagination because it not only identifies the Protestant community as the victims of the hostile and controlling Catholic beast but also as the morally just victors who, with God's righteous aid, won out against incredible odds. It is no accident that since the events surrounding the siege of Derry, the Ulster Protestant community identifies intensely with the disenfranchised and persecuted Israelites. This became apparent in 1968, nearly three hundred years later, when Loyalists, carrying ornate banners which depicted King William triumphant on his white horse at the Battle of the Boyne, protested against the rebellious and more numerous Catholics on the island as a whole attempting to "enslave the people of God" (Elliot, Watchmen,

5).[27] In Derry, Protestants jeered and threw stones at protesting Catholics still standing outside the city walls, as if they were unconsciously repeating the events of the siege four hundred years earlier.

The problem with the way in which the outside world interprets the struggle is that modern secular thinking accepts nationality, not religion, as a mark of identity. But "In Ulster, where the past is so much part of the present, the seemingly antiquated bigotry of Protestants" is, in fact, an extension of a long libertarian tradition (Elliot, Watchmen 6). The authors of the United States Constitution shared the culture, religion and political beliefs of the Loyalist Scottish and English planters in Ulster. However Marianne Elliot claims that the identification by Protestants of the Gaelic Irish with the Catholic Church is a relatively recent development (Watchmen 16). The Penal Laws of the eighteenth century withheld the right of any Catholic to hold political power, eventually giving Catholics an aggrieved sense of an identity distinct from their Protestant counterparts. However, as we saw with the ancestors of Yeats, Protestants in the eighteenth century sought independence from England, and the romantic movement, spurred on by the Ossianic folk revival which swept Europe in the late eighteenth century, turned settlers into patriots. The settlers wished to make themselves Irish by whatever means were available as a way of distancing

themselves from England as settlers in New England quickly invented "traditions" to create an identity distinct from their English lineage.

In Ulster Catholics were not included in the Protestant movement for independence, so reforms were sought to break the link with England without the goal of Catholic emancipation. A specifically northern movement led by a group who called themselves The Volunteers was formed in 1778. During Britain's war with America, "Tom Paine called them the only truly revolutionary movement in the country" and in the tempestuous decade which followed the United Irishmen were born (Elliot, Watchmen 7). They were not, as is often mistakenly believed, a movement for Catholic emancipation, but a distinctively Presbyterian pressure group seeking to achieve independence for the Irish as a whole, but divided on the issue of Catholic emancipation. The birth of the Orange Order in this era was evidence of

> the controvertible fact that Protestant survival depended upon Catholic suppression. It did so because Protestant power was novel and based on the confiscation of property which a series of political upheavals had threatened to reverse. The Glorious Revolution was particularly significant in Ireland because it represented the final Protestant victory in a bid for supremacy which had raged throughout the seventeenth century and which had very nearly gone in favour of the Catholics in James II's last parliament. (Elliot, Watchmen 15)

The Northern Protestant's interpretation of his own history is linked to a curious double perception: one

version sees Protestants as the triumphant conquerors deemed by God to be the chosen people; the other sees the community as helpless victims in a conspiracy to overthrow their independence. But history has failed to offer Ulster Protestants any wider dynamic on which to build an identity outside of these narrow historical confines. Yeats's ancestors invented a long and, though fictional, dynamic history for themselves. Yeats, in imitation of his ancestors, added more detail to and expanded the great tapestry. One of his motifs was to list the great contributions his ancestors and he had made to Ireland. Hewitt responds to this persistently implied interrogation by Catholic nationalists by dwelling on his imaginary and distant colonial ancestors as if he were one of them, clearing the land of the natives in order to improve it, and distanced from them in time so that he is now as much Irish as colonial. Hewitt's Puritanical Methodist background and temperament mean that he did not inherit the same fertile historical imagination as Yeats. However, he broke through this imaginative colonial stockade to build a sense of belonging for himself through his poetic *oeuvre*.

Hewitt employs a series of voices as a means of "trying out" what best roots him in his beloved though politically problematic environment. Like all Irishmen, however, he is forced to grapple with the political semantics of identity. At times he employs the booming oratorical voices of his

conquering forefathers who planted the countryside, but at others the speaker's voice is filled with a sense of doubt, lost on a bleak landscape which he feels is not his own.

Tom Paulin, a younger poet from Ulster, expresses the sense of historical emptiness which he feels results from his being a member of Ulster's Protestant community in "After the Summit":

> Boot polish and the Bible,
> the Boy's Brigade is arming.
> This is the album you found
> in your grandmother's sideboard,
> the deedbox with her burial papers,
> a humped ledger and a lock
> of that dead uncle's hair.
> There is so little history
> we must remember who we are. (1-9)

The speaker identifies the need to grasp the physical memento in the perceived absence of an available history. The first two lines illustrate the relatively empty youthful symbols of the Protestant identity. The Boy's Brigade is an Ulster Protestant version of Lord Baden-Powell's English Boy Scouts, with a strong emphasis on the patriotic and the military, thus the double-meaning of "arming": it arms its members with a specifically English imperialist militarism, but more ironically, it is supposed to "arm" its members with a sense of pride in who they are -- subjects of a

monarchy which is emotionally central but physically and politically extinct. This still life seems historically and emotionally lifeless. The speaker's search for identity falls into the cliché of remembrance, a dangerous word in Ireland. We are reminded of graffiti on the walls of Belfast and Derry which cry out with oppressive monotony: "Remember 1690," and "Remember 1916." The speaker's search for a personal memento is the history of which he feels deprived; the history of battles is lengthy but never fully satisfying.

It is believed, especially among impatient British commentators on Irish affairs, that the Irish, Protestant and Catholic, are over-attached to their own sense of history. This view contrasts with that among many Ulster Protestant writers and critics that "a community that superficially might appear to be burdened by historical awareness can accurately be said to possess so little history" (Brown, Whole Protestant 5).

Hewitt's attempt to discover his people's history came relatively late in life, and only as a result of great autodidactic labor. He began writing poetry in his late teens as a student at Queens University, Belfast. According to Frank Ormsby, "When Hewitt began writing verse...he knew little or nothing about other poets from the north of Ireland, living or dead. He had learned...'The Burial of King Cormac' by Sir Samuel Ferguson at Methodist College,

but was ignorant that these poets were any closer to him than Wordsworth or Tennyson" (xliv). This is perhaps more evidence to add to that provided above by Robert Crawford that the Irish Protestant was educated as if he or she were living in a suburb of London -- students had little opportunity to be contaminated by nationalist Irish poetry.

Hewitt's early verse finds its subject matter in the pastoral and romantic traditions, and its style in a number of different sources, not least, early on, the free verse of Walt Whitman. Hewitt took up many foreign causes, particularly those highlighted by the international socialist movement in the nineteen-twenties and thirties. Many early poems proclaim the injustices meted out to African Americans and to American socialists. An early poem in memory of the famous case of Sacco and Vanzetti is titled "murdered on the twenty-third day of August, nineteen twenty-seven by the legal minions of American capital" (Collected xlv). This starry-eyed youthful quality carried over into his first encounter with the Irish literary revival, which was centered ninety miles to the south in Dublin. Hewitt and many of his colleagues were caught up in what he called "a vague sense of romantic Irish nationalism, Oisin and Connolly, Maeve and Maude Gonne bright in the sky" ("No Rootless" 19). Hewitt was still ignorant of the historical complexities of his ancestors, and therefore enthusiastically adopted the Yeatsian revivalist project

with its erasure of much of Ireland's bloody history in preference for the simplistic dialectics of Kathleen Ni Houlihan and Cuchulainn. Hewitt even used the term "We Irish" in his 1932 poem "Ireland," six years before Yeats used it in "The Statues" (1938). Both poets had to constantly arm themselves against accusations that they were not really Irish, by constantly referring to themselves as Irish, a feature notably present in the poetry of the Anglo-Irish, and absent in the poetry of the Gaelic Irish. "Ireland" opens with a didactic declaration made by a speaker who calls himself "Keltic." We are never sure that Hewitt is identifying with his speaker:

> We Irish, vainer than tense Lucifer,
> Are yet content with half a dozen turf,
> And cry our adoration for a bog,
> Rejoicing in the rain that never ceases,
> And happy to stride over sterile acres
> Or stony hills that scarcely feed a sheep. (8-13)[28]

The young Hewitt feels utterly alien to rural Ireland. He attacks Ireland's insularity and inability to become part of the modern world, the opposite of Yeats's fear that Ireland would be polluted by the modern and industrial. The speaker constructs an Ireland which has undergone only one plantation by the ancient Celts. But in the third stanza he begins to awaken to another reality: "We are not native

here" (28). The ambiguity of this line reveals the dual "not belonging" on Hewitt's part, both as a would-be "Kelt" and as a colonist in more recent history. The tone of the poem is charged with claustrophobia and a need to escape not only the island, but also its history to which he feels chained. This tension which Hewitt felt for the physical and historical restrictions of his country was to change to a deep love and appreciation for the Irish countryside in the ensuing decade, after he had discovered the glens of Antrim. This contrasts with Hewitt's growing uneasiness with his ancestors' part in Ireland's colonial history.

Hewitt felt alone in this early period because he was searching for a spiritual father. He found him in the work of the nineteenth century Ulster poet William Allingham. A Protestant like Hewitt, Allingham wrote this immortal lines which describe the everyday banality of the sectarian view of the colonial crisis:

> Not men and women in an Irish street
> But Catholics and Protestants you meet. (Hewitt, Selected 29)

Hewitt was to find in Allingham the sanction to write as directly as possible about the conflict which silences the mass of the populace and its poets. Allingham, like Hewitt, felt Irish when in England, but did not feel Irish in Ireland. Hewitt wrote of Allingham,

> But while he lived in Ireland, he could identify neither with the older Catholic population nor

> with the strict Protestantism of his own people. As he wrote in 1851 'I know but three persons in Ireland besides myself who are distinctly separated from the creeds.' Indeed, with Allingham, I am often reminded of Shakespeare's one Irishman, Captain MacMorris in King Henry V, with his outburst -- 'Of my nation! What ish my nation.' (Ancestral 147)

Another of Hewitt's earlier poems, "The Bloody Brae" (1936), remembers the massacre of Catholics by Cromwellian soldiers in County Antrim in 1642. The attacks on Catholics came as a response to the Gaelic Irish uprising against the colonists in the previous year, in which an untold number of colonists were burned out of their homes by rebellious natives. The events are another battleground for historians, some claiming that the initial uprising was not as brutal as the response, others claiming that the accounts of one or both events are greatly exaggerated. For the purposes of Hewitt's dramatization, 1641-2 is another narrative of atrocity and counter-atrocity, a cycle which his poem attempts, if only imaginatively, to break through acts of pardon and forgiveness. Hewitt was becoming more aware that the collective memory of each community has a rich store of mythologized history which can be employed when necessary to justify a new act of aggression. Frank Ormsby argues that "The Bloody Brae" marks Hewitt's first attempt to "negotiate the crosscurrents in which the liberal Ulsterman of planter stock finds himself caught" (liv). It is specifically as a liberal Protestant that he chose to

write about the victimization of Catholics and his own people in the rebellion of 1641.

Hewitt's verse dramatization takes the form of a dialogue for six voices. Set in the early eighteenth century, the inhabitants of Gobbins, Islandmagee, encounter an ancient Cromwellian soldier, named John Hill, who is racked by guilt over his slaughter of a young Catholic woman and her child:

> I killed a woman, comely and young,
> In a heat of frenzy with one stabbing thrust.
> (34-5)

The gesture of remorse is contrasted to the attitude of another Cromwellian soldier who realizes that in killing Catholics, he is merely obeying his orders, and is therefore not responsible. The ghost of the dead woman, Mary Magee, extends her pardon:

> I have said that I pardon you, but the sword's
> edge
> is marked with blood forever. I am dead
> Who might have mothered crowding generations:
> For good or ill you altered the shape of things.
> (88-92)

The ghost of the young woman then rebukes him for merely indulging in guilt rather than striving to promote tolerance in others. While the moral may seem a little heavy-handed and naive in the face of continuing atrocities in Ulster at

that time, Terence Brown calls Hewitt an "exorcist of his community" in the sense that in order to be free of one's ghosts one must confront them, a rite which Hewitt performs in his poems with great regularity (Northern 87). Essentially, the poem is Hewitt's plea "for forgiveness for the wrongs of our past and tolerance between the communities" (Warner 47).

In the late 1930s Hewitt began to move outside the confines of Belfast and travel in other parts of Ireland, though before seeing his own "foreign" country, he travelled extensively on the Continent with his father in his early twenties. He fell in love with and felt an immediate connection to the glens of Antrim on the northeastern corner of Ulster. He then wrote a numerous nature poems in the tradition of Wordsworth, deriving a deeper sense of his identity in the Ulster landscape. But even in the world of hawthorn, sheep and glen, Hewitt manages to find a way to express the perceptual and cultural differences between the colonizer and the colonized. In "Frost" (1936), the speaker observes with relief the return of the winter's clarity after the disappearance of the clutter of clouds, mist, and the leaves on the trees:

> With frost again the thought is clear and wise
> that rain made dismal with a mist's despair,
> the raw bleak earth beneath cloud-narrowed skies
> finds new horizons in the naked air.

Light leaps along the lashes of the eyes;
a tree is truer for its being bare. (1-6)

The idea that wisdom and clarity are possible only in a frost covered landscape is not only an expression of the instinctual relief one feels after the passing of the long, wet, dank Irish autumnal gloom, it also suggests Hewitt's "puritan temper" described by Warner (Selected 5). Organic myths and the worship of the harvest, and its association with the pagan, and therefore the Catholic, is rejected for the "light" of rational thought. The word "light" is often employed by Hewitt both as a noun and an adjective. As a noun, it reminds us of that eighteenth century Ulster Presbyterian libertarian group who called themselves the "New Light" movement. The word "light" is a stock invocation in the Presbyterian and Methodist sermon. It was the "New Light" movement which gave birth to the United Irishmen, for its thinking resisted the dark authorities of both London and Rome. The tree's being "truer for its being bare" is a rationalist's thinking, preferring the stripped, the reduced, the common denominator, to the Keatsian "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" and its messy earth deities.

The second stanza answers the implied questions of the first: why is it that "the thought is clear and wise" in this bleak winter landscape? It is because the speaker's "gaze is on the end of things" and he "knows, past summer

lush, brimmed autumn's height, / no promise in the inevitable springs" (8-10). These lines are suggestive beyond the superficial meaning that winter provides the speaker with a mirror for his eschatological mind. They also suggest a preference for the rational truth over organic truth: the love of the empirical singular life over the broader earth-bound celebration of regeneration. Again we have an example of that characteristic focus of Calvinist thinking which loves the world "stripped of shadow down to the bone of light," the last image suggesting not only the truth of death, but also a trust in the nakedness of that truth, "the false gone and the restless wings." That Hewitt chooses the winter landscape as a subject for meditation does not mean that he participates in the bleak world of T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land in which "April is the cruelest month," for this is not so much an attack upon the modern world as a rejection of the promise of spring and regeneration, but a preference for the light that comes with the clarity and finality of death. The speaker's tone suggests that he is proud of this recognition and that he sees something his Gaelic Catholic counterparts cannot. There is even something Hobbesian in this certainty that the reduced and distilled is truer than the object in its natural state.

As Hewitt's sensibilities mature, however, he expands his awareness of his senses to create a more complex but

also more tragic vision of his relationship to both the natural world of Ulster and his own intellect. John Wilson Foster points out that "For this poet whose trust is in empiricism, what he takes to be essential Irishness has been roped off and made out of bounds" (144). What develops in his later poems is a sharper recognition of this tragedy of vision. Hewitt loves what he sees in nature, but he is never able to see nature otherwise than through the eyes of an empiricist, which are further colored by the colonist's lens. The result is a poet who is emotionally cut off from that which surrounds him.

In the 1940s Hewitt read Lewis Mumford's The Culture of Cities (1938), a work which fired the poet with a new sense of possibility. Mumford's work preached the doctrine of a new movement, already under way in England, called Regionalism. Hewitt argued that

> Regionalism is based upon the conviction that since a man is a social being, he must, now that the nation has become an enormously complicated organization, find some smaller unit to which to give his loyalty. This unit, since the day of the clan is over and that of the large family is passing must be grounded on something more than kinship. (Ancestral 131)

Hewitt realized that Regionalism gave him a new opportunity to belong to the Ulster community, not as a Protestant or as a colonist, or a Planter, but simply as one who lives there. It marked the beginning of his evangelistic fervor for Ulster not just as a bloodied battlefield, but as his home.

Hewitt hoped that the movement would help the two communities find commonalities of place to eclipse their ethnic differences. This is Hewitt's specific form of nationalism, one which rejected what Edna Longley calls, "the 'English colonial' panic which led Unionism to cling culturally to 'the Mainland' and forget its own history in Ireland" (221).

Hewitt discovers that he can never fully possess the Ulster landscape in the same way that, say, Wordsworth possesses the Lake District in northern England. In "The Glens" (1942), the speaker has moved on from the preacherly tone of "Frost" to a pastoral but mournful voice which cries out for communion with a place which he loves but which is already possessed by the natives. The poem is a meditation on his unrequited love for the glens of Country Antrim. The half of the land which had not already been planted by Scottish settlers in the 1620s was confiscated from the Catholic natives by Cromwell in the 1640s and given to English and Scottish soldiers. Since that time County Antrim has been a Unionist stronghold, but for Hewitt it is still not possessed.

In the first stanza the speaker feels himself responding instinctually and sexually to the landscape:

> this rim of arable that ends in foam
> has but to drop a leaf or snap a branch
> and my hand twitches with the leaping verse

as hazel twig will wrench the straining wrists
for untapped jet that thrusts beneath the sod.
(3-7)

The thrill of the country muse, speaking though the vegetation, sends him quivering with verse as the water-diviner's hazel twig tells him that he has struck it rich. The whole organic and folkloric rootedness of this stanza denies the puritanical austerity of "Frost," but even in this ecstasy, the speaker is careful to describe the land as "arable." This colonist mind's utilitarianism sanctions beauty, but beauty must pass the test of productivity.

The second stanza breaks the folk-magic spell when the poet's gaze moves from the land to those who work it: "Not these my people, of a vainer faith / and a more violent lineage" (8-9). That he judges the locals as having a "vainer faith" and coming from a "more violent lineage" does not so much set him above them as apart from them. A shift in tone takes him down in a spiral of consciousness that his world is different from and can never come into communion with theirs:

My days, the busy days I owe the world,
are bound to paved unerring roads and rooms
heavy with talk of politics and art. (12-14)

While he feels superior in his lineage and work ethic to the rustic locals, he carries the white man's burden of responsibility and is cast out from their Eden of winding

road and field, left to

> ...pace these lanes
> and pause at hedge gap spying on their skill
> so many fences stretch between our minds. (16-18)

"Mind" is a favorite word of Hewitt's. It provides him with a sense that it is intellect which separates him from others, yet he uses "mind" in many places where one would normally expect the use of the word "feeling." It is also, a denial of the role of fear in the bloody world of Northern Ireland politics in keeping him separate from the majority which surrounds him. For Hewitt the mind is fixed and stable, thus giving little hope for the role of change in healing the wounds of ethnic hatred. Thus the "mind," solitary and responsible, becomes the territory which he is able to rule, but which also alienates him from his Catholic neighbors.

The third stanza moves further away from the innocent natural world into the irrepressible struggle with the native population. He fears them, using theological difference as his basis:

> I fear their creed as we have always feared
> the lifted hand against unfettered thought.
> (19-20)

For the Protestant, mind and truth are abstract and pure, above interaction with the flesh in the form of rituals performed by the priest. The "lifted hand" is feared

because it symbolizes submission to the authority of the priest as the interpreter of truth, as such it is a threat to one of the central tenets of Protestantism: liberty. We normally associate invocations of liberty with the authors of the United States constitution, for instance, not with Ulster Protestants, but both spring from the same root system. For Hewitt, an insistence upon this brand of liberty both links him to his ancestors and reinforces his identity through the negation of his belief in Catholicism. Hewitt here makes his first articulation of his personal fear of Catholics and Catholicism. It is this fear which provides him with a sense of community and connection with his lineage, and finally an acknowledgement of the terrible weight that this innocent-seeming and abstract thought carries. This long libertarian tradition is often read in today's secular world as mere bigotry and a repugnant form of ethnic elitism, but Marianne Elliot explains that

> this sense of superiority, of being the 'elect,' does not rest entirely on an economic base. Rather it come from that sense of intellectual superiority felt by Protestants in general, but more specifically etched in Presbyterian consciousness by the conviction of their own purity of principle. (Watchmen 26)

Hewitt and the Protestant community enjoy "unfettered thought," an acknowledgement of the liberty of the individual to communicate directly with the Creator. But as if to contradict or compensate for that thought, he also acknowledges the role of his people's colonial history in

alienating him from them, a separation he regrets. The speaker knows

> ...their savage history of wrong
> and would at moments lend an eager voice,
> if voice avail, to set that tally straight. (21-23)

The bitter acknowledgement of his distance from the natives, the irremediable damage of history, and the knowledge that he is powerless "to set the tally straight," although willing to do so, leave him estranged from the pastoral garden in which he found himself in the first stanza.

The final stanza seals his dilemma, for while he at first sings of his visceral connection to the land and praises its generative energies, he then realizes that, like Eden for post-lapsarian humankind, it is beyond his grasp because of the sins of his fathers. Finally, he recaptures that specific territory for himself by insisting,

> And yet no other corner of this land
> offers in shape and colour all I need
> for sight to torch the mind with living light.
> (24-26)

What began as an ode to a place which causes the speaker's hand to twitch "with leaping verse" has now been reduced to a place with "shape" and "colour" "to torch the mind with living light." He has moved away from the elemental to the intellectual in his relationship with the land. Instead of

a sexual object to be enjoyed, the land is a source of intellectual illumination. The word "mind" here is used in preference over the word "feel" in relation to his attachment to the land. This puzzling shift in response is characteristic of Hewitt's distrust of the mysterious and a need to intellectually understand and divide his mind into areas of darkness and light. The darkness of not belonging is contrasted with the light of attachment.

Hewitt is conscious of the emotionally limiting effects of his aesthetic approach to writing about the physical, an approach that Terence Brown calls "this emotional narrowness in the Northern Protestant's basic self-vision that has led to the literary trope of 'the Black North,' with its sense of restriction, bleakness, and atrophied possibility" (Whole Protestant 9). However, Hewitt struggles with this "narrow self-vision" and opens up the possibility of a fertile relationship at least with his sense of place, if not with its inhabitants.

Of "Once Alien Here" (1942), Terence Brown says, "it poignantly expresses the dilemma of the colonial predicament" (Voices 87). It is a poem which explores the deeper reaches of Hewitt's imagination, especially those treacherous areas which contain the knowledge that he is an outsider in his own land, and that while the umbilical chord with "pure" English has been cut, his people have made no connection with the tongue of the natives. Here Hewitt

takes a firmer stand that he is not altogether an outsider, that his ancestors' work of rendering useless land useful has earned him the right to belong, despite the fact that the land was confiscated:

> Once alien here my fathers built their house,
> claimed, drained, and gave the land the shapes
> of use. (1-2)

Hewitt reiterates the laudable work of his ancestors, the "shapes of use" referring again to that Weberian Protestant love of utilitarian production, an essential element of the Planters' credo. The distance from England, linguistically, is part of the price the colonist must pay for "well rubbed words that had left their overtones / in the ripe England of the molded downs" (4-6).

The second stanza brings in a contrast the rituals and language of the natives whom his fathers displaced. We are no longer looking back at history now, but imaginatively reliving it. There is both guilt and envy in the native's displacement and possession of a language which the poet cannot understand:

> The sullen Irish limping to the hills
> bore with them the enchantments and the spells
> that in the clans' free days hung gay and rich
> on every twig of every thorny hedge. (7-9)

The word "sullen" captures the conqueror's view of the natives, and the ironic caricature of the Irish, seen

through the colonial lens as both simian creatures and noble savages. Here he acknowledges his ancestors' view that they were intellectually superior but lacking ritual. The specific Irish ritual here cited is the Celtic worship of the hawthorn bush, thought to have magical powers, which in many places was symbolically decorated by pieces of cloth tied to its branches. We are also reminded of the tension in Yeats's "Ancestral Houses" between the speaker's ancestors' utilitarian view of the landscape in opposition to the native Irish worship of the land as a female deity.

The third stanza is a prayer that the speaker may find a language which is neither English nor Irish, but still valid and native. That his ancestors are buried in this foreign soil is enough to make him a native, and while he cannot remember the purer language of England, neither can he speak like a native. Ironically, like the Gaelic Irish, he must praise the soil itself in order that it will impart a unique language to him. He hints that the bones of his ancestors buried in the soil will somehow attach him to once-foreign ground. He knows that he

> must let this rich earth so enhance the blood
> with steady pulse where now is plunging mood
> till thought and image may, identified,
> find easy voice to each aright. (21-24)

"Each" here refers to the "graver English" and "lyric Irish tongue" (19). This poem marks the beginning of Hewitt's

attempt to find a truly distinct sense of identity which will look to ancestry, language, and place for its roots. The speaker's rejection of his identity as an outsider begins to etch in language his own distinct history.

In "Conacre" (1943), Hewitt ponders the dual forces of remembering and forgetting in the formation of his identity. More specifically, it is a poem which mourns the fall from an edenic relationship with safe, ahistorical nature, into a confrontation with the reality that his identity is socially and historically based. His physical relationship with the landscape cannot help him escape, as much as he tries, from the fact that his territory is only recognizable as both native and colonized. John Wilson Foster puts it that Hewitt "realizes that country and nation are not synonymous; that his nativeness is incomplete. His poetic locale is largely Protestant -- the fertile parts of the Antrim glens, and the fertile corridor of the Lagan valley" (143). This productive and fertile "Protestant" landscape contrasts sharply with the harsh Irish unproductive landscape in which Heaney digs.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary the term "conacre" is an eighteenth century usage meaning, "In the Irish land system: The letting by a tenant, for the season, of small portions of land ready ploughed and prepared for a crop." While the title might suggest an ode to arable land in contrast to the wilder landscape of Ireland, the speaker

prefers his own instinctual, elemental response to the landscape:

> I'd give the collar of an Irish king
> for one wet catkin jigging loosely in the spring,
> when I am weary of the labelled bird
> and want the song and not the latin word.
> (155-159)

In wishing to fly over the rationalism of his Protestant tradition and urban upbringing the speaker hopes to enjoy a haiku moment in the glens of Antrim. But the scene is painted in rational Augustan couplets which kill the visceral quality of the imagined union. The colonial rationalist tries to resist the temptation to view nature through the reductionist lens of the imperialist explorer. But while he can imagine enjoying the bird's song directly, this desire is not to be realized. Another irritation obscures his view of nature: the consciousness of history, here embodied in the "collar of an Irish king," which cannot be erased. The speaker's alienation from the natural world is further reinforced by his being a city-dweller experiencing nature as an outsider:

> ...I began
> these verses to discover why a man
> town bred and timid, should attain to peace
> with outworn themes and rustic images,
> and now I find the shifting meaning turns

on human history and its wry concerns. (224-228)

Hewitt's use of the term "Conacre" suggests his own people's relatively short term on Ulster's land, but more importantly, it reminds us that it was his people who gave large areas of Ulster's land "the shape of use," implying that his people are not the tenants of time, but the landlords. They have *earned* a place in this nation. But in the excerpt, the concerns of history are tiresome and "wry." This is not Hardy's Wessex, each rustic rooted to the earth; it is inescapably a tapestry of the colonist's carefully tilled fields with all the burdensome history which this implies.

The speaker is constantly reminded of his alienation from the land in which he lives, and instead wishes himself to be

> rather a happy man who seldomn sees
> the emptiness behind the images. (253-4)

He longs for the bliss which is imagined to come from a faith in the images which he formerly adored. The images are the ideals of the unsullied pastoral garden and its opposite, the corrupt city. The very word "conacre," with its protected and pampered furrows, embodies a safe, orderly place in a wilderness of chaos. But the speaker knows that as a mere acre, it is swamped by its over-historicized surroundings. The tragedy is simple: the rational, thinking, analytical man is left without an identity which

the ignorant man can enjoy.

The iambic couplets march on in a protest against the forces of history, and the speaker's tone becomes nervous and enraged at the historical residue which crowds him off his island. He is further enraged by his ancestors having left him stranded on this place without the power or knowledge to return to his by now estranged fatherland:

> in this mad island crammed with bloody ghosts
> and moaning memories of forgotten coasts
> our fathers steered from, where we cannot go
> the name's so lost in times' undertow. (258-261)

The only resolution the speaker can find is in the ideas of "home and country," but this security is spoiled by his use of the word "nation," forcing him back to the mean and lonely world, and like a hermit he seeks refuge in the elemental forces of nature:

> This is my home and country, Later on
> perhaps I'll find this nation my own
> but here and now it is enough to love
> this faulted ledge, this map of cloud above,
> and the great sea that beats against the west
> to swamp the sun. (262-267)

The closing images take us from an easterly view facing England and Scotland to the western horizon over the cold Atlantic, which holds the promise of imaginative or even real escape. The west of Ireland is also, in the territory

of literature, instantly recognizable as Synge's Ireland, of imagined authentic people who carry in their idiosyncratic use of the English language the emblem of Irish identity.

A wide selection of Hewitt's poems form the depressed annals of the poet's realization that his identity is forged by his *not* being one of these people. The image of the clouds as a "map above" contrasts in its free play and seductive escapism with the fixed and confining political map of Northern Ireland, and even the coastline of the entire island, which in comparison with the sky, is confining. The last stanza's conciliatory tone is reached by the speaker's assertion that his love of the Irish land and seascapes is enough for him to belong. The simple, direct imagery of the last three lines evokes early Irish nature poetry, written by monks in the sixth to the ninth centuries on the self-same ground as Hewitt's. Consciously or not, Hewitt is returning to an ancient mode of identity with place. He is rejecting the compulsory interrogation of politics and history as a means of justifying one's right to belong.

The claustrophobic qualities which pressurize "Conacre" deliver Hewitt to a territory which he can possess with a sense of authority previously absent in his poetry. This rite of passage allows him to discover a new assertiveness over the forces of history. He will write a series of poems in which he confronts both distant and intimate ghosts which

he feels are confining him within the limitations of historical discourse. Ironically, he finds his most authoritative voice in the discovery of the absence of any authority or identification with the landscape.

In "My Father's Ghost" (1949), Hewitt's memory of his father is controlled by a wish to substantiate abstract images. It is a brave attempt to come to terms with a feeling that he is an outcast from life's feast, even with his own immediate history:

> My dead father, the prince among my dead,
> has never come again except in dream,
> unless the word that jangles in my head,
> reminding me, rebuking me's from him;
> never his palpable presence or his face,
> his ink-ringed finger or his broad-splayed thumb.
> (1-6)

The only physical image remaining of his father is his disembodied hand, the only sound a vague "jangling" rebuke. In that Hewitt confronts this prototypical, or perhaps even stereotypical Protestant father-son relationship, he is exorcising the limitations and restraint of the father's distant, cold, but powerful authority. That his father is merely the "prince" among his dead suggests a resistance against the vengeful intimacy of Hamlet and his father's ghost. This speaker will not go out on a heroic quest for his father; of that the speaker is deprived, but he is also

comfortable with this absence of drama.

The last two lines in the first stanza describe a lapse in the consciousness that his father is dead:

> yet, when I've stood in some famous place,
> I've always thought I'll tell him he must come.
> (9-10)

That the speaker forgets, even for a moment, that his father has died is an occasion to contrast the death of his father imaginatively and instinctually. His instinct, for a moment, tells him that his father is alive and must be told of this "famous place." The speaker strays from the straight and narrow path of seventeenth century rationalism, and must correct himself.

In the second and final stanza, the speaker, in deference to his father's puritan sensibilities, rejects the fashionable bohemian spiritualism so central to Yeats's mystical experiments:

> It was never his wish to play planchette
> or tilt a table; once I asked him why,
> and I recall his definite reply,
> so I have never tried. I'd rather let
> my pulses keep the quiet discipline
> that, if he haunts, he haunts me from within.
> (9-14)

The "confident reply" we must assume, is the reassurance that the dead do not haunt, that once in the ground, life is

over until the Day of Judgment. This Calvinistic certainty and resistance to the mystical which infuses Hewitt's work is in contrast to his occasional liberation from it and communion with the energy of the natural world, a union conventionally relegated to the romanticized native Irish. Most critics of Hewitt have failed to see that in his purging himself of the limitations of his community's "self-vision" he is remaking his identity and universalizing himself. While the speaker is rebuking himself through the disembodied voice of his father, he is also rebuking his father in the very act of writing this poem. Yeats's sense of continuity with his colonial ancestors is affirmation. That is because Yeats's ancestors are under his imaginative control, and the past is a harvest for him to reap and enrich his present. Hewitt's past haunts him. He must make repeated acts of burial, and exorcise these formidable ghosts, whether they be distant ancestors or his own father. The past exercises an oppressive, almost strangling effect upon him. In order to possess the past, Hewitt must constantly conquer and reconquer the land, and while wishing to continue his tradition, he also longs to be able to break from it.

"The Colony" (1950) is exacting evidence of this kind of struggle. The poem is a treatment of the English conquest of Ireland transposed onto the Roman conquest of the Britons: there is both indictment and acquittal in the

speaker's voice in this epic myth whose cadences remind us of Caesar's Gallic Wars. The speaker in the early part of the poem is not Hewitt, but another ghost of a battle-weary conqueror, at once Roman and distinctively seventeenth-century Ulster, who looks back on the pillagings, plunderings and plantations of Ulster. He has some of the guilt-ridden qualities of the ghostly soldier, John Hill, in "The Bloody Brae," but he is less apologetic, and more matter-of-fact about his actions. The Roman centurion's armor-coating also obscures the guilt of the colonist who wishes to nest in what he now sees as home.

The device of romanizing the English garrison and making Caesar their leader transfers the act of aggression onto a physically and historically distant conquering people. In doing so, Hewitt frees his ancestors from the guilt of confiscation by, in effect, showing that the Romans did the same to his ancestors: the Plantation of Ulster has been rendered here as a mere cycle of nature. In erasing the historical differences between England and Ireland Hewitt reminds us that the English, too, were once the victims of dispossession. We are also reminded of Yeats's ancestors and their romanizing of Irish history after appropriating it from the native Irish through the latinizing of names, such as "Hibernia." The greatest difference between Yeats's and Hewitt's versions of their ancestors' arrival on Irish shores is that Hewitt chooses

not to glamorize the colonists:

> First came the legions, then the colonists,
> provincials, landless citizens, and some
> camp-followers of restless generals
> content now only with the least of wars.
> Among this rabble, some to feel more free
> beyond the ready whim of Caesar's fist; (1-6)

In calling his ancestors "rabble" Hewitt is putting them under his authority. He is not only recognizing the relatively lower class of the Planters, he is also recalling the freedoms of colonists, a little like outlaws, away from the governmental eyes of the colonial center, without authority. The "least of wars" refers to the absence of resistance which the native Irish showed the conquerors, except briefly in 1641:

> We planted little towns to garrison
> the heaving country, heaping walls of earth
> and keeping all our cattle close at hand;
> then thrusting north and west, we felled the trees
> selling them off at the foothills, at a stroke
> making quick profits, smoking out the nests
> of barbarian tribesmen, clan by clan. (18-24)

Historical events which took place four hundred years earlier are reimagined with grandiose, marching iambic pentameter. The lines here ring of confession, each sin recounted with purgative zeal; the native Irish likened to

animals in their "nests." The imagery of destruction and clearing celebrates and indicts the inscription of the colonist on the once pristine landscape. The ritual of remembrance in Ireland is one which provides each community with a sense of history and identity. Each community celebrates its myth; be it William's victory on the Boyne, or the Easter Rising, with the passion of willing history to be true. That is a passion of which Yeats is keenly aware. Hewitt is distrustful of such passion, so he rewrites his community's history with the objectivity of a sociologist:

> Teams of the tamer natives we employed
> to hew and draw, but did not call them slaves.
> Some say this was our error. Others claim
> we were too slow to make them citizens;
> we might have made them Caesar's bravest legions.
> (68-72)

The tragedy of division among those left behind after the conquest has given rise to this indecision as to how to treat the natives. The finger of accusation is now being pointed away from the speaker towards his community.

Hewitt is, like his spiritual and actual Protestant ancestors, both fearful and distrustful of Catholicism. This sets him at a distance from those with whom he must share the land, but it also reinforces his own distinct colonial lineage. While it may at first appear as a justification for and indictment of the plantation, Hewitt's

directness of voice makes the poem's tone ironic:

> They worship heaven strangely, having rites
> we snigger at, are known as superstitious,
> cunning by nature, never to be trusted,
> given to dancing and a kind of song
> seductive to the ear, a whining sorrow. (92-6)

The speaker moves away from specific concerns of the conquest and plantation to the way many members of the Protestant community, then and today, view the Gaelic Irish. This is where Hewitt is beginning to take risks, and the poem leaves behind the distant past to take up present post-colonial dilemmas. This clichéd colonial view of the colonized could be articulated in ancient Britain, seventeenth to twentieth century Ulster, or anywhere in the vast colonized world of the nineteenth century. Those qualities of the Gaelic Irish which Yeats found so compelling and attractive, Hewitt's speaker here finds as threatening as the beating of the natives' drums in the hills that disturbs the civilized settlers' sleep. Hewitt is taking the glamour of the Irish and recasting it as brutal in the Ulster Protestant mind. The last three lines of the stanza give us the basis of this fear:

> Also they breed like flies. The danger's there;
> when Caesar's old and lays his sceptre down,
> we'll be little people, well-outnumbered. (97-100)

The threat to the imagined Roman community has been expanded

to include the present crisis. Hewitt's community fear being swamped by the native population without the protection of the empire's center, especially after Caesar "lays his sceptre down." This fear is greater even today than in the relatively peaceful days of 1950 when Hewitt wrote the poem.

The confusion of what the colonial descendant is to do when abandoned by the empire becomes clearer when he points out the possibility of embracing the native culture a la Yeats:

> Among us, some, beguiled by their sad music,
> make common cause with the natives, in their
> hearts
> hoping to win a truce when the tribes assert
> their ancient right and take what was once theirs.
> Already from other lands the legions ebb
> and men no longer know the Roman peace. (106-111)

Hardly has a poet better encapsulated the anxiety of the international post-colonial crises in the latter part of the twentieth century. The former rule of the empire was a "Roman peace" now sadly gone: it has been replaced by the various forms of chaos described by Chinua Achebe, V. S. Naipaul, and now Hewitt. The choices are few: go native in hopes that one will be tolerated after the territories have been restored to native rule; resist; or repatriate. The last is not a possibility for Hewitt or the majority of his

community, for whom Ulster is now home.

The final stanza marks a change in speakers. We are in the present, and there is powerful sense that Hewitt has taken center stage because he identifies himself as "alone," a clear marker for Hewitt:

> Alone, I have a harder row to hoe:
> I think these natives human, think their code,
> though strange to us, and farther from the truth,
> only a little so -- to be redeemed
> if they themselves rise up against the spells
> and fears their celibates surround them with.
> (112-117)

This is one instance where Hewitt makes an unfortunate error. Instead of sustaining the voice of his speaker, which is distant enough from the poet to be allowed to utter the forbidden thought, Hewitt the cool-headed rationalist comes through, negotiating with his tolerant voice. The unapologetic tone of the colonist has been broken by the voice of the conflicted poet. The conflict centers on the speaker's acknowledgment that the Gaelic Irish are human, but also the rather naive notion that they could be equal to "us" if exorcised of the influence of the "celibate" priests.

In the rigorously segregated world of Hewitt's childhood, Loyalists and Nationalists (Protestants and Catholics) rarely intermingled. This segregation had to be

enforced by law, since Catholics and Protestants often lived in close proximity, not as in the South where the Big House acted as a secure haven to separate colonizer from native. As a result, children kept close ties with their own kind, and held superstitious beliefs about children of the other persuasion. After the outbreak of street rioting in Belfast in the summer and autumn of 1969, Hewitt reflected in the only non-sectarian literary journal in Northern Ireland:

> Heart-sore as any Belfastman must be at the events of last Autumn, I have prodded through my troubled thoughts and memories to find the cardinal seed of evil which we have allowed to break into this horrible efflorescence...I have tried hard to recall my own childhood and realise that even in a comparatively enlightened home, I built up a grotesque image of the majority of my fellow countrymen which is frightening in its implications and has proved crippling in its effects. ("Family" 14)

In "The Irish Dimension" was written in 1978, after a decade of street rioting and urban guerilla warfare had taken many lives in the province. It is Hewitt's by now characteristic appeal not to community but to reason that motivates this parable poem. Hewitt remembers his first encounter with a Catholic family who moved to a neighboring house:

> We shortly found that they were Catholics
> the very first I ever came to know;
> To other friends they might be Teagues or Micks;
> The lad I quickly found no sort of foe. (5-8)

The terms "Teague" and "Mick" are derogatory Protestant

euphemisms for Roman Catholics. Hewitt remembers the surprise of the event, since his father never let a Catholic visit the house, even though he remembers his father, a schoolmaster, as one of the most libertarian men in their community. Hewitt resists the urge to see Catholics as his Protestant friends do; however, they carry an air of mystery:

> Just my own age. His Christian Brothers School
> to me seemed cruel. As an altar boy
> he served with dread. His magazines were full
> of faces, places, named, unknown to me.
> Benburb, Wolfe Tone, Cuchulainn, Fontenoy. (9-13)

The foreignness of the Catholic renders him exotic. The tone of the speaker carries the excitement of a newly-arrived colonist in India or the West Indies. However, the speaker's deliberately respectful tone is a rebuke to those members of the Protestant community who still fear personal contact with Catholics. Hewitt's open-minded and reasonable tone is a cue to his audience to follow his lead. This is where he descends into wishful thinking, like the Yeats who thought he was the pied piper of Dublin, but learned that his music could not seduce the masses into following him.

Declan Kiberd insists on the dismantlement of the binary oppositions which, he claims, interfere with a fuller understanding of the history of Irish writing, both native

and Anglo-Irish. Protestant and Catholic Irish writers have always been treated as separate beasts, separated by a series of unique "essences." As a result, Kiberd claims, we are unable to reach a basic understanding of each group and therefore of the Irish as a whole. Hewitt has made his own attempts to see himself as part of not just one, but two cultures. He takes a deep interest in native Irish culture, albeit through the colonial lens, and discovers in this encounter a whiff of the familiar. He does so without the triumphant authority of Yeats, but in a quiet, guarded tone, characteristic of any voice which emanates from the scrutinizing environs of Ulster.

Seamus Heaney's obituary for Hewitt hits on one important aspect of Hewitt's life and work. Because Hewitt is a Protestant, the majority Ireland's critics are quick to try to attach a series of labels to him. It is as if once categorized, he can then be overlooked, and the Irish critics and their obsession with making sure that important people are not offended can resume the more important work of reshaping their literature to make it presentable and as inoffensive as possible. Heaney wrote of Hewitt that he "outstrips the categories we keep invoking for him such as...'conscience of the Planter tradition' and becomes instead the universal poet" (Ormsby lxxiii). Eavan Boland also calls attention to Hewitt's being overlooked in the Irish literary canon for reasons which are essentially

political:

> I suspect that John Hewitt's poetry has been wished away at times because it seems to cling to old political positions which do not suit the new political programme..Hewitt is not a Unionist, not Planter, not a Loyalist. He is one of the dispossessed. ("Outsider" 10)

The current Irish literary and critical canon is controlled by a political climate which insists upon the simplistic opposition between Irish as essentially Catholic and dispossessed and Protestant as necessarily English and conqueror. Hewitt's dissenting voice is like a warm front thawing the oppressive glacier which divides and crushes the possibility of a non-Catholic Irish identity. It is a tribute to Hewitt that he began with so little sense of possibility in the Ulster Protestant identity and found through Regionalism a common ground on which to commune with the Catholic artistic community. As Heaney's obituary affirms, Hewitt was instrumental in forging a community of Ulster artists whose sense of identity is invested not only in history, but also in place.

Chapter Four

Silence, Exile and Digging: Seamus Heaney's Voice of the Dispossessed in Death of a Naturalist, Door into the Dark and North.

> *What is the source of our first suffering? It lies in the fact that we hesitated to speak..It was born in the moment when we accumulated silent things within us.* Gaston Bachelard. (Ireland's Field Day 18)

Seamus Heaney employed Bachelard's words as an epigraph for his uncharacteristically satirical poem entitled "An Open Letter" (1984). The poem describes the overwhelming pressure that Heaney feels to utter what has not been uttered for centuries, and resists the inclusion of his poem in the 1982 edition of The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry: "This "British" word / sticks deep in native and *colon* / Like Arthur's sword" (Ireland's Field Day 23). Heaney insists upon his Irish identity, which he feels is threatened by the well-intentioned kind of anthologizing which erases the subtle differences between a Cockney and a Derryman.

The northern Catholic community, of which Heaney is by far the best known poet, is one which has largely languished in silence. Over the past twenty-five years this silence

has found its expression most notably in the form of violence. Heaney's art attempts to fill this silence on personal, familial and political levels. Declan Kiberd argues that in modern Irish literature the expression of mourning and rage replaces the urge for actual violence:

> There is little in the ethos of Irish life or culture to glorify violence. The greatest work of modern Irish literature, Ulysses, is something of a pacifist tract whose central voice, Leopold Bloom, denounces all armies and insists that the only victories worth having are those won in the mind. Synge's exposure of the gap between a "gallous story" and a "dirty deed" has been updated in our own time by writers as diverse as Seamus Heaney and Brendan Behan. Even those who sing rebel ballads in public houses (the so-called armchair Provos) are in all likelihood purging an aggressive tendency which, otherwise, might take the lethal form of action. (Elephant 13)

Over the past thirty years of his career, Heaney has struggled to speak directly to what he calls "the matter of Ireland." That "matter" is in part an overwhelming accumulation of the unuttered, and so his work has been a digging back through history as a means of recovering the lost narratives of the Catholic Irish, much in the same way that Joyce sought to recreate Ireland in his "well-polished looking-glass." More specifically, Heaney sees his poetry as an attempt to find an idiom which will cut through the superficial realm of "peace talks" and "political settlement." He explains that

> This idiom is remote from the agnostic world of economic interest whose ironhand operates in the velvet glove of 'talks between elected representatives,' and remote from the political manoeuvres of power-sharing; but it is not remote

> from the psychology of Irishmen and Ulstermen who do the killing, and not remote from the bankrupt mythologies implicit in terms of Irish Catholic and Ulster Protestant. The question, as ever, is "How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea?" And my answer is, by offering "befitting emblems of adversity." (Preoccupations 56-7)

Heaney describes his family background as "not illiterate, but not literary" (Haffenden 63). His rural working-class roots set him at odds with Yeats and Hewitt, both of whom are of educated, colonial, middle-class backgrounds. Francis Clines of The New York Times reports that Heaney "...is the product of parents whose education ended with grade school, unbookish people with differing approaches to the language, as Heaney describes it. 'There is the Heaney side, very intelligent with a belief in the authenticity of the unspoken,' he says, 'And my mother's side, the McCanns, very much devoted to argumentation, discourse; they're know-alls" (104). The McCann verbosity might be a remnant of their Protestant heritage, inherited by Heaney from his maternal great-grandmother, who converted from Protestantism to Catholicism before marriage. In the first part of "Clearances" (1987), an elegiac but not uncritical tribute to his mother, Heaney recalls the near mythical story of how his convert forbear withstood the inevitable stones cast by her betrayed community:

> A cobble thrown a hundred years ago
> keeps coming at me, the first stone
> Aimed at my great-grandmother's turncoat brow."

(1-3).

The speaker acknowledges this family story to be a "genre piece," the genre being every Irish family's lore of their particular involvement in, or suffering during the "troubles." The consciousness of his Protestant colonial ancestry upsets his pieta-portrait of authenticity as a colonized victim. For Heaney the story removes the possibility that he can ever purely be a suffering native at the hands of the conqueror: he is now conscious that the conqueror's blood flows through his veins. However his great-grandmother's stony entry into the Catholic community renders her worthy of membership. In this violent rite of passage, with its Biblical echoes, identity is transformed from Protestant, triumphant, and colonial to Catholic, victimized, and colonized. The stigmata of her attack place the great-grandmother on the Irish Nationalist altar but they also subvert the myth of a "pure" Irish identity, for Heaney learns that he is not entirely of native lineage. Heaney is aware that the story is a microcosm of Ireland's entire colonial history: a reminder that the quotidian realities of history contradict the oversimplifications of partisan politics.

This story helps Heaney to see himself in communion with Yeats and Hewitt. Although Heaney finds Yeats to be an almost overwhelming influence and therefore also a source of anxiety, he has also been Yeats's most stalwart defender in

the face of a barrage of critical attacks in recent years. Heaney also identifies closely with Hewitt because they are both northern and therefore marginal in the Irish and British literary scenes. A host of critical admirers, including Harold Bloom, Helen Vendler, and Robert Lowell, placed "the mantle of Yeats" on Heaney's shoulders (*Observer* 7). And while he is uncomfortable with the responsibilities of this role, it is a garment which both honors and burdens, for while it heralded Heaney's fine verse craft it also placed him in the dubious role of national poet in a divided nation.

That Heaney is a product of a community which is isolated from the Republic of Ireland and disenfranchised by the Loyalist majority in the Northern state is evidence of his radically marginal status as compared to Yeats. But his elevation onto the academic podium cleaned up his muddied boots and lent him a curious double-vision of the Irish situation. On one hand Heaney intimately knows Ireland from the perspective of his family farm and its surrounding bogland, but now as an academician holding a prestigious chair at Oxford, he can simultaneously understand the perspective of the colonizer. Heaney is constantly guilt-ridden that he has "abandoned" the lowly family farm in County Derry, a guilt that is confronted and appeased in his verse.

Heaney's secondary education at St. Columb's College,

Derry, brought him into his earliest encounters with Romantic and modern English poetry, in particular Wordsworth and Hopkins. Heaney reminisces, "The result of reading Hopkins at school was the desire to write..it is true the Ulster accent is generally a staccato consonantal one...and it may be because of this affinity between my dialect and Hopkins' oddity that these first few verses turned out the way they did" (Preoccupations 44-5).

Like Hewitt, Heaney takes up the cause of regionalism to help find a writing voice and an identity which have strong elements of both English and Irish culture. But his concept of region is complicated by his being Irish and Catholic, unlike Hewitt. The "either English or Irish" dilemma, which Hewitt spent decades overcoming and replacing with a post-colonial identity of place, is tackled by Heaney in his second collection, Door into the Dark (1969). In "Belderg" the speaker finds that the sacred landscape on which he grew up was possessed and named by a series of invaders, Viking, Scots, and Saxon. Archaeology and the etymology of the name of his home confront the speaker with the fact that he is not the king of his castle: "But 'Mossbawn..., reveals a forked root." The persistent resurrection of Ireland's colonial history was accelerated by the sectarian conflict which reached its crisis in 1969.

The current international recognition of Seamus Heaney as "one of the most admired poets writing in English" has at

times overshadowed his longer-established role as a member of a group of Northern Irish poets whose identity is inextricably bound up with Northern Ireland's colonial crisis (Gross 23). In the early 1960s, as a student at Queen's University, Belfast, Heaney and a gathering of fellow Catholic and Protestant would-be poets came together under the tutelage of the English critic Philip Hobsbaum, a founding member of The Group. Among Hobsbaum's students were Stewart Parker, Derek Mahon, Seamus Deane, Michael Longley and Tom Paulin, all of whom today are widely recognized as poets and critics of the troubled province.

As an undergraduate at Queens University, Belfast in the early 1960s, Heaney was part of the first generation of Catholics to enjoy newly available British public funding for higher education, allowing formerly excluded Catholics to enter the professional classes. This is an important part of the consciousness of Heaney and his Catholic colleagues, especially Seamus Deane, for both are acutely conscious that they are the first generation of working-class Northern Catholics to enter the Academy. The responsibility placed on the likes of Heaney and Deane was and is great.

The 1960s saw the beginning of the movement for civil rights for Catholics in Northern Ireland, a state which, since its inception in 1921, had kept Catholics out of the professional work force and maintained the hegemony of

Protestants loyal to the union with Britain. The sixties also saw the development of cracks in the wall dividing Protestant and Catholic writers and artists, probably because for the first time in Ireland's colonial history, the children of the colonizers and colonized, Protestant and Catholic, were sitting together in university lectures halls. Heaney and Deane began to collaborate in writing projects with Protestant writers, opening up the previously unlikely possibility that undergraduates from both sides of the strong sectarian divide would mix and exchange ideas. In 1967 the Catholic poet John Montague and John Hewitt produced a joint collection of poems entitled The Planter and the Gael. Later, when Hewitt took up a post a artist - in-residence at Queen's University in the early 1970s, Heaney joined forces with him to encourage the cooperation between Protestant and Catholic poets in Belfast. Probably the greatest common ground between Hewitt and Heaney besides the close proximity of the place they both call home is their membership in relatively marginal and isolated communities, bonded in war and victimhood. They are stranded on an island which is in the British imagination a fading vestige of a formerly vast empire inhabited by an unfathomable and virtually irrelevant population.

That Hewitt failed to find an audience outside Northern Ireland is in part a result of his inability to break through the wall of his own provinciality. Central to

Heaney's wide appeal is, paradoxically, this very provincialism, which expresses itself in his intensely protective attitude towards the northern landscape and culture. Before the mid-1950s, the northern Irish dialect and marginal identity were outside the Pale of canonical English literature and would certainly have excluded Heaney from possible publication in England. That situation changed because of the work of Philip Hobsbaum, who, in 1955, formed The Group in London. The Group's founder members, John Lucie-Smith, a Jamaican, George MacBeth, a Scot, and Fleur Adcock, a New Zealander, were bohemian and foreign to the croquet lawns of Oxford and Cambridge. It is therefore no accident that when Hobsbaum took a post at Queen's University, Belfast, in the late 1950s, he would bring the liberal, inclusive politics of The Group with him. Heaney credits Philip Hobsbaum with his newly discovered but timorous pride of place and culture:

> Hobsbaum...trusted the parochial, the inept, the unprinted...It's easy to be blase about all that now, for now, of course, we're genuine parochials. Then we were craven provincials. (Preoccupations 29)

One of the dangers of this newly glamorized parochialism was that Heaney could be recasting himself in that type so admired by Matthew Arnold, for instance, in his writings on the anachronistic literature of the Celts. This new type of poet could easily have been received as the bardic noble-savage bogman from bleak and tragic Northern

Ireland, bearing his stigmata in the form of psychic war wounds. But the imposing edifice of Patrick Kavanagh (1904-1966) was available to Heaney as a model for writing simultaneously about the brutal and the provincial. Kavanagh's insertion of the provincial into the modern idiom helped Heaney work his poetry up to the level of the universal. In spite of this strength, Heaney's work, like Yeats's and Hewitt's, is in constant danger of being read as merely marginal and enigmatic. The New York Times, for example, argued that while Heaney's poems "contain many striking and lines and images, they are often impenetrably obscure" (Gross 23). Heaney demands much of his readers, especially in the sense that many of his allusions are localized to the culture of rural County Derry. The writer of the New York Times review of Heaney's "Sweeney" poems in part two of Station Island (1984) had difficulty grasping Heaney's references to Sweeney, the early Ulster King. One of the dangers in this provinciality is that non-Irish readers often struggle to understand Heaney's literary and local allusions. The intense power that Heaney invests in his boglands, his subterranean world of tooth and bone, neolithic and modern murdered corpses, can easily be softened by the literary tourist industry which tends to place his poems into the museum or the glossy coffee-table book. However, Heaney succeeds in resisting this categorization with lines like "report us fairly, / how we

slaughter / for the common good...how the goddess swallows / our love and terror" from "Kinship" (1975). The poem's speaker is maddened by the fury of endless violent conflict, which he can only explain as being motivated by a terrifying subterranean quasi-religious force which Yeats endearingly called "Kathleen Ni Houlihan." Heaney manages simultaneously to mourn for the tragic effects of violence and deglamorizing the myth that leads to the violent act. Like his forebear, Yeats, Heaney does not want his work to "send out men the English shot."

Heaney's pride in the parochial added a vitally subversive element to his writing. With Hobsbaum's encouragement, Heaney took possession of the rhythms of his native accent and dialect. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Northern Ireland accent was not to be heard on the B.B.C.'s air waves. The now trite but then sanctioned "B.B.C.-accent" was the voice of authority on radio and television throughout the British Isles. Today, regional accents of the British Isles are to be heard regularly on the B.B.C.'s air waves. For Heaney, then, writing and reading in an unadulterated form of his own dialect and staccato accent was an unprecedented act of assertion. Heaney the proud regionalist was one of the earliest marks of his poetry, "Dan Taggart pitched them, 'the scraggy wee shits,' / into a bucket" from "The Early Purges" (1966) describes the horrified gaze of the child speaker watching a

neighbor drown unwanted kittens (2-3). The consonantal tones and lemon-sharp curtness of the Ulster accent had at last found their way into writing.

Yet what Heaney's wife humorously refers to as his "magical ring of confidence" is tempered by Heaney's timorousness and passivity (Hart 2). In an early uncollected poem called "Incertus" Heaney describes himself as "Uncertain, a shy soul fretting and all that" in contrast to his advances in the act of writing (Preoccupations 45). Heaney believes that the timidity and verbal reticence of the Northern Catholic has an historical component. In "Whatever You Say Say Nothing" (1975), for example, the speaker attacks the passive but deadly pieties of a people who have learned to use language as a means of avoiding the responsibility for changing a world they feel to be beyond their control. And Heaney recognizes the penchant for silence and passivity in himself. But Seamus Deane argues that "[Heaney's] guilt is that is that of the victim, not of the victimizer. In this he is characteristic of his Northern Catholic community" (Celtic Revivals 175).

For all of Heaney's outrage at the violence which reerupted before his eyes shortly after he began to write poetry, he still is prostrate before that goddess who "swallows / our love and terror." For Heaney is always responding to various forms of authority: Protestants ("Docker" [1966]), the I.R.A. ("Punishment" [1975]), the

Royal Ulster Constabulary ("A Constable Calls" [1975], and the British Government ("Whatever You Say Say Nothing" [1975]). Terence Brown identifies in Heaney a kind of authority which rebukes itself; his poems "seem the minimal revelations of a reality that exists at the beck and call of no man -- not even the poet" (Bloom 34).

The six counties of Northern Ireland had succeeded in maintaining their uneasy peace for almost fifty years since the formation of the state in 1922. Heaney's earliest published poems also came at an auspicious time. The publication in 1966 of Heaney's first collection, Death of a Naturalist, came on the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1916. The celebrations of the anniversary were the most unequivocal expression of Irish nationalism since the Rising itself, matching Bastille Day in Paris or July the Fourth of the United States.[29] But in the North the minority Catholic community did not join in the celebrations. Their feeling of defeat and dispossession was compounded by an increasing sense of abandonment by their freed counterparts in the south, making them a pitifully isolated group.

Heaney knew that his being Catholic would identify him with political subversion, restricting the workings of both the tongue and the pen. In his early work Heaney is most reluctant to address the crisis in Northern Ireland. It was not until 1975 that the poet wrote directly about the

communal aspects of everyday atrocities. Henry Hart argues that "Heaney's former status as a 'noncitizen' in Protestant-dominated Northern Ireland derived at least in part from his decision to choose writing as his mode of expression rather than the more customary political organ, speech" (8). In his early poems Heaney is least timid in identifying himself with those Catholic nationalists in history who sacrificed themselves for the cause of ending English colonial rule. The poems "Docker" (1966) and "Requiem for the Croppies" (1969) are expressions of that uniquely northern Catholic victimized perspective. In "Docker" the speaker fears "Oh, yes / That kind of thing could start again," referring to the reeruption of sectarian rioting, last seen en masse in 1922. And in "Requiem for the Croppies" the sacrificed victim knows that his blood will germinate another revolution, "And in August the barley grew up out of the grave." In 1969, rioting on the streets of Belfast and Derry did, in fact, "start again," necessitating new leadership in the Catholic community. Loosely organized housing and civil rights groups led a series of protests which expressed a long-suppressed collective rage at their second-class status under the Loyalist-controlled government. Heaney took part in many civil rights demonstrations demanding the right to the Catholic vote and equality in the allocation of public housing. But his role as a poet placed him in what Heaney

called the "position of... a representative of the Catholic community" (Druce 28).

This burdensome predicament was to be a bitter test of his commitment either to his community or his art. Heaney chose to commit himself to his art, somewhere on a continuum between the disdain of Joyce for Irish party politics and the commitment of Yeats to them. His adoption of Joyce's credo, "Silence, exile, and cunning" proved to be an essential element in his subsequent growth as a poet. In 1972 he moved out of Northern Ireland with his family to County Wicklow. He would not allow himself to be Ulster's Vaclav Havel, although the need for an outspoken rhetorical "father" like Yeats was readily apparent. Heaney called himself as one who "Escaped from the massacre, / taking protective colouring / from bole and bark" in "Exposure" (1975). This probably best describes his feelings about his own reticence to direct political involvement. Heaney's fiercest critics in the Catholic community would complain that their poet-leader abandoned them for the relatively safe pastoral environs of County Wicklow in 1972. His later receipt of distinguished faculty chairs at Oxford and Harvard have psychologically pulled Heaney from the sodden fields of his forefathers and landed him in uncomfortably safe "enemy" territory.[30] But while Heaney managed to fend off the demands of Northern Catholic citizenry for a leader, the resultant guilt found its way into his verse.

Heaney and his Irish predecessors, Joyce, Beckett, recognized the irony of having to exile themselves to the colonial center in order to receive recognition in their peripheral homes. Heaney's entire *oeuvre* is infused with and is an attempt to understand the guilt which is his constant companion. This guilt is in part a response to Heaney's individual ambitious urge to be free of political sanction, to write whatever he feels. His poems serve as a battleground for the conflict between the individual will and the call of a disenfranchised community to be saved by its more powerful sons. It is easy to fit Yeats's paradigm of Cathleen Ni Houlihan into Heaney's mental landscape, for both poets subscribe to the myth that Ireland is transformed and redeemed only when the individual will surrenders to that of the community. For Heaney tradition is embodied in one of his favorite words: "Piety."

"Piety" is a word worth examining, for it figures as a powerful part of Heaney's credo. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "piety" is literally "an early form of the word 'pity'" (2170). Heaney does, indeed, show "pity" to his community as the victims of oppression, but often shows little to himself as one weighed down by the demanding cries of that community. But "Piety" also means "faithfulness to the duties naturally owed to parents and relatives, superiors, etc" (2170). In this sense, we can see a central paradox in Heaney's hierarchy of loyalty. For

the ideal son of the Northern Catholic community is one who sacrifices his life for them: the Christ-figure of Bobby Sands and the I.R.A. hunger-strikers of 1980-1 are consciously imitating the sacrifice of Easter 1916 in response to the call of this blood-thirsty "Shan Van Vocht." The last word in the definition,"superiors," would also paradoxically imply loyalty to the authority of England and the Loyalist Protestant community. Heaney is powerfully aware that by refusing fidelity to the nationalist myth of martyrdom, he is betraying his community and abandoning the possibility of participation in that myth. For this refusal to confront it in his poetry Heaney is admirable. As Tony Curtis points out, "Intrigued by the central idea of place and cultural determinants he works to define his own position, to catch feelings in the tightening net of language" (8). And in Ulster the very act of feeling into words, or, articulating subversive or dangerous thoughts, is a risky business, and Heaney knows that some of his poems occupy a kind of no-man's-land between loyalty to the isolate self and to social acceptability.

Hewitt meandered around a series of negations in order to define the Protestant identity that he might then subvert and repudiate it. Since he was a pioneer in this search, the process took decades. But Heaney inherited a ready-made history and mythology that nourished his work and which his poetry dismantles. The clearly defined myths central to the

Irish Catholic ethos are undermined: sacrifice, loyalty to maternity (Ireland), betrayal by paternity (England), and a self-destructive comfort with victimhood and defeat. Yeats's and Hewitt's approach to the discovery of their identities is a process of construction, Heaney's is a process of disassembly.

Loyalty and betrayal are integral to Heaney's identity as a northern Catholic. The community aspires to repossess Ireland, and feels an intense pressure for sacrifice to that female deity who is a personification of Ireland as a captured, wronged woman. Heaney sees the history of the Irish through a lens which personifies Ireland as Mother and England as Father:

> There is an indigenous territorial numen, a tutelar of the whole island, call her Mother Ireland, Kathleen Ni Houlihan, the poor old woman, the Shan Van Vocht, whatever; and her sovereignty has been temporarily usurped by a new male cult whose founding fathers were Cromwell, William of Orange and Edward Carson, and whose godhead is incarnate in a rex or caesar resident in a palace in London. (Preoccupations 57)

That Heaney feels compelled to kneel and worship those powerful religious forces which inhabit his landscape marks an important difference between the colonizer and colonized. Even Hewitt's poems, though "quiet celebrations of man's relation to the earth," seem to point a powerful beam of rational light on the Irish landscape in the manner of a land surveyor (Bloom 28). But Heaney's passivity is a conscious outgrowth of that Irish Catholic earth-bound

religious sensibility with its emphasis upon the penitential rite. Heaney's passivity contrasts with the overwhelming authority of Yeats, whose poetic voice seems to demand that the gods and fairies in the earth perform at his command. Heaney claims that, "My view and my way with poetry has never been to use it as a vehicle for making statements about situations. The poems have more come up like bodies in the bog of my own imagination" (Bloom 34). Heaney's only motifs in writing about his subjects are suspended under the aegis of a specifically Irish Catholic humility. As Terence Brown puts it, Heaney's voice implies "the existence of a self already formed before the poet turns to discover the confidence to, as he so often puts it, "feel into words" (Bloom 33). The poet learns that in order to understand the power of that "self already formed" -- the Catholic Irish identity embedded in myth -- he must first dismantle it. Heaney sees his native landscape, something he continually refers to as "territory," in a radically different way from his northern counterpart, John Hewitt. Hewitt coolly observes and praises the Irish landscape in what Terence Brown calls "a clear, reflective, humanist light," but Heaney sees more truth in the shadow, "allowing the geographer's material to inhabit darker regions of the imagination" (Northern Voices 175-6).

Northern Catholics' communal longing for reunification with this female deity often glosses over the complicating

facts of ancestry. As a result Heaney is conflicted between what he and his community feel in their shared victimhood and the rational recognition that there is no authentic, "pure" Irish ancestry. His work, therefore, keeps moving towards the path beaten for him by Joyce, who dismantled those sacred essences of Irish identity through Leopold Bloom's constant musings on the components of the Irish identity. Despite his habitation close to the powerful forces of the Irish landscape and community, Heaney managed to make a number of Joycean escapes, but seemed attached to the north by an invisible but powerful thread.

Heaney's first escape was to the campus of the University of California at Berkeley as poet-in-residence in 1971, at the height of the "troubles" back in Northern Ireland. There in the leftist counter-culture of Berkeley, Heaney was able to draw parallels between the struggle of his people and that of African-Americans and Native Americans. Back home, many of the leaders of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association also saw a link between themselves and the television images of Martin Luther King leading a march on Selma, Alabama, and their own struggle for civil rights. They self-consciously imitated this new American form of communal protest, conducting a series of marches from Belfast to Derry, the marchers singing American protest songs such as "We Shall Overcome" and "When the Saints Go Marching In." As if to match the violence in

Selma, the first marchers from Belfast to Derry were attacked by a loyalist mob while police looked the other way (McClean 21). Heaney returned a year later to Ireland, confronted by the worsening violence in his northern home. The first poem which he felt succeeded in getting into words the feeling of being torn between his personal ambitions and the wishes of his community is "Digging" (1966). It is a poem as much about the rejection of ancestry as it is about the continuation of family traditions.

As a teenager, Heaney knew that he would make a break from the work of his digging farmer patriarchs, but what was he to do with the seemingly insurmountable pressure to continue his ancestral traditions? The answer lies in the confluence of two types of digging:

> Between my finger and my thumb,
> The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.
>
> Under my window, a clean rasping sound
> When the spade sinks into the gravelly ground:
> My father, digging. I look down
>
> Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
> Bends low coming up twenty years away (1-5)[31]

This poem contains embryonic elements of soon-to-be-central emblems of Heaney's verse: sexual and phallic imagery; guilt over individuation and the possession of

authority over the self; the terror and inevitability of numerous forms of violence. Heaney's poems have a recognizable rhetorical pattern: the oedipal urge; the act of individuation; and the urge for violence, are articulated and then repudiated. The symbol of the excavator holding a pen instead of a spade has a series of resonances. Beyond the break from the father's way of life, the pen gives the writer the power to excavate internally, but also to record and communicate without going through the almost forbidden act of speech. The pen as a sexual symbol is regenerative: its oozes help produce and reproduce the mind of the writer, giving him the power of self-reflection. The speaker also suggests that the pen, compared here with a gun, is more dangerous than the father's spade. That it is "snug as a gun" points to the writer's oneness with his weapon and the secret power he holds to usurp the authority of both the father and the Protestant community.

In "Whatever You Say, Say Nothing" (1975), Heaney will trace his disdain and pessimism at the silence which both protects the Irish from the full recognition of their plight and keeps them paralyzed in the headlights of their own awkward piety. The putting of feelings into words is a dangerous business in Northern Ireland, not only because it calls attention to the speaker making him a target of violent men, but also because speech inevitably implies the recognition and expression of the self and the self in

relation to the authority of the colonizing other. So the quiet digging of Heaney's ancestors is both an acceptance of their lot and a continuation of a tradition of colonial subjection, whereas Heaney's act of digging has far-reaching implications for his relations with his own people and the authority of the British establishment.

The father's love-making with the mysterious earth-goddess in the garden, "His straining rump among the flowerbeds," hints at the sight from the window of the forbidden act. But the line also has the feel of a voyeuristic manor-house view of the father as a garden worker, and this tone identifies more fully the oedipal nature of Heaney's early poetry. The resolve in the poem is simultaneously an identification with and separation from the father, for the father is now below the son, under the son's gaze, the object of the son's writing, seen but unseeing. The resolution of the conflict comes in the last lines. The speaker acknowledges both the oedipal urge and the need to take part in work like that of his own patriarchs, so he digs with another instrument:

> But I've no spade to follow men like them.
>
> Between my finger and my thumb
> The squat pen rests
> I'll dig with it. (28-31)

But his seemingly confident exit from the family

farming tradition belies his intimate attachment to an almost secret garden which is much-desired maternal territory. The father's observed communion with the earth is a reminder that the mother as earth is not available to the son, and so he resolves to strike out and find his own territory in the imagination. And while Mother Ireland is a virtual cliché in the shadow of Yeats's early drama, mother and landscape in Heaney's internal ordinance are more intensely intimate and threatening. "Digging" is an illustration of the poet's actual separation from his ancestors and his symbolic reunification with them. This opening poem in his first collection marks the transition from the world of tradition, rootedness in the soil, an Antaean safety in the physical connection with the Great Mother, and his entry into the exiled liminal world of the poet.

Through the negation of conventional ideas about what it means to be a northern Catholic, Heaney constructs a dwelling which incorporates the past into the present. This is how he can reconcile his paternal ancestors' physical digging with his own imaginative excavations. In "Digging," Heaney's identity is invested in the moment of and the actuality of loss -- digging is about loss; what is gained -- an individual identity -- is achieved only after the loss of his belonging fully to his family. His pen memorializes his patriarchs but also it rebels against them by being a

pen and not a spade. For this, as for every act of individuation, Heaney feels intense rebuke.

Henry Hart points to the personal and political side of this oedipal schema, claiming that Heaney's poetry "deconstructs the ancient hierarchies and oedipal struggles between 'patriarchal' British Protestants and 'matriarchal' Irish Catholics" (3). Heaney tackles the implications of the persistent myths among the Irish of a seductive mother Ireland and a conquering father England, only to find that these insights offer no solution to the persistent Northern crisis. Heaney's guilt is in part born of two acts of rebellion, the first against his own inarticulate community and its codes of silence, the second against the paternity and authority of England, for using their very language to subvert their authority. In an interview with John Haffenden, Heaney explains,

> The pursuit of the verbal icon eventually leads you into a confrontation with the mess of the actual around you, and in this country we have no shortage of actual mess. When I was in Glanmore I thought a lot about the function of writing. Dan Jacobson said to me once, "You feel bloody well guilty about writing," and there is indeed in me some part that is entirely unimpressed by the activity, that doesn't dislike it, but it's the generations, I suppose, of rural ancestors -- not illiterate, but not literary. They, in me, or I through them, don't give a damn. (63)

Heaney's conscious shift from the "not literary" world of his ancestors is compacted by a second rebellion against the authority of England and the Protestant community. For to articulate in political terms as a northern Catholic is

to confront one's own defeat, victimhood and rage. Heaney is more comfortable with the first two emotions than the last. Heaney described himself in terms of the title which he gave one of his first poems, "'Incertus,' a shy soul fretting and all that" (Preoccupations 40).

Some of the most important aspects of Heaney's poetry present us with seemingly insoluble problems: the child's terror in the face of brutal natural forces; paralysis, in the political as well as the Joycean sense; and the poet's inability to find communion with his pre-colonial ancestors. Heaney's marriage of aggressive and conciliatory urges is achieved through the process outlined by Herbert Marcuse, when he says that "Art is perhaps the most visible return of the repressed, not only on the individual, but also the generic-historical level ...to oppose and to reconcile, both to indict and to acquit; both to recall the repressed and to repress it again - 'purified'" (144). For surely Heaney's project is ambitious: to find a voice as a member of a community which lost its voice through centuries of colonization, then to create an aesthetic which is governed by both the repressed and the rational. The temptation to lapse into the rage of identity politics is great, as is evident in many 'post-colonial' writings, but Heaney's discipline keeps him from the aggressive flailing-about of rage and in contact with a constantly self-reflexive voice which monitors and undermines his visceral urges. In "The

Harvest Bow" (1979), a pastoral elegy, the speaker describes tentatively the possibility of his art in the face of his political disillusionment. Poetry, the result of the quarrel with the self, achieves a kind of peace. The poem's central motto "*The end of art is peace,*" is taken from Yeats's "Samhain: 1905." But this is not only the peace of a political settlement in Northern Ireland, but also a peace which both Yeats and Heaney find dangerous, for violence is the great spur of artistic production; so this "end" is the death of art itself.

Heaney's earliest poems are studies of the repressed, not mere representations of it. They manage to inhabit a borderland between the instinctual and the rational. He stalks these dangerous territories possessed by the violence of the natural and man-made world, the frightening and guilt-provoking discovery of an individuated self which separates him from his ancestors, and the paralyzing dilemma of how to address the political violence which eventually drives him from his home.

Heaney's developing consciousness as a Catholic Irishman forces him to confront with fear and loathing the enemy in the form of the violent Loyalist, the British soldier, and even the I.R.A. gunman. But while his poems are rooted in the often terrifying feelings which he seeks to reproduce, he never strays far from a kind of rational commentary upon these feelings.

Set against a background of violence, Heaney looks for home, and finds that it is not the pristine place he thought it to be. Like John Hewitt, Heaney never strays far from an orbit around a powerful and almost inarticulate loyalty to a nervous and highly codified community. But the rational investigation of poetry complicates the Battle-of-the-Boyne-simplicity of history. Like Yeats, Heaney discovers that his ancestry has served on both sides of the colonial wars. This brings a sense of both enlightenment and loss, another theme begun early on in his work.

It was not until 1972 that Heaney was able to produce the inimitable lines in "This Morning from a dewy motorway:" "Competence with pain,/ coherent miseries, a bite and sup,/ we hug our little destiny again." (10-12). That "competence" is an essential ingredient in the well-learned culture of acceptance, itself a central credo of the northern Catholic identity. Later, in 1975, Heaney was to express his frustration at this cultural trait in which he himself participates. That non-verbal tradition of both communities in Ulster dictates the compulsory rule best exemplified in Heaney's pessimistic diatribe: "Whatever You Say, Say Nothing" (1975). The poem is an indictment of the northern verbal reticence and its disastrous results. Heaney's frustration is highlighted by his own discovery of a voice which in a sense saves him from the undertow of silence.

Heaney broke the pervasive silence which cloaks Ulster, forbidding the open expression of estrangement from the "other," in his case, the northern Protestant. In many of the poems in Death of a Naturalist the speaker is mesmerized by that which sickens him with fear. Farmyard rats, angry bullfrogs in the flax dam, the seemingly unnecessary killing of unwanted kittens, and the all-powerful and terrifying Protestant authority, freeze the speaker in a visceral combination of fear and fascination.

Heaney remembers the bigoted childhood rhymes which reminded young Catholics and Protestants who they were and who they were not:

> And there were other chants, scurrilous and sectarian, that we used to fling at one another:
>
> Up the long ladder and down the short rope
>
> To hell with King Billy and God bless the
>
> Pope.
>
> To which the reply was:
>
> Up with King William and down with the Pope
>
> Splitter splatter holy water
> Scatter the Paypishes every one
>
> If that won't do
>
> We'll cut them in two
>
> And give them a touch of the
>
> Red, white and blue. (Preoccupations 25)

While these lines are indoctrinations into the sectarian divisions for Northern Irish children, their

feelings persist into adulthood. Heaney's art, therefore, seeks to defuse the tension between these opposites. As Seamus Deane puts it

> his central trope is marriage, male power and female tenderness conjoined in ceremony, a ritual appeasement of their opposition. One source of appeasement in his hands from an early age -- the link between his own, definitively Irish experience and the experience of English poetry. (Celtic Revivals 175-6)

Heaney's first adult utterance of this "otherness" is the poem "Docker" (1966). It is part of the residue emanating from years of silent fear and ignorance of a monolith of otherness. Even though the poem is written before the outbreak of sectarian violence in Heaney's lifetime, the tension is apparent. While it is far from his best work, the poem contains Heaney's characteristic staccato rhythm and sharp, pared-down imagery. In a smoky bar near the shipyards of Belfast, the Catholic speaker shudders at the intimate sight of the Protestant "enemy," somewhere between the imaginary and the real:

> There, in the corner, staring at his drink.
> The cap juts like a gantry's crossbeam,
> Cowling plated forehead and sledgehead jaw.
> Speech is clamped in the lip's vice. (1-4)

More than a sketch of a stranger in a bar, these quatrains map out the northern Catholic mind and its fear. The shipyards of Belfast have always employed Protestants exclusively. It is natural that metaphors of riveting and

sheet-metal work insinuate themselves into the image of the Protestant against the soft, prostrate, pastoral Catholic. The Protestant is here a photographic negative of the Catholic. While the Catholic is passive before the earth, the Protestant beats the earth's ore into a useful, mechanical shape. He is an extension of the colonist as maker, as opposed to the colonized as passive worshiper. Moreover, the Calvinist's crystal-clear view of morality and self-image are cast in stainless-steel certainty.

In the second stanza, the inevitable fear of violence rears its ugly head with mechanical rigidity:

> That fist would drop a hammer on a Catholic --
> Oh yes, that kind of thing could start again;
> The only Roman collar he tolerates
> Smiles all round his sleek pint of porter. (5-8)

In his imagined destructiveness, this Calvinist-automaton is comparable to one of Joyce's similarly threatening characters in Davey Byrne's bar -- Heaney's bestial man is a kind of "citizen" in reverse. However, Heaney never wastes words painting a grotesque picture without showing that much of the grotesque is in the eye of the beholder. Having created the stereotype, the speaker explodes it through the double-reference of the Roman collar on a Catholic priest and the head on a pint of Guinness. The speaker is now as objectified as the docker. The simultaneous construction and subversion of the Catholic

view of the Protestant continues in the third stanza:

> Mosaic imperatives bang home like rivets;
> God is a foreman with certain definite views
> Who orders life in shifts of work and leisure.
> A factory horn will blare the Resurrection.

The "imperatives" here are the fundamentalist interpretations of the Ten Commandments. This clever double-helix of work and religion is more than a reference to Max Weber's ideas of the roots of the Protestant work-ethic. What we have is another instance of Giordano Bruno's theory that "every power must evolve its opposite in order to realize itself": the northern Catholic seems to need the Protestant as the negative definition of his own identity (Kiberd, Ireland's Field Day 83).

The final stanza demonizes the docker by imagining his tyrannical power in the domestic scene:

> He sits, strong and blunt as a Celtic cross,
> Clearly used to silence and an armchair:
> Tonight the wife and children will be quiet
> At slammed door and smoker's cough in the hall.
> (13-16)

The docker's workplace is imagined to be his preferred domain. His domicile is a demonic inversion of Heaney's intimate idea of the home. But this is a construction of the other as a form of comfort for the self. The word "clearly" hints at the speaker's doubt of his own vision.

And characterizing the docker as "blunt as a Celtic cross" explodes the idea that the docker's reticence is the domain of Protestants alone. For his comparison to a Celtic cross suggests that he is wholly Irish. Readers of Joyce's Dubliners will also be reminded of the ominous, even horrifying homecomings of male authority figures in both "Araby" and "Counterparts." So the more the speaker tries to convince us that the docker is anything but a typical Irishman, the more he is revealed to be just that. "Docker" is Heaney's first attempt to pin down and subvert those stereotypical Catholic views of Protestants. The exercise is as liberating for him as are Hewitt's poems -- especially "The Colony" -- which outline the reverse viewpoint. In each case a series of internal demons are externalized in writing, understood, and therefore exorcised.

In "At a Potato Digging" (1966), Heaney adopts the demystifying realism of Patrick Kavanagh's "The Great Hunger" and infuses it with a broader view of history. Kavanagh would perhaps not have approved of Heaney's politicized response to his own epic verses, but then Kavanagh did not live in Northern Ireland in the 1960s. Kavanagh prefers the politics of corporeal deprivation to politics of colonialism. There is no sign that Maguire has any consciousness of Ireland's colonial history, and the potato famine of 1845-7 is merely an oblique foil for the poem's elegy of the farmer eaten by the more insidious

blight of religion and culture. Whereas Kavanagh's credo dictates

> Clay is the word and clay is the flesh
> Where the potato-gatherers like mechanized
> scarecrows move
> Along the side-fall of the hill (1-3, Muldoon 26)

Heaney's potato-diggers live in a Jungian nightmare:

> ...Centuries
> Of fear and homage to the famine god
> Toughen the muscles behind their humbled knees,
> Make a seasonal altar of the sod. (13-16)

The landscape in which Heaney grew up is, like Kavanagh's, a patchwork of hard-earned fields carved into a vast upland of waterlogged bog. Both grew up in relatively poor farming families with the strict codes of piety of rural Catholic life. But Heaney's powerful sense of piety supersedes the kind of indignation so characteristic of the poetry of Kavanagh, Yeats, or Hewitt. Instead, Heaney's sensibility in the face of an unchangeable and ever-present history responds with a stoicism best likened to that of Thomas Hardy. Both Heaney and Hardy celebrate the tragedy of rustic men sacrificed to the hungry earth: "Heads bow, trunks bend, hands fumble towards the black/Mother" (9-10).

The exhumed potatoes are more a reminder of death than a source of life:

> Live skulls, blind-eyed, balanced on

wild higgledy skeletons
Scoured the land in 'forty-five,
Wolfed the blighted root and died. (31-35)

Likened to those who died as a result of the disastrous crop failures in the last century, the potatoes are a constant *memento mori* for the terrified but too-acceptant living, as if history has the ever-present power to thrust the Irish back into its nightmare. The Irish are trapped in an organically-predestined role as starving colonized victims:

A people hungering from birth
grubbing, like plants, in the bitch earth
Were grafted with a great sorrow.
Hope rotted like a marrow. (43-46)

The great Mother is now the object of a Joycean attack; a "sow that eats her farrow." The Irish are not only the victims of English conquest, but also of Ireland herself, the "bitch earth," a piece of land which fails to nurture its offspring. The oppressive pessimism shown by Heaney in this poem echoes Kavanagh's laments. But the tragedy of Maguire has been extended to the entire population.

The only relief -- the workers' break for lunch -- cones in the last stanza, but even this little respite is infused with the knowledge that it is merely temporary. The workers are

Dead beat, they flop
Down in the ditch and take their fill,

Thankfully breaking timeless fasts;
Then, stretched on the faithless ground, spill
Libations of cold tea, scatter crusts. (54-58)

The final rub is that while the men are starved by and deprived of any security from the earth, they persist in making ritual sacrifices to her. Their meager lunch of "brown bread and tea" needs to be portioned out so that the earth can be appeased by receiving her ration. They may not be aware of it, but the men are repeating a millennia-old ritual in their own careless modern way.

This poem introduces a trope central to Heaney's investigations: the Irishman is in the hands of unpredictable and often treacherous natural forces. Like Edgar as Poor Tom in King Lear, the Irishman's territorial claim has been usurped and he has been exiled onto bogland to become a universal symbol of humankind: "the thing itself, unaccommodated man." Heaney feels some central connection to the tortured, starved, unaccommodated man, for this type acts as an archetypal ancestral figure of the conquest of Ireland by England. Through this type Heaney is reunited with his country's history of dispossession. The male is prone and powerless to rescue an imprisoned and demanding mother earth; the figure of Antaeus, the earth-hugger, will, for Heaney, eventually act as a symbol of the Catholic Irish relationship to Ireland. England and Protestantism are seen by Heaney as Hercules, the conqueror

who separates Antaeus from the earth, rendering him powerless.

The primacy of this tortured web of oedipal imagery in Heaney's first collection gives way to a deeper investigation of the darker crevasses of his own imagination in his second collection, Door into the Dark (1969). The natural and political forces which terrified the child in Death of a Naturalist are now confronted and analyzed. We can detect a concerted Orphean search for identity in an underworld populated by sacrificed historical figures. The speaker is here less defensive in the face of fear. The dark, the underworld, both physical and psychological, might even hold the promise of comfort and a reunification with lost possessions. One of the most important possessions lost to Heaney and his people is history. For Catholics, history is the domain of the earth, a dark place in which they worship. Heaney's first poem on this theme is "In Gallarus Oratory." It is a portrait of a sanctified space which, emptied of its congregants, resonates its powerful role as the gravitational center of the Catholic community. The chapel's earthy, thick-walled darkness is contemporary with the stone beehive huts inhabited by early Irish monks on the islands off the west coast, particularly Skellig Michael and Inishmurray. The combination of the images of eremitic and of communal bowing down to the female deity is essential to the poem's atmospheric power:

You can still feel the community pack
This place: it's like going into a turfstack,
A core of old dark walled up with stone
A yard thick. When you're in it alone
You might have dropped, a reduced creature
To the heart of the globe. No worshipper
Would leap up to his God off this floor. (1-7)

The dark, ancient mystery of this almost pre-Christian place lies like an archaeological dig beneath the Calvinist light of the Protestant church. Heaney feels and interprets the religious braille for his people in the darkness. The chapel does not so much exalt as humble its worshippers. Heaney prefers the oratory as a private place of meditative withdrawal over the act of oratorical speech, embodied in the Protestant church. The evangelical light of Calvinism is suggested in contrast to these worshippers who dare not leap to their feet. The entire place demands whispered prayer, not shouted revelation; that those who enter be prostrate, not stand and bear witness to the "Word of the Lord."

The second stanza discusses both the present and the ancient worshippers in this now empty church:

Founded here like heroes in a barrow
They sought themselves in the eye of their King
Under the black weight of their own breathing.
And how he smiled on them as they came,

The sea a censer, and the grass a flame. (8-12)

The submissiveness of the congregation comes in part from their identification with the crucified "King," in whose tortured eye they see themselves. It is in the passion, death and resurrection that this people invest their own beliefs. This is felt more deeply in the sexualized communal rite, or "black weight of their own breathing." The last two lines mark that moment of simultaneous sacrifice and sexualized release from the darkness. The speaker's view of the sea as a censer reminds us of the Irish view of the sea not only as provider but also as a crucible of sacrifice. Moreover, that the grass is seen as a "flame" suggests the inevitability of sacrifice in the religious consciousness of the Irish. The joy of recognition that the landscape is a source of life is always tempered with the knowledge that at any moment the crops will fail and the Irish themselves will become sacrificial lambs to their God.

There is something of the archaeologist in this Heaney; an attempt to recover what Seamus Deane calls "an old, lost wisdom" (Celtic Revivals 177). And this is true of the entire collection as well as the subsequent one, for "In Gallarus Oratory" the anonymous congregants are set in a vague past, imagined but never fully realized. While the dark of the earth is a place which promises illumination, it fails to provide the rational mind with any clear answers.

The most important communion here is between the poet and his lost wisdom.

In "Requiem for the Croppies" (1969) the speaker is one of the young men who died in the failed insurrection against English rule in 1798.[32] The publication of the poem coincided with the reeruption of violence in Northern Ireland. Therefore, this is not merely a meditation on a distant historical event, but a prediction that it will occur again, since for Heaney history is trapped in an unchanging cycle. But this is also Heaney's first meditation on the operation of the fertility ritual on a political level. Violence and blood sacrifice are viewed from the standpoint of those sacrificed, imagining their consciousness that death will fertilize new grain in coming seasons. The cycle of starvation and daily drudgery for the laborers in "At a Potato Digging" is broken. The spilling of blood at least provides for the possibility of renewal. The sacrifice of the young male facilitates that regeneration:

> The pockets of our great coats full of barley--
> No kitchens on the run, no striking camp--
> We move quick and sudden in our own country.

Heaney imagines the anxiety of the rebel on the run and identifies fully with that angst. But he also imagines that the rebel is conscious of the necessity of his own sacrifice and the regeneration that will be gained, for sacrifice is

always a prelude to transcendence:

> Terraced thousands died, shaking scythes at
> cannon.
> The hillside blushed, soaked in our broken wave.
> They buried us without shroud or coffin
> And in August the barley grew up out of the grave.
> (54)

The speaker's identification with the croppies mirrors Hewitt's "The Colony," in which the poet takes on the role of conquering colonizer. And both poets are deeply engaged in the quest to commune with and draw sustenance from their respective ancestral presences. However that "the hillside blushed" reminds us of Heaney's view of the sexual nature of blood sacrifice. The physical return, unconfined, of the slaughtered to the earth guarantees the growth of new grain. The grain the rebels carry in their great coats will germinate with the help of their spilled blood on the soil, a regeneration similar to the kind imagined by Yeats in "Easter 1916." Though Heaney sees no "terrible beauty" in the deaths, he acknowledges the recurring myth of blood sacrifice and regeneration in Irish literature, especially in Padraig Pearse's writings. Heaney said of the poem,

> That rising [Easter 1916] was the harvest of seeds sown in 1798, when revolutionary republican ideals and national feeling coalesced in the doctrines of Irish republicanism and in the rebellion of 1798 itself -- unsuccessful and savagely put down...The oblique implication was that the seeds of violent resistance sowed in the Year of Liberty [1798] had flowered in what Yeats called 'the right rose

> tree' of 1916. I did not realize at the time that the original heraldic murderous encounter between Protestant yeoman and Catholic rebel was to be initiated again in the summer of 1969, in Belfast, two months after the book was published. (Preoccupations 56)

As is the case with "Docker," in "Requiem for the Croppies" Heaney uncannily predicts the recurrence of violent events, as if he were a medium for some cyclical-historical time-piece. The poem also predicts the poems of ritualized violence investigated and celebrated in North (1975).

In Heaney's third collection, Wintering Out (1972) the metaphor of the landscape as territory lost and seeking to be recovered intersects the linguistic relationship between England and Ireland. Seamus Deane sees this relationship in terms of "a sexual differentiation, the vowel being female, the consonant male; and in the sexual differentiation there is a political distinction, the Irish vowel raped by the English consonant" (Revivals 178). In a tribute to the territory in which he grew up, he wrote "Anahorish" (1972): "*Anahorish*, soft-gradient / of consonant, vowel-meadow" (7-8). The sound of the heavily-voweled word for his home is female in both its Gaelic intonation and its liquidity, for the Gaelic (Anach fior-uisce) means "place of clear water." The word's womb-like roundness and liquid guttural ending form a place of repose for the speaker. But this pre-sexual comfort of the son with the home as mother gives way to the painful knowledge that Heaney's home is not his possession. In "Belderg"

(1975), a poem which considers the name of the wider territory around Heaney's home, named Mossbawn, the speaker discovers that "Moss" and "Bawn" may not be Gaelic in origin, but Norse and English. He discovers through the ambiguity of his home's place-name that it has already been the possession of another, just as Gabriel Conroy in James Joyce's "The Dead" discovers that his wife has already been the love-object of another before him.

The sexual nature of this linguistic relationship works for Heaney not only on the abstract political level, but also on the personal. Heaney's early studies of English poetry and his fascination with the consonantal sounds of Hopkins' sprung rhythms help his growing awareness that his own dialect and accent are branches which have roots in the colonial language of Scotland and England. Part of Heaney's project now takes the form of mapping out the differences between the Irish and English experience. The plotting of these differences implies that the culmination of the project is to find common ground. Declan Kiberd's comment on Oscar Wilde that "talent perceives differences, but only genius discerns unity" can be applied to Heaney's discoveries (Anglo-Irish 7).

In "Bog Oak" Heaney maps out the differences between the experience of the conqueror and that of the conquered. The title of the poem refers to the remains of ancient oak forests preserved in the boglands of Ireland. Those oak

forests were long ago destroyed, beginning with the clearings by the Tudor conquerors. The Irish would have used the excavated bog oaks for building purposes, as is the case here. But their mention in the title is not an ecological reference as much as it is a reminder that for Heaney history is eternally in the present. His sacred ground, the bog, is a preserver of history, and a reminder here of what has been lost as a result of colonization.

Although the speaker's view of history is obscured, he characteristically tries to feel his way back to his ancestors and their encounters with those under the governance of Edmund Spenser. The poem's opening image is

> A carter's trophy
> split for rafters,
> a cobwebbed, black,
> long-seasoned rib
>
> under the first thatch. (1-5)

The image inevitably brings back memories of the sufferings of Heaney's ancestors, "the moustached / dead, the creel-fillers," a reference to the ancient practice of gleaning for meager pickings of food and fuel, both virtually eradicated by the time of Spenser's appointment in Ireland (6-7). The speaker might "eavesdrop on / their hopeless wisdom / as a blow-down of smoke / struggles over the half door" (9-12). Indeed we have here evidence for Heaney's

less than laudatory view of his own culture. That "hopeless wisdom" is the very speech of acceptance which Heaney seeks to undo. Heaney's poetry struggles against his own culture's penchant for the victimized acceptance of the lot of the dispossessed.

The next image shifts the meditation further back into history:

> The softening ruts
>
> lead back to no
> 'oak groves', no
> cutters of mistletoe
> in the green clearings. (16-20)

The term "oak grove" is an English translation of the word for Heaney's home: Derry (Doire, in Irish). But this is a pre-colonial name, and for centuries the name has no longer been a part of the native experience. The practices of the folk culture, such as mistletoe-cutting, are absent in his vision. Instead he sees the conqueror in the person of Edmund Spenser and the conquered as his starving ancestors. Spenser is imagined

> dreaming sunlight
> encroached upon by
>
> geniuses who creep
> 'out of every corner

of the woodes and glennes'

towards watercress and carrion. (23-28)

The final vision is the clearest in terms of native encounter with the colonizer. The quotation is from Spenser's Veue of the Present State of Ireland in which the writer records the movements of the Catholic survivors of the Battle of Kinsale. The speaker's imagination is unable to find anything other than loss and guilt for his mere observation of the recurrent defeat of his people. He identifies fully with the "moustached dead" and the "geniuses" whose only nourishment is "watercress and carrion." Heaney's remarks that in Ireland "our sense of the past, our sense of the land and perhaps even our sense of identity are inextricably interwoven" ring true in this poem and the subsequent imaginative excavations into the ground and history (Bloom 33).

Heaney also attempts more fully to define Catholic and Protestant, colonized and colonizing, sensibilities. Phillip Hobsbaum remarks that "The Catholic way of life is defined by rueful irony: Heaney is by no means uncritical of his side of the house. But in his quiet manner he indicates that he is indigenous. The Protestant is like a stranger in the dark outside" (Curtis 38). Hobsbaum is referring to the poem "The Other Side," from the same collection. Here Heaney moves to his own rural childhood to examine the experience of encounters with a Protestant neighbor. The

realities of Irish history begin to impinge upon the poet's personal life as a series of memories which together make up an almost pre-verbal sense of self in relation to the other. The otherness that we found in "Docker" has been taken a step further, for here the Protestant is a known, intimate yet distant quantity:

> Thigh-deep in sedge and marigolds
> a neighbour laid his shadow
> on the stream, vouching
>
> 'It's poor as Lazarus, that ground,' (1-4)

The neighbor's ominous appearance as a shadow and his dismissive judgement about the quality of the land farmed by the Heaneys mark a series of familiar yet striking differences between Protestant and Catholic. The Protestant's speech is authoritative, whereas the speaker, a Catholic, is silent throughout the remembered encounters. He only remembers his "ear swallowing / his fabulous, biblical dismissal, / that tongue of the chosen people" (10-12). That the speech is itself an obstacle for the Catholic ear unaccustomed to rhetoric of this type is an insight into both the Protestant penchant for speech and the Catholic proclivity for listening. The Protestant's judgement of the ground as "poor as Lazarus" immediately marks him as a Protestant, the use of Biblical metaphors noticeably foreign to the speaker, yet characteristic of the neighbor. The

stream marks the boundary between Protestant and Catholic, a microcosm of religious, cultural and economic differences:

> When he would stand like that
> on the other side, white-haired,
> swinging his blackthorn...(13-15)

The contrast between "white-haired" and "blackthorn" here has the acidity of Calvinistic clarity and judgement. The Protestant neighbor presented here is a type like his urban counterpart. But his triumphal verbal judgement of the Heaneys for their inferior religion, "Your side of the house, I believe, / hardly rule by the Book at all." and in particular their inferior land, are characteristic of the colonial utilitarian perspective we found in Hewitt's work (29-30). The unnamed neighbor is self-assured on his moral pulpit: "He prophesied above our scraggy acres / then turned away / toward his promised furrows" (17-19).

The third part of the poem recalls times when the same neighbor might come to visit the Heaney home when the family were reciting the Rosary, a common after-dinner ritual in more pious Catholic homes. The visitor is embarrassed at his poor timing, he "taps a little tune with his blackthorn / shyly, as if he were party to / lovemaking or a stranger's weeping" (46-48). The Heaney family are deep "in the moan of prayers" (44). The result is a tension between a neighborly visit and the knowledge that differences cannot be overcome. Finally the speaker ponders,

> Should I slip away, I wonder,
> or go up and touch his shoulder
> and talk about the weather
>
> or the price of grass-seed? (49-52)

The speaker's inability to articulate his thoughts directly to the neighbor contrasts with the neighbor's Biblical freedom to judge the Heaneys and their land, which he deems inferior to his own in its fertility and productivity. So the only conversation open for the speaker and his neighbor is the relatively safe territory of weather and grass-seed prices. The silence of the Catholic in the face of the verbal judgement of the Protestant is present throughout Heaney's memoirs of everyday encounters with members of "the other side."

If Loyalist Protestant authority is the demon which threatens Heaney's oedipal relationship with the Irish landscape, then the bodies of those sacrificed to that demanding earth-goddess are both a source of guilt and the objects of worship. Heaney explains the religious significance of the bog not only for early Northern Europeans but also perhaps for the recurrent violence in Northern Ireland:

> The bogs in Northern Europe in the first and second centuries A.D. contained the shrines of the god or the goddess of the time, and in order that the vegetation and community would live again after the winter human sacrifices were made: people were drowned in the bogs. Tacitus reports

> of this in his *Germania*. You have a society in the iron age where there was ritual blood-letting. You have a society where girls' heads were shaved for adultery...Now in many ways the fury of Irish Republicanism is associated with a religion like this, with a female goddess who has appeared in various guises. ("Views" 790)

The bog's almost magical qualities which preserve the organic past mean that it is not only a female deity, like the entire island, but also a sacred archaeological repository. For the disenfranchised Catholic community the bog also holds the promised treasure of an ideal pre-colonial past. Heaney is pre-determined to be celebrant of a ritual in which the bog opens herself up to him, revealing her divine mystery. That mystery is Ireland's history of discontinuity, and while at times a gift, it can also be a nightmare, revealing truths excluded by written history.

"The Tollund Man" (1972) is Heaney's first meditation upon a number of bodies found in the bogs of Jutland in the western half of Denmark. Through his reading of P. V. Glob's <u>The Bog People</u> (1969), Heaney immediately drew parallels between the photographs of the exhumed and their almost perfectly-preserved bodies and the bodies of Irish Catholics slaughtered in more recent times. Glob's book, as well as a number of follow-up studies, argue that these bodies are the remains of men and women who were ritually killed in the first and second centuries, A.D.. The poem's theme brings us back to some of Heaney's early poems in which the speaker is mesmerized by the sight of atrocity.

But "The Tollund Man" also marks a new beginning, for now the poet begins an extended and deeply engaged search for the meaning of communal violence in the northern Irish context. Simultaneously to this search, the poet finds traces of his ancestry in these sacrificed victims. Although no such bodies were found in Ireland, Heaney sees the Tollund Man as an ancestral figure. In some visceral way, Heaney feels the need to (and did) make a pilgrimage to view the body, as if this was one of his own ancestors. There is a deeply embedded recognition for the poet in the body.

Heaney went on to write a series of poems which look for a kind of analog and ancestry of the violence which was encroaching upon the entire province of Ulster: "Strange Fruit," "Come to the Bower," "The Grauballe Man," and "Punishment" (1975). It is as if Heaney, unlike the journalists who surrounded him, was taking for granted that the violence was not entirely anathema to the culture from which modern Europe emerged. The archaeologists, particularly Glob, hypothesized that the bodies exhumed from the bogland were ritually killed in some kind of fertility rite. Heaney accepts Glob's theory, an outgrowth of his reading of Fraser's The Golden Bough and subsequent anthropological works. Heaney takes these theories one step further to imagine a culture which appeased the earth goddess with annual human sacrifices, but which still

follows these rituals in the twentieth century. He sees the Tollund Man as a

> Bridegroom to the goddess,
>
> She tightened her torc on him
> And opened her fen,
> Those dark juices working
> Him to a saint's kept body... (12-16)

That the victim is seen as a "bridegroom to the goddess" ritualizes the death to the degree that what is born of this conjugal rite is apparently the spring itself and its crops. The killing is thus given a greater meaning, beyond the merely elegiac. The reference to the torc, an early Celtic decorative necklace usually made of a solid ring of gold, explains his means of death: strangulation. Although in fact simple rope was used to strangle the victim, the word torc, which also means "twisting," resonates of early Celtic myth, connecting this Germanic ritual to the Celtic British Isles.

The second part of the poem looks back to sectarian atrocities in the 1920s, when hundreds of Catholics and Protestants were slaughtered after the signing of the treaty which divided the island. The poet connects these deaths to that of the Tollund Man:

> I could risk blasphemy,
> Consecrate the cauldron bog

Our holy ground and pray
Him to make germinate

The scattered, ambushed
Flesh of labourers,
stockinged corpses
Laid out in the farmyards...(21-28)

Here is Heaney the celebrant at work again. The speaker feels the urge not only to connect atrocious deaths distant in space and time, but also to perform a rite in which those deaths close at hand might achieve transcendence and connection to a broader and more universal ritual. His consecration of "the cauldron bog" is again a germ of his attitude towards the bog as a great, wet, soft organism. The bog is not only Heaney's native ground but also a medium through which dead ancestral voices communicate with him. Heaney calls us to join him in this worship, the fruit of which is supposedly a spiritual reunification with pre-colonial ancestors.

The third part of the poem reveals more fully the poet's feeling of connection to the dead bodies found in Denmark:

Out there in Jutland
In the old man-killing parishes
I will feel lost,
Unhappy and at home. (37-40)

The foreignness of the place and language will estrange the speaker, but the ritual killings will remind him of his home. But the lines also suggest that the speaker is lost and unhappy *while* at home, a perfect definition of the virtual banality of everyday atrocity in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s. Heaney knows that in his native County Derry, he lives in a "man-killing parish." And soon after the poem was published, the uncanny occurred again: sectarian violence left victims lying in the ditches along the sides of country roads, as if what Heaney calls the "cud of memory" needed to be chewed once again.

These bog poems are a metaphorical vehicle which Heaney uses to address the political issues surrounding Northern Ireland's violence. He did not address the violence in any direct way until North was published in 1975, six years into what then seemed to be an unending cycle of slaughter. Seamus Deane has criticized Heaney for not speaking directly to the crisis in Wintering Out (1972), arguing that,

> The poems express no politics and indeed they flee conceptual formulations with an almost independent success. Instead they interrogate the quality of the relationship between the poet and his mixed political and literary traditions. The answer is always the same. Relationship is unavoidable, but commitment, relationship gone vulgar, is a limiting risk. Nevertheless commitment is demanded during a crisis. ("Appetites of Gravity" 203)

If Heaney has any commitment in Wintering Out it is both to his own feelings and to his rational wish to find a way of marriage between the Protestant and Catholic

traditions. In this collection he experiences guilt for not showing triumphalist commitment to his beleaguered people, but he does not give in to those pressures. Instead he writes about the guilt and his individual relationship to it. Heaney knows that in order to be sincere he must speak in the form of his own definition of a poet: a priest of sorts, not a politician or activist. Heaney is an activist in the sense that his verse mourns the dead, and kneels before their preserved bodies, ancient and contemporary. It is enough, surely, that he tries to find words adequate to the horror that surrounds him beyond "violence" and "atrocity." Heaney said of his versemaking that "I only write when I'm in the trance. It's a mystery of sorts. If you are possessed by a subject...the thing moves" (Preoccupations 64). And certainly one of Heaney's subjects is the tragedy of being an Northern Irish Catholic, and when in that "trance" one cannot feign the political rage of the sort which Deane feels is called for.

Heaney turns characteristically to Ireland's topography, in which he will be able to experience his "trance." Topography is Heaney's personal, political, and mythical domain, for the land itself and the bodies buried within it are the key to feeling and understanding an experience which cannot find its proper utterance in the sphere of abstract political rhetoric. Heaney sees poetry "as divination, as a restoration of the culture to itself"

(Preoccupations 60). It is not, therefore, his poetic work simply to point in outrage at the injustices committed against his people.

Heaney's role as such a celebrant or diviner in the mysterious rite of worship and mourning reached its zenith in the collection called North (1975). It was as if all of his previous work had been leading up to this two-part collection, of which the poet himself said: "In a way it grows together and goes together" (Preoccupations 64). The theme of the collection develops the metaphor of digging back into history, but a number of the poems are also about different forms of marriage: England to Ireland, the male Irish male sacrificial victim to the Irish earth goddess, and Protestantism to Catholicism. The first poem in Part One is called "Antaeus." The speaker is the powerful Antaeus, ensconced in the safe, dark earth, who tragically but inevitably will be separated from her and thus weakened. Heaney uses the myth of Antaeus versus Hercules as a metaphor for colonized Ireland:

> The Hercules-Antaeus thing came to seem like a myth of colonization almost -- that Antaeus is a native, an earth-grubber, in touch with the ground, and you get this intelligent and superior interloper who debilitates the native by raising him, taking him out of his culture, his element and leaving him without force. You could think about Ireland in those terms...(Haffenden 70)

The first stanza of the poem depicts an almost infantile Antaeus, attached to mother, innocent, and powerful as a result:

I cannot be weaned
Off the earth's long contour, her river-veins.

Girdered with root and rock
I am cradled in the rock that wombed me
Like a small hillock. (7-12)

The comfortable, safe, fetal positioning of these lines is an idealization of Ireland's pre-colonial past. As a poet, Heaney could be imagining his early Irish monastic counterparts whose verses describe a pristine, pre-sexual marriage to nature, a relationship destroyed by the Viking invasions. Likewise during the English conquests, the innocent native earth-gazers were the victims of those who strode in

...that realm of fame

The sky-born and royal:
He may throw me and renew my birth
But let him not plan, lifting me off the earth,
My elevation, my fall. (16-20)

The mythical Greek figure, Antaeus, is a paradigm for a pre-colonial Irish hero before the conquering light of rational knowledge overpowers him. The "Presbyterian-light" of Hewitt's thinking is analogous to the mind-set of that "superior interloper" to whom Heaney refers earlier. The implication of the native's Antaean relationship to Ireland

is later developed into a schema whereby the Herculean conqueror rapes Ireland. The pre-sexual native is thereby powerless to protect his domain. The metaphor of digging in Death of a Naturalist was limited to the familial realm, but now it has more ominous qualities, for as Heaney puts it, "The image that came to my mind...was of me being a dark soil and him [the english conqueror] being a kind of bright-pronged fork that was digging it up and going through it" (Haffenden 70). Though the image of Antaeus as the doomed native Irish race has in it the danger of colonial determinism, it nevertheless is another of Heaney's gifts to his people to counter the silence which needs to be filled at least with mourning. Heaney's allegories of defeat, using metaphors of the conquered, have the danger of reinforcing the concept that the Irish have some innate penchant for defeat. It might be preferable to see Antaeus as that part of Heaney which is attached to his country, but powerless and non-combatant in the face of her possession by the conqueror.

Heaney's excavations into the language of Irish place-names also reveal the Irish tradition of betrayal and conquest. For Heaney the bog holds the promise of a pre-colonial identity, but it also reveals to him, the deeper he digs, that his land is not of him, but of a series of invaders, Viking and English. In "Belderg" Heaney meditates on the implications of an excavation by archaeologists in

Belderg, County Mayo, where a neolithic farm was discovered. The speaker, in conversation with the farmer who discovered the stones, is both excited and disturbed to dig up etymologies which uncover the existence of pre-colonial farmers who can serve as the restorers of a sense of continuity. But when he thinks on the name of his rural home, he realizes that its linguistic strata reveal dispossession. Diggers in Belderg, he realizes, found ancient "One-eyed and benign" quernstones, refuse from millennia-old flour mills, "a landscape fossilized" (3, 13). The speaker's thoughts turn to Mossbawn, where Heaney grew up:

> So I talked of Mossbawn,
> A bogland name. 'But *moss*?'
> He crossed my old home's music
> With older strains of Norse. (26-30)

The excavation of the Norse settlement in Belderg reveals the "growth rings" (using the image of a tree's rings) and then applies this image to the linguistic growth rings in the name of his family's first farm, Mossbawn. In an essay on this theme, Heaney explains, "*Moss* is a Scots word probably carried to Ulster by the Planters, and *bawn*, the name the English colonists gave to their fortified houses. Mossbawn, the planter's house on the bog. Yet...we pronounced it Moss bann, and *ban* is the Gaelic word for white...In the syllables of my home I see a metaphor for the

split culture of Ulster" (Preoccupations 35). And the speaker must reconcile himself to the painful fact that

I could derive
A forked root from that ground
And make bawn an English fort,
A planter's walled-in mound... (32-35)

His home is not his own, but strata of centuries of warring factions. Henry Hart sees a pattern of such painful discoveries: "As was true for Joyce's Finnegan, all times circulate though this baffled and baffling psyche. He is Yggdrasil, the ash tree of Norse legend, whose branches and roots extend through the whole universe, as well as a universal body" (82). There is here a progression from the traditional "Dúchas," the Irish word for "heritage, patrimony, native place, natural bent," a force which bound the Irish to an identity with place, toward a more encompassing satellite-view of the Irish tradition in ancient and modern Europe. So the resolve for the speaker is, like Finnegan, to see multiplicity as unity, give up the child-like identity politics of which Yeats was in so many ways a victim:

I passed through the eye of the quern,

Grist to an ancient mill
And my mind's eye saw
A world of balanced stones,

Querns piled like vertebrae,

The marrow crushed to grounds. (40-46)

The "eye" of the quern becomes the "I" of the modern speaker, discovering his multicultural roots, and through this hole he can see his genealogical dendritic system, unifying what he previously saw as separate, colonizer and colonized. That the marrow is "crushed to grounds" symbolizes the absence of any substance in the living bones; instead the absence of life, of marrow, allows the anthropological speaker to see his history, painful though the gleaning process may be. Heaney succeeds in marrying his own culture to that of his conquerors in this final redemptive, unifying symbol.

This is the first of Heaney's digging-bog poems in which there is a distinct stage of growth from the innocence of the Irish Catholic imaging his lineage and home as "pure" to a place where he is at some peace with the loss of this simplistic vision. As is characteristic of Heaney's rhetorical aesthetic, he begins many of the poems in North with a desire for communion with some imagined, lost essence. Through a process of physical, linguistic, and psychoanalytic digging, he comes to terms with the fact that this imagined essence does not exist. The reward at the end of the process is a higher level of consciousness. This may seem like cold comfort, but it is a sincere means of escape from the grind of the eternal and frustrating search for

what never existed: "Romantic Ireland" may be "dead and gone" but there is life beyond its grave.

In other poems in Part One of North Heaney's persona is possessed with the disturbing necrophilic spirit which falls in love with the preserved bodies of ritually slaughtered neolithic adulteresses. "Punishment," "Strange Fruit," and "Bog Queen" are perhaps more startling poems than any Heaney has written before or since, because he takes the mythical motif of marriage to the dead and pushes it to the limit, flirting with the bodies of the dead girls. His desire for his own history is intensified simultaneously into eroticized adoration and whinging self-blame. In "Punishment," Heaney is physically in love with the body of a young Teutonic woman apparently killed as a punishment for adultery. The speaker allows himself to enter into a fantasy of the girl's horrific death: strangled and then placed in a water-filled grave to be drowned under the crushing weight of a "weighing stone." Glob judged the girl to be fourteen years old when she was killed, and from his reading of Tacitus's *Germania*, he surmised that this form of punishment was specifically devised "for women who committed adultery" (114). The grisly scene opens with the speaker's imagined entry into those ancient brutal times:

> I can feel the tug
> of the halter at the nape
> of her neck, the wind

at her naked front.

It blows her nipples
to amber beads, (1-6)

Heaney manages to eroticize this macabre scene because of his deeper awareness of his own horrified, conflicting feelings. At the moment when the speaker declares

Little adulteress,
before they punished you

you were flaxen-haired,
undernourished, and your
tar-black face was beautiful.
My poor scapegoat...(23-28)

he simultaneously elegizes her and mourns her untimely death as if he had had some hand in it. She is apparently the scapegoat for the sins of the community, but the speaker never fully explains his meaning. Only when the speaker finds his contemporary analogue to this punishment do we begin to understand his specific fascination with the victim. It is in the next line that blame is meted out to the killers, the victim and himself:

I almost love you
but would have cast, I know,
the stones of silence.
I am the artful voyeur...(29-32)

Heaney is no longer addressing a distant, abstract and mysterious killing but something much closer to home. In Belfast and Derry in the early 1970s, a number of young women were ritually and publically humiliated and tortured by having their heads shaved, and then being "tarred and feathered" by groups of their women neighbors. This act was apparently a punishment for dating British soldiers: they had transgressed an unwritten but rigorously-enforced law. The speaker knows that simultaneously he would "have cast...the stones of silence" making the psychology of his love for the girl an act of self-punishment: he feels love for her in identifying with her slaughterers, and the resultant guilt must be purged (35-36). The guilt-burdened speaker knows that he has a passive part in the awful drama:

> I who have stood dumb
> when your betraying sisters,
> cauled in tar,
> wept by railings,
>
> who would connive
> in civilized outrage
> yet understand the exact
> and tribal, intimate revenge. (37-44)

The victim is blamed along with her modern-day "betraying sisters" because the speaker knows that while he might publicly "connive / in civilized outrage" he understands

fully the motive for the punishment. The poem brings Heaney to a greater understanding of his racked feelings, but it does not let him off his own hook of punishment or publish any political manifesto to alleviate the violence that surrounds him. He is more intimately involved as party, even if only passively, to violence. He is faced with a kind of Sophie's Choice and is fully prepared to suffer the consequences because he knows that reparation is impossible. No poet has before or since reproduced these feelings with such exactitude, brutal honesty, or compactness of language.

In "Ocean's Love to Ireland" sexualized colonization is imagined in Sir Walter Ralegh's renown for taking whatever he wanted, whether gold or sex. What is interesting here is that Heaney's persona is no longer the mourning, dispossessed bog man. He identifies with the conqueror with a sexual glee that underscores an oedipal tension that is founded not a partisan loyalty to one sex or the other, but in ambivalence:

> Speaking broad Devonshire,
> Ralegh has backed the maid to a tree
> As Ireland is backed to England
>
> And drives inland
> Till all her strands are breathless:
> 'Sweesir, Swatter! Sweesir, Swatter!' (1-6)

The tale is from John Aubrey's Brief Lives (1693) in which

Raleigh overwhelms one of the Queen's maids of honor and her cries of protest "Sweet Sir Walter!" quickly turn into "Sweesir, Swatter!" during the randy renaissance vignette. The superimposition of this scene onto Ireland's conquest is a radical departure from the motif of the old woman mourning the loss of her four green fields. The poem is a parody of the cliche of Ireland raped by England, the fun-loving Raleigh hardly here condemned. That "He is water, he is ocean, lifting / Her farthingale like a scarf of weed" suggests that England's act of invasion is as natural as a young gallant having his way with a maiden.

In part three of the poem, Ireland is characterized as a Hardyesque "ruined maid" who "complains in Irish." The speaker's distance from Mother Ireland and identification with the rapist is an outspoken response to the mournful tone of Heaney's earlier bog poems, as if he is beyond the stage of trying to save her:

> Ocean has scattered her dream of fleets,
> The Spanish prince has spilled his gold
>
> And failed her. Iambic drums
> Of English beat the woods... (20-22)

In part one Raleigh was characterized as a natural part of the "water" and "ocean" from which the Irish coastline emerges. Ireland's invasion, the speaker argues, is as mundane as the tide rising in her bays. The failure of the

Spanish Armada to invade is sexualized as a failure to penetrate her loughs and save her from English dominion. Instead prince Philip II "spilled his gold," which is literally what happened to the storm-tossed Spanish fleet on Ireland's coast. The speaker seems to be resigned momentarily to the notion that he who has greater sexual prowess wins Ireland, "the ground possessed and repossessed" (27).

The note of resignation in "Ocean's Love to Ireland" is a submission to Ireland's history of betrayal and defeat. The poet is at least released from the act of mourning for the past. But Heaney counters this mood in Part Two of North in a series of poems set in the crisis-ridden present of the early 1970s. Gone are the sexualized rites of worship for the dead, and now the speaker is possessed by the terror of the less fortunate living. The mood of these poems is less than resigned to Ireland's continued possession and repossession. And brutality cannot be appeased, as Heaney knows from witnessing the events of history and the violence-filled streets which he feels are on the verge of smothering him.

In part two of North Heaney moves away from the subterranean horrors brought to the surface by his meditations on the relationship of history and violence to the present. His voice turns journalistic, and the poetry as a result loses its impact. Poems like "Whatever You Say

Say Nothing," condemn his own and others' language of civilized outrage:

> Expertly civil tongued with civil neighbours
> On the high wires of the first wireless reports,
> Sucking the fake taste, the stony flavours
> Of those sanctioned, old, elaborate retorts: (21-24)

He is now more directly outraged at himself and the Irish populace not just for their pedantic powerlessness, but for their unspoken complicity with atrocity. Only the final stanzas of the poem capture a deeper sense of the broken-record repetition of history in the post-modern nightmare. The speaker describes driving on a motorway past the new internment camp in which hundreds of Catholics were held for years without trial, named in characteristic Orwellian surreal-pastoral, The Maze:

> And it was déjà-vu, some film made
> Of Stalag 17, a bad dream with no sound
>
> Is there life before death? That's chalked up
> In Ballymurphy. Competence with pain,
> Coherent miseries, a bite and sup,
> We hug our little destiny again. (88-92)

These more confident, longer, meters express Heaney's newly developed confidence in his own mournful voice. The lines need little explication: Belfast had become a modern

colonial stockade with a barbed wire corral for the rebellious natives. The "coherent miseries" of hundreds of years of colonial history have returned to modern council housing estates and high-tech roadblocks. Heaney tries to convince us that this awful destiny is in some unconscious way welcomed by northern Catholics, and it is astonishing that this is utterly believable.

When Heaney was writing these poems he moved with his family south of the border, outside Dublin, to Glanmore, County Wicklow. There he wrote the last poem in the collection "Exposure." He wonders from the pastoral safety of the countryside, free from British army watchtowers and checkpoints, what is his relationship to his native north and those he left behind:

> I am neither internee nor informer;
> An inner émigrè, grown long-haired
> And thoughtful, a woode-kerne
>
> Escaped from the massacre... (31-33)

While Heaney was composing North he was also translating a Middle-Irish saga called Buile Suibhne (The Madness of Sweeney) about a seventh century pagan king of Ulster who refuses to pay obeisance to the evangelizing St. Ronan, subsequently killing one of Ronan's psalmists. Ronan places a curse on the king, sprinkling him with holy water. In the meantime, Sweeney's wits are already frayed at the sight of

the human slaughter at the Battle of Moira. But under Ronan's curse, Sweeney is turned into a maddened bird, condemned to spend the rest of his days on bog and windblown treetop, outside human society but always commenting on it. It is easy to see why Heaney, an escapee and outsider-commentator, chose to translate or indeed, pour his soul into this chimera of a marginalized medieval king and himself. Heaney is distrustful of politician and public-figure alike, an anxious "inner émigrè" exposed to the elements but hidden from humankind behind a public persona which feeds off the figure of the gregarious Irish bard.

Ironically, the more Heaney has sought in recent years to withdraw himself from the world of political discussions, the more he has been drawn into that very arena. In 1989, Heaney addressed the Ireland Fund, an American foundation which promotes peace initiatives for Northern Ireland, stating with hope,

> In Ireland we are capable of a doubleness of focus, a capacity to live in two places at the one time and in two times at the one place, a capacity to acknowledge the claims of contradictory truths without having to choose between them. (Gaffney 1)

Heaney sees this double-vision as a possibility not only in the imaginative sphere, but also in the political. His long-suffering pessimism, seeing that the situation in the north as hopeless has given way to a tentative hope for peace. The very fact that Heaney has given in to the urge to speak outside the realm of his art and of academe is a

recognition on his part that poetry does not entirely lack quotidian usefulness.

The greatest threat to Ireland's future today is not the violence which has plagued the north for over a quarter century, but emigration. Heaney's flight with his family south of the border in 1972 was perceived by many Catholics in the north as another depressing reminder that those whom the community needed most were seeking a life elsewhere. But unlike the vast majority of emigrants, Heaney remained a resident of the island. His Antaean attachment to his home meant that he has remained closely engaged with the peace developments in the north, and many Irish and British journalists today look to Heaney's capacity to embrace both the native and colonial traditions. It is perhaps the greatest credit to Heaney that his pen can feel the pulse of the people, to life as it is lived, long before the political process can catch up. As Fintan O'Toole argues, "Ordinary life, as usual, runs far ahead of politics. In that abstract world called politics, Britishness and Irishness have been conceived of as opposites whose conflict over the past 25 years has had far from abstract consequences of death, injury and destruction. In life as it is lived, Britishness and Irishness have ceased to be opposites and became aspects of a much more complex web of affiliations and loyalties" (22). O'Toole points to Heaney's poem "Scaffolding" (1969) as a metaphor for the

possibility of building lasting peace today. The poem contemplates the irony of the relationship between scaffolding and the structure which is built within it, until the scaffolding is no longer necessary. The poem's overt theme is that of personal discord, marital and familial, but the poem implies greater disunities and their repair. The wall could represent either the division between the Irish communities, or today, as O'Toole reads it, the building of the peace process, in which case the scaffolding is a metaphor for the talks in which Heaney is rapidly becoming an indirect participant:

> So if, my dear, there sometimes seem to be
> Old bridges breaking between you and me
>
> Never fear. We may let the scaffolds fall
> Confident that we have built our wall. (7-10)

Afterword

This study has considered three versions of the Irish identity. Questions surrounding the constitution of Irish identity plague the current peace process in Northern Ireland. During the recent Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin, two Unionist councillors from Ulster handed a letter to the chairperson of the Forum, Catherine McGuinness, (a Dublin-born Protestant judge) which explained why Northern Unionists would not attend the Forum: "To participate would be to accept the claim in the Eire Constitution to jurisdiction over the territory of Northern Ireland" (Carroll 11). Among the many issues raised with these few sharp words is the issue of language itself. Virtually no one but the post-office uses the name "Eire" to refer to the Republic of Ireland. That Ulster Unionists frequently employ this term rather than the more common terms, "Republic," "South," or "The Free State," reveals their need to reinforce their feelings of alienation from the rest of the Irish populace.

The recent ceasefire by Catholic and Protestant paramilitary organizations has opened the way for many uneasy discussions. The question "What do we do now?" has been answered in a number of ways, depending partly upon the ethno-religious background and the aspirations of the speaker. But not all Protestants have the same political aspirations for their Ulster, Northern Ireland, Six

Counties, or whatever they choose to call it. In a similar sense, not all Catholics have the same wishes for their supposed "United Ireland" or the implications that this unity implies.

In practical terms, it is the British government that is charged with overseeing negotiations toward a settlement which will include Protestants and Catholics, north and south. No one in Ireland has any doubt that Westminster has little understanding of the Irish, let alone their poetry. Yet recent speeches by prominent Irish figures on all sides of the debate have contained lengthy quotations from the work of the very poets under discussion in this dissertation. Throughout the current negotiations, especially at the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin, the works of Irish poets have frequently been cited as evidence of the "authentic" feelings of the people. In a recent session of the Forum,

> Quotations proliferated. Catherine McGuinness quoted from Armour of Ballymoney. Gerry Adams quoted Yeats, Heaney and Bobby Sands. Mary Harney quoted...Thomas Davis. Dick Spring also quoted Heaney. John Lowry of The Worker's Party reeled off the 1798 pantheon -- Wolfe Tone, Jimmy Hope and Henry Joy McCracken. (Carroll 11)

While we should be ever-suspicious of politicians who appropriate quotable lines of poetry, it is nevertheless remarkable when politicians pay any attention to the observations of poets. In Gerry Adams's quoting both Yeats and Heaney, we have perhaps some evidence of that

"doubleness of focus," that ability to live with "contradictory truths" that Heaney claims. Or we may merely have evidence of Adams's aspirations being bolstered, as they certainly could be, by carefully chosen lines of those two poets' work. In Irish society, any politically charged statement (and that includes just about everything outside the weather) needs to be prefaced with the endorsement of a great poet or political leader. Every statement however obtuse that may have some association with history or politics is armed with its own linguistic immune system. That system is comprised of pointing out one's ancestry, as Yeats so often did, or citing the words of a beloved Irish poet or writer. For instance, Joe Carroll of The Irish Times reports that the Dublin Joyce scholar, David Norris of Trinity College during his participation in the recent Forum, "called himself a 'loyal son of the Republic,' pointed to a vice-regal coat of arms on the wall of St. Patrick's Hall which belonged to an ancestor, and quoted from Mrs. Tancred in O'Casey's Juno and the Paycock -- "Take away this murdherin' hate and give us thine own eternal love" (11). As A. A. Gill of the Times of London puts it, "anywhere else in the world you can just have an opinion, but with Ireland, like some ancient Celtic king, you've got to recite your ancestry and the deeds that permit you to speak" (10:2). This constant qualification of one's opinion with numerous quotations from the vast popular

textual culture that infuses Irish public life is a symptom of a people which has forgotten that they ever owned their own land, culture or history.

One of the central messages from numerous Irish journalists, politicians, and even poets, to the Irish populace is that the Irish, whatever emblem of loyalty they choose to wear, will have to learn to be more tolerant of those of different ethnic-religious backgrounds. All three of the poets here under discussion have endorsed this idea, as if urging their people to "grow up." Hewitt and Heaney grew up in an environment which enforced extremely limited definitions of the Irish Protestant and Catholic identities. As children, these poets were forced, as are thousands of children today, into the arena of adult identity politics. And as if that did not wound them enough, they spent a large part of their adult lives ruminating those same intractable questions of identity. As each poet matured, we can see that to a greater or lesser degree he began to recognize the humanity of those formerly considered as merely the "other." The process that each poet went through liberated him from those childish notions of Catholics as mournful, dreamy-eyed and lazy, and Protestants as hard-working but cold and calculating. The years of difficult verse making which resulted in the dismantling of these stereotypes should serve as a model for the enormous amount of work which now challenges the Irish as a whole. One of the greatest

problems which plagued each of these poets was the challenge to grow into a sense of himself not only as a poet, but also as a poet charged to represent a community which aspires to be something other than what it is. Yeats, Hewitt and Heaney were able to convert silent but powerful feelings into clearly expressed language, a tall order in a culture which prefers that these uncomfortable feelings remain safe and repressed. The legacy left by Yeats and Hewitt, and by the still-living Heaney, is their triumph over the lure of smothering, wilful ignorance; a terrifying sense of national paralysis; and a conspiratorial distrust of the "other" who may be a next-door neighbor. These poets have laid down a challenging groundwork for their countrymen.

Notes

[1] The Anglo-Norman settlers in Ireland are known by Irish historians as the "Old English" to distinguish them from the Elizabethan conquerors or the "New English."

[2] For more on the politics of this period see, T. Garvin, Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland 1858-1928 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987).

[3] For the purposes of geopolitical clarity, "Northern Ireland" is referred to by the various and politically-loaded terms of "Ulster", "The Six Counties", or "The North"; the "Irish Republic" (established in 1948) grew out of the "Free State" (formed in 1922), but is often referred to by those living in Northern Ireland as "The South," or simply, "The Republic."

[4] See J.C. Beckett's The Making of Modern Ireland, 1603-1923 (New York: Knopf, 1966), F.S.L. Lyons's Ireland Since the Famine (London: Fontana, 1973) and R. F. Foster's Modern Ireland: 1600-1972 (London: Penguin, 1989) for a full discussion of partition and the creation of the state of Northern Ireland.

[5] While taking the risk of over-simplifying the issue, "Revisionist" and "Unionist" histories may be called synonymous.

[6] An Irish Roman Catholic teaching order who, since 1802, have served the Catholic poor of Ireland. They are renowned for the provision of a rigorous, if unsophisticated, education, and strict discipline.

[7] See Brendan Bradshaw. "Nationalism & Historical Scholarship in Modern Ireland." Irish Historical Studies XXVI. No. 104 (November, 1989): 320-42.

[8] "Derry" is the name given to a sixth century monastic site founded, reputedly, by Saint Columba. After the Tudor conquests in the 16th century, the town was given over to a group of merchants from London, who renamed the town "Londonderry."

[9] Matthew Arnold's Studies in Celtic Literature (1867) extolled the virtues of the Celts to English liberals, contributing to the sectarian notion that there are built-in racial differences between the English and the Irish.

[10] For a fuller discussion of the destruction of the bardic tradition, see J.E. Caerwyn Williams and Patrick Ford's The Irish Literary Tradition Cardiff: University of Cardiff Press, 1992, and J.C. Beckett's The Making of Modern

Ireland, 1603-1923. New York: Knopf, 1969.

[11] "Hedge schools" is a term used to describe the underground education of rural Irish Catholics during the years following the Treaty of Limerick in 1691 which, among other things, proscribed the purchase of land by a Catholic and the education of a Catholic by a Catholic priest. The most repressive of these laws were enacted in 1704 in an attempt to reform the indigenous people to the Church of Ireland. For more see Karl Bottigheimer's *Ireland and the Irish* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 138-43.

[12] One of the more common ways of finding out if a stranger is Nationalist or a Loyalist is to ask which school he or she attended. The prefix of a saint's name indicates a Catholic school, the absence of such a prefix indicates a Protestant school.

[13] At the turn of the century, Belfast was the largest shipbuilding port in the world, the center of Britain's shipbuilding industry. Northern Ireland included the most industrialized part of the island.

[14] The indigenous Irish, referred to as the "Gaels", "Gaelic Irish", or simply "Irish", are generally defined as those descended from the natives of the island before the invasion of the "New English" (i.e., the Tudor English) in the sixteenth century. It is believed that these invaders, unlike their "Old English" (i.e. Norman) and Viking predecessors, kept their own culture rigorously separate from the native one, thus setting up a truly colonial situation.

[15] In 1723 William Wood bought a patent allowing the owner to mint currency for use in Ireland. The production of Wood's Half-pence" would have devalued Irish currency, something desirable to competing and unscrupulous English merchants. The sale of the patent was vigorously protested in Ireland, not least by Jonathan Swift who wrote under the pseudonym "Drapier" in The Drapier's Letters (1724). In the end the currency was never minted or circulated.

[16] The most notable of these philologists was Kuno Meyer (1858-1919) who collected and translated a great number of early Irish manuscripts.

[17] The term, "nationalism" has in recent years been strongly associated with "ethnic cleansing" and fascist mob rule, particularly of the kind conducted in Eastern Europe and Bosnia. It is here used in the sense proposed by Raymond Williams to describe a movement intended to liberate

a colonized or "subjected people." For more see Williams, Raymond. Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society. Revised edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983 [1976].

[18] All of Yeats's poems here quoted are taken from W. B. Yeats: The Poems. ed. Richard J. Finneran. New York: Macmillan, 1983.

[19] O'Leary (1830-1907), one of the more literary minded agitators for Irish independence, was the president of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, which he joined after serving nine years of a twenty-year prison term for editing the more radical *The Irish People*. In 1888 he met Yeats, whose politics he greatly influenced, and later published poems by Yeats in the Gaelic Athletic Association newpaper *The Gael*.

[20] Charles Stuart Parnell (1846-1891) attempted and partially succeeded in currying the favor of the Roman Catholic Church, whose support he realized he needed if he were to achieve the necessary vote to carry through the Home Rule Bill successfully. At the peak of his political power in 1889 he was cited as a co-respondent in a divorce action "which revealed publicly his long-concealed liaison with Mrs. O' Shea, the wife of one of his MPs" (Boyce, 221). The Church attacked Parnell on moral grounds, the bulk of the populace eventually abandoning their former support of him. Yeats vehemently supported the Liberal Parnell's vision of an Ireland whose people, both unionist and nationalist, Protestant and Catholic, would be united.

[21] Sir Hugh Lane's Gallery, planned to be built on the River Liffey in central Dublin, was greatly opposed by members of the Dublin City Corporation and the press because they felt the cost of the project would be better spend on improving the appalling social conditions in Dublin's numerous slums.

[22] The term "Big House" refers to those relatively lavish homes of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy which dotted Ireland both north and south. The term went into wider circulation after the publication of Edith Somerville's The Big House at Inver (1925), a chronicle of the downfall of the Protestant ascendancy.

[23] The Irish Civil War was fought throughout the newly liberated territory. One side, the "Free-Staters," believed in accepting the terms of the British treaty which divided the island, creating a British "Northern Ireland", the "Republicans" did not accept the treaty and insisted on liberation of the entire island from British rule.

[24] Each year Protestants all over Northern Ireland celebrate William III's victory over James II on the banks of the river Boyne in 1690. The victory marked the end of the Catholic English monarchy and has been interpreted by many Ulster Protestants as a symbolic victory of their people over the native Irish. The passionate celebrations also underscore the reassuring sign that King William, the leader of the Glorious Revolution and his descendants, were and are committed to the preservation of the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland.

[25] In the ancient province of Ulster, there are nine counties. After partition, six of these were in the new State of Northern Ireland, while Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan were under the rule of the Free State.

[26] The Opsahl Commission is a sociological study group organized and funded by the European Community to increase European-wide understanding of the conflict in Ulster. Hundreds of Protestants and Catholics were interviewed by the commission to record the attitudes which each community carries in regard to the other.

[27] "Loyalists" is the most widely accepted term used to refer to those in Ulster who favor maintaining British rule in Northern Ireland. Because most Loyalists are descendants of English and Scottish Reformed planters, the vast majority are Protestant; the term "Unionist" is also applied to those who also favor the rigid maintenance of the link between Northern Ireland and Britain. The term "Nationalist", on the other hand, is used to refer to those who believe that British rule in Ireland is illegitimate, and should be removed. Most Nationalists are descended from the Gaelic or indigenous Irish, and are, therefore, Catholic, since the Reformation largely failed among the Gaelic Irish.

[28] All quotations from Hewitt's poems are taken from The Collected John Hewitt. Ed. Frank Ormsby. Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1989.

[29] For a bipartisan discussion of the Easter 1916 commemorative celebrations see Kiberd, Declan. "The Elephant of Revolutionary Forgetfulness" Revising the Rising, ed. Maire Ni Dhonnachadh and Theo Dorgan. Derry: Field Day, 1991. The author contrasts the jubilant celebrations to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising with the virtual non-existence of a seventy-fifth commemoration.

[30] For centuries London has been a magnet for Irish writers writing in English and seeking recognition in the colonial center, from the times of Goldsmith and Congreve to

the present.

[31] All excerpts of Heaney's poems are taken from Heaney, Seamus. Selected Poems: 1966-1987. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990, except as noted.

[32] The term "Croppies" was applied to those insurrectionist militia who wore their hair close-cropped, a style which became an emblem of the uprising which took place sporadically over the spring and summer of 1798, culminating in the Battle of Vinegar Hill. The English forces slaughtered the poorly armed and organized rebels. The death toll on both sides is reported to have been upward of 30,000 that year, making it the bloodiest in Ireland's colonial history. For more see R.F.Foster. Modern Ireland: 1600-1972 New York: Viking/Penguin, 1988.

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