IMAGINATIVE KNOWLEDGE

IN

SHAKESPEARE AND YEATS

IMAGINATIVE KNOWLEDGE

IN

SHAKESPEARE AND YEATS

by

Leona Dixon, B.A.

(Brock)

A Thesis

Submitted to the

Faculty of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the

Degree Master of Arts

McMaster University

July, 1982

MASTER OF ARTS (1982)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY

HAMILTON, ONTARIO

TITLE: Imaginative Knowledge in Shakespeare and Yeats

AUTHOR: Leona Dixon, B.A.

(Brock University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor R. Morton

NUMBER OF PAGES: x, 91

SCOPE AND CONTENTS

In the works of William Shakespeare and W. B. Yeats, the concept of intuitive knowledge gained through imagination is sharply contrasted with that of knowledge gleaned from experience coupled with inductive/deductive reason. In both writers, the inspired figure — frequently the *mad* figure, is shown as having an understanding of the world which cannot be substantiated by argumentation.

This thesis attempts to explore the intimations of imaginative knowledge as projected in the concepts of *imagination*, *prophecy*, *delusion*, *spirit*, *love*, *rage* and *passion*, and the similarities and differences of these elements in the characters of Shakespeare and Yeats, taking into account the thought prevailing in the age in which each poet produced his works.

The thesis will generally involve a discussion of these terms based on the intimated flashes of insight and imaginative knowledge. As well, some reference will be made to the possible influence of the *Bible*, (quoted here in the Authorised Version). The thesis will include an Appendix which will attempt to relate Yeats's theory on metaphors for poetry as outlined in his book, *A Vision*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

In the plays of William Shakespeare and W. B. Yeats, the prophetic (or intuitive) knowledge their tragic figures gain through imagination sharply contrasts with knowledge gleaned from experience by inductive/deductive reason. Both Shakespeare and Yeats believe intuitive knowledge carries prophetic flashes of insight attained in the brief throes of extreme emotion — passionate truth revealed in *madness, ecstasy, delusion, love and rage;* and often conveyed in the wandering ravings of fools, beggars, minstrels, or otherworld characters. The central issues of their plays concern fulfillment through the attainment of inner truth, but the differing philosophical, religious and social beliefs of their periods produced clear differences in the way these two writers approached this theme.

The Shakespearean protagonist is propelled along his path of inward dialogue to fulfillment by a linear path of action, and as Lear does, reaches dramatic self-realization; or antithetically self-destructs like Macbeth. For Shakespeare, intuitive understanding of one's true Self, springing from imaginative experience as it does, must still be firmly rooted in the ideals of charity (love), penance and forgiveness. As such, his plays may be interpreted on a first level reading and Shakespeare's own attitudes must be seen in terms of the general thought of his age: we can know little of his personal world. This is not true with Yeats.

Yeats's protagonists also walk a purgatorial path, and

he believed man capable of ascending to supreme truth through his creative imagination; but he laboured throughout his creative life to develop, maintain and enlarge his own system of thought to define his work. Fortunately, he left abundant evidence of this labour for our reference. The path of Yeats's hero zigzags through a series of dialogues with his two selves: the incarnated essential self and his contingent self, or that self he longs for through his daimonic impulse. Man constantly oscillates between this agonizing duality and is eventually driven to realization of his true self. Yeats terms this *Unity of Being* and maintains this *Condition of Fire* is but a "pulsation of the artery."

Morton Irving Seiden defines Yeats's 'supernatural' as the 'idealized human mind' and he notes:

> In the second edition of *A Vision*, we must not forget, he was now and again to define God as each man's moral self; the soul, as the creative imagination; and the other world, as the unconscious — but all these things as existing only in their most beautiful (or their happiest) state. [1]

But, Yeats maintains, man's objectivity and its evil is an essential part of his total development:

> He only can create the greatest imaginable beauty who has endured all imaginable pangs, for only when we have seen and foreseen what we dread shall we be rewarded by that dazzling, unforeseen, wing-footed wanderer.[2]

---

[1]Morton Irving Seiden, *The Poet as a Mythmaker 1865-1939* (Chicago: Michigan State University Press, 1962), p. 217.

[2]W.B. Yeats, *Mythologies* (London: MacMillan, 1962), p. 332.

This is Yeats's *Vision of Evil* interwoven into his basic concept of total existence. Yeats defines this term as the ability to "conceive of the world as a continual conflict." [3] In sum, Yeats's fulfilled hero is one who has courageously faced his existential crises and evolved, through successive purifications, to his anti-self, (or *Mask*). This, in Yeatsian terms, is the process of the *heart's consumption* experienced in heartbreak and defeat in one's objective world. Yeats stresses this agony of the heart, and it is important that one perceives this dialectic of man's primary and antithetical selves as impelled from man's own heart. This evolution of man to his contingent self is a mere glimpse of eternity. On his *Wheel of Life* in *A Vision* this state of *beauty* is Phase fifteen, the phase wherein the soul lies "in immovable trance." [4]

Yeats's own description of the daimonic impulse brings his concept of man's conflict into clear focus:

> The Daimon, by using his mediatorial shades, brings man again and again to the place of choice, heightening temptation that the choice may be as final as possible, imposing his own lucidity upon events, leading his victim to whatever among works not impossible is the most difficult. His descending power is neither the winding nor the straight line but zigzag, illuminating the passive and active properties, . . . it is the sudden lightning, for all his acts of power are instantaneous. We perceive in a pulsation of the artery, and after slowly decline. [5]

---

[3] W.B. Yeats, *A Vision* (New York: Collier Books, 1978), p. 144.

[4] Ibid., p. 82 and p. 136. Also see Appendix One.

[5] W.B. Yeats, *Mythologies* (London: MacMillan, 1962), p. 361

Thus, the two poets represent two vastly different approaches to "seeing into the heart of things," and for this reason one's understanding of the Yeatsian hero's *Unity of Being* considerably enhances understanding of the Shakespearean protagonist, and his process of dramatic realization, as I shall hope to show in this paper.

The concept of *madness* as a means to insight and prophecy is ancient. Cassandra, Princess of Troy in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (443 BC) is driven to mad prophecy through foreknowledge of her approaching death by Clytemnestra. Centuries later Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida* employed the same Cassandra's prophecies to further his dramatic theme:

> O. farewell, dear Hector,
> Look how thou diest, look how thy eye turns pale.
> Look how thy wounds do bleed at many vents,
> Hark how Troy roars, how Hecuba cries out.[6]

But Troilus denies Cassandra's prophecy, saying:

> This foolish, dreaming, superstitious girl
> Makes all these bodements. (V,iii,80.)

Foolish? Dreaming? Perhaps, yet Paul the Apostle in *Corinthians I* writes how God has made foolish the wisdom of this world:

> But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;
> And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

---

[6]William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida* in *The Riverside Shakespeare* ed. G. Blakemore Evens, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 487. (Subsequent references to this edition will be shown parenthetically).

[7]*Holy Bible, King James Version* (London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1949), *Corinthians I*:27, p. 161. (Subsequent references to this edition will be shown parenthetically).

Paul not only intimates that perhaps the wisdom of eternity may be found in the foolish. He also recognizes the world's evil as integrally based in the scheme of things. His own evilness, and part in God's design, are revealed to him in a blinding light and he falls, dazed:

> . . . I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, . . . And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, . . . Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? . . . But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness . . .
>
> And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. (*Acts*, 26:13-24.)

But the *madness* of which Festus accuses Paul is the prophetic *ectasy* that Lear undergoes, born of passionate inner deliberation.

Of a different sort is the *madness* Hieronimo feigns in *The Spanish Tragedy* (c.1586) by Thomas Kyd. Here Hieronimo calculates to delude his son's murderers, and the theme is revenge, not inner fulfillment:

> And to conclude, I will revenge his death.
> But how? Not as the vulgar wits of men,
> With open, but inevitable ills,
> As by a secret, yet a certain mean,
> Which under kindship will be cloaked best. . . .
> Thus therefore will I rest me in unrest,
> Dissembling quiet in unquietness,
> Not seeming that I know their villainies,
> That my simplicity may make them think
> That ignorantly I will let all slip;
> For ignorance, I wot, and well they know,
> *Remedium malorum iners est.* [8]

---

[8] Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy* in *Elizabethan Plays* ed. Hazelton Spencer (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1933), p. 239, V.vi,190ff. "Is an idle remedy for ills."

Hieronimo's *madness* is contrived, artificial. The dramatic realization born of the madness in Shakespearean or Yeatsian characters grows and develops from the protagonist's imaginative processes.

Shakespeare's works teem with significant quotations which confirm his concern for imaginative intuition and insight as a major theme. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he writes:

> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
> The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact.
> One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;
> That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
> Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to aery nothing
> A local habitation and a name. (V,i,4ff.)

This concern for imaginative "comprehension which is more than cool reason" generally revolves around the sixteenth century's dictates of *order* and *harmony* as universally accepted norms perceived through the intuitive knowledge of the individual. The original sin of Adam and Eve and their salvation is an accepted dogma, and with this dogma occurs the original loss of divinely-inspired understanding. Man is restored through grace to a new intuitive comprehension. Man is capable of perceiving this *order* and *harmony* and operates within its hierarchical sphere. It is in this context that Lear's Cordelia beseeches the Gods:

> Cure this great breach in his abused nature,
> Th' untun'd and jarring senses, O, wind up
> of this child-changed father! (IV,vii,14ff.)

King Lear's entire being convulses in torment, but before he achieves inner truth he must, according to sixteenth-century ideals, establish *harmony* within his soul.

The concepts of *order* and *harmony* relate to all of creation's hierarchy, and thus Cleopatra, anticipating reunion with Antony in death, expresses her new-found being in Shakespearean concepts of creation:

> I am fire and air; my other elements
> I give to baser life. (V,ii,289.)

Cleopatra's union with her other-self, expressed here in terms of fire and air, provides an interesting parallel to Yeats's *Condition of Fire*, the momentary condition of unity with one's daimonic self. In Yeatsian philosophy, this condition occurs after painful purification of the essential self. Furthering the Shakespearean parallel above, one might consider that Antony's and Cleopatra's love purifies to an essence of divinity through their self-sacrificing 'marriage in death'. Certainly their sensuous beginnings are overshadowed by the passing of an empire and its divinities; the same divinities who, throughout the play, intimate immortality for the lovers, and protect them from base sexual connotations. Rarely does the *passion* involved in Shakespeare's works leading to enlightenment of the soul relate to physical appetite of the senses. Universal love, conversely, is enormously important to his tragic figure, for a lack of this empathy implies inner disorder, and incomplete existence.

Basically, this universal love springs from the established principles of faith in Shakespeare's time. In *The Tempest* the protagonist Prospero is a demi-god, yet his reply to Miranda's question concedes a superior Power:

> How came we ashore?
>
> By Providence divine. (I,ii,158-159.)

This same demi-god, during his scene of forgiveness, acknowledges the basic need of penance as crucial but sufficient. This is in concordance with reciprocal Christian love, and very necessary to Prospero's self-fulfillment:

> They being penitent,
> The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
> Not a frown further. (V,i,28ff.)

Prospero realizes this, standing on the verge of dramatic truth. He undergoes what might be called *purgatorial* recognition of his true worth and identity. Yeats's plays about the legendary Irish hero, Cuchulain, are often termed *purgatorial*. In *The Death of Cuchulain*, one of the hero's primary traits is his passive forgiveness, and total receptivity to mankind's nature, (and to his own), both in terms of evil and good. Cuchulain tells his mistress, Eithne Inguba:

> You thought that if you changed I'd kill you for it,
> When everything sublunary must change,
> And if I have not changed that goes to prove
> That I am monstrous. [9]

---

[9] W.B. Yeats, *The Death of Cuchulain* in *Variorum Edition of The Plays of W.B. Yeats*, ed. Russell K. Alspach, (London: MacMillan, 1966), p. 1055, 11.56-59. (Subsequent references to this edition will be shown parenthetically).

In Yeatsian thought, this passivity indicates resignation to death, but Cuchulain's 'death' is basically his heroic acceptance of daimonic subjectivity and the renunciation of his objective ties. It is therefore equivalent to Prospero's renunciation of his 'magic'. Both protagonists achieve fulfillment of their true selves.

The Tempest stands in a unique position from the viewpoint of symbolic structure, and it is for this reason that the play has been chosen for discussion further on in this paper in contrast to Yeats's *Cuchulain* dramas.

In essence much of Shakespeare's drama is rooted in *Scriptures*. Further, many of Yeats's dramatic aims appear compatible to those of Shakespeare's. Joseph Hone quotes critic John Eglinton on Yeats's work:

> The beautiful lines which drifted down to us, weighted with poetic imagery, the blank verse which rose out of the babble of the meaner personages, made one think of the Shakespearean rather than of any new drama. [10]

We may, then, following the line from *Scriptures* to Shakespeare to Yeats, compare the two demi-gods Prospero and Cuchulain and the all-powerful Centurion of the book of *St. Matthew*:

---

[10]Quoted by Joseph Hone in his book *W.B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1942), p. 215.

> . . . Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.
> And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.
> The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.
> For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. (Matthew:8:5-17.)

The Centurion, like Prospero and Cuchulain, is forced to acknowledge his own limitations. Obviously a man of command, as Prospero and Cuchulain had been, the Centurion, helpless in the face of sickness, faces total reality with humility. He therefore resorts to a higher authority to cure his 'servant' (perhaps a state of his own being?).

In sum, Prospero rescinds his 'magic' in order to achieve empathetic dialogue with his total self. Cuchulain rescinds his dear objectivity in order to achieve union with his daimonic self. And the Centurion rescinds his command in favour of a higher faith. All three protagonists must suffer and yield to reach their *Unity of Being*.

This study pursues with a few of Shakespearean and Yeatsian protagonists their odyssey to dramatic insight through the imaginative intellect.

I would particularly like to thank Professor R. Morton of the McMaster English Department for providing me with invaluable help during the preparation of this work.

McMaster University

Hamilton, Ontario.

July - 1982.

CHAPTER ONE

MACBETH AND DEIRDRE

(THREE WITCHES AND THREE MUSICIANS)

Macbeth represents a study of evil. Shakespeare reveals the protagonist's dramatic realization of his true self by means of passionate crises. Macbeth sins in ambitious pride — Aristotle's *hubris*. Macbeth, in a negative sense, parallels Yeats's Deirdre, who fulfills her contingent self in the daimonic presence of her lover, Naoise. Lady Macbeth is Macbeth's daimonic self, but her evil influence ruins both of their ultimate beings.

The Weird Sisters manifest Macbeth's ambitious evil. Their actuality is academic: from the standpoint of theatrical technique only are they real. They make concrete the real spiritual action of Shakespeare's study: Macbeth's growing lie to himself as his ambition grows.

The Weird Sisters announce to Macbeth his coming success: "All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be King hereafter!" (I,iii,50); they prophesy the Stuart line of kings to Banquo: "Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none " (I,iii,67), and they later prophesy Macduff's revenge.

All this is not to say that the play cannot carry its theme without otherworld characters. Lady Macbeth can lure Macbeth to treason. The betrayal of Duncan, Macduff's revenge and Malcolm's

coronation can still take place. But these events are not Shakespeare's principal dramatic aim. The play's basic theme is Macbeth's self-discovery of his all-consuming sin, and to expose the effect in all its horror, Shakespeare, of necessity, appeals to the human *imagination*. To understand Macbeth's evil is not enough: one must see it in the witches' apparitions; feel it in their boiling cauldron; smell it in their excruciating boiled entrails; and hear it in the harpy's cries. Shakespeare knows human understanding can realize the murders, that it can acknowledge the social crime. But he also knows that only human *imagination* can vicariously intuit the torment of the Macbeths' souls embroiled in guilt and driven to madness. Shakespeare does not aim at mere acknowledgement or categorization of the crimes. Shakespeare desires, in his language, total conceit from his audience. This conception cannot be induced through the logical deduction of a sophisticated oration — this horror has to be experienced through the inflamed *imagination*. Like breeds like. There is no logic in murder. There is no logic in the Weird Sisters; they are the embodiment of intuitive (and here evil) knowledge.

Shakespeare stresses their unworldliness, thereby identifying them with abnormal spheres of thought, time and knowledge:

> How far is't call'd to [Forres]? What are these
> So wither'd and so wild in their attire,
> That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth,
> And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught
> That man may question? You seem to understand me,
> By each at once her choppy finger laying
> Upon her skinny lips. You should be women,
> And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
> That you are so. (I,iii,39 ff.)

The three sisters are beings whose thoughts are questionable: "You seem to understand me," — whose status in Time is not clear: "Live you?" — and whose sex is doubtful. It follows that their knowledge is of an undetermined nature.

Viewed psychologically, the witches confirm Macbeth's inner deterioration. The physical and moral aspects of a character's progression or regression can be communicated in normal language. But to convey Macbeth's deluded mind, Shakespeare utilizes the weird prophe ies of the witches. Thus as long as Macbeth's delusions persist the prophecies of the Weird Sisters persist. They assure him of his invulnerability:

> Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care
> Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are:
> Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until
> Great Birnan wood to high Dunsinane hill
> Shall come against him. (IV,i,90ff.)

The prophecy came true: but who could have perceived Macbeth vanquished by a woods that moves in combat:

> Malcolm: Let every soldier hew him down a bough,
> And bear't before him, thereby shall we shadow
> The numbers of our host, and make discovery
> Err in report of us. (V,iv,5 ff.)

Indeed, Macbeth's belief in his impregnability indicates his disordered mind. On learning that Macduff is not "of woman born" but a forced birth, Macbeth's courage disintegrates:

> Thou losest labor.
> As easy mayst thou the intrenchant air
> With thy keen sword impress as make me bleed.
> Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests,
> I bear a charmed life, which must not yield
> To one of woman born.

> Despair thy charm,
> And let the angel whom thou still has serv'd
> Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb
> Untimely ripp'd.
>
> Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,
> For it hath cow'd my better part of man!
> And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd,
> That palter with us in a double sense,
> That keep the word of promise to our ear,
> And break it to our hope. I'll not fight with thee.
> (V,viii, 8 ff.)
> (underscore mine)

His tragedy now magnifies, for he must achieve his evil destiny:

> But get thee back, my soul is too much charg'd
> With blood of thine already. (V,viii,5.)

As self-realization of his true existence creeps upon Macbeth, all his illusions fade and the Weird Sisters fade too. Macbeth's denunciation of the "juggling fiends" who assure him of his supremacy over any man "of woman born" completes his self-awareness, but the juggling fiends do not err. Macbeth's own self-delusions constitute the error, emanating from his other self — Lady Macbeth. Surely she represents in Yeatsian terms Macbeth's "daimonic self", goading him on to the ultimate lie through the passion of their imperfect love:

> Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me from the crown to the top topful
> of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood . . .
> Come, thick night, . . . That my keen knife see
> not the wound it makes,
> Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
> To cry, "Hold, hold!" (I,v,40 ff.)

A supernatural source — "the spirits that tend on mortal thoughts" — expresses this supreme evil; and there is no light. The imagery is "thick night", thus no sight is possible. Compare these passionate words delivered in the "thick night" of a poisonous love, with Macbeth's apathetic speech, ironically rendered by the light of a "fool's candle":

> She should have died hereafter;
> There would have been a time for such a word.
> To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last syllable of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. (V,v,17 ff.)
> (underscore mine)

These last two quotations, in terms of content of light imagery, concur with Yeats's moon imagery in the *Great Wheel*. The Macbeths represent total objectivity in their consumptive evil. Thus they parallel the "last crescents":

> And what of those
> That the last servile crescent has set free?
>
> Because all dark, like those that are all light,
> They are cast beyond the verge, and in a cloud,
> Crying to one another like the bats;
> But having no desire they cannot tell
> What's good or bad, or what it is to triumph
> At the perfection of one's own obedience;
> And yet they speak what's blown into the mind;
> Deformed beyond deformity, unformed,
> Insipid as the dough before it is baked,
> They change their bodies at a word.
>
> Hunchback and Saint and Fool are the last crescents.
> The burning bow . . . Of beauty's cruelty and wisdom's
> chatter — Out of that raving tide — is drawn betwixt
> Deformity of body and of mind. [1]

---

[1] W.B. Yeats, "The Phases of the Moon", *A Vision*, p. 63 - p. 64.

The Macbeths condemn themselves to a sightless cunning and mastery, lacking the illumination of their own innate, but rejected, inward truth. Macbeth achieves, in terms of empty non-fulfillment, the knowledge stemming from intuitive illumination, which he had spurned in his illusions of grandeur. But, as the glorious passion of Antony and Cleopatra precipitated their spirits into immortal union; so the inglorious love of the Macbeths illuminates their "way to dusty death", stripped of language and Time itself.

As in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the major theme of W.B. Yeats's *Deirdre* is the discovery of one's true Self through dramatic realization. But, *Deirdre*, unlike *Macbeth*, represents a study of the heroic ideal, rather than evil. Yeats considered man's heroism in the face of defeat a primary step towards *Unity of Being* — the state of unity with the daimonic self. Deirdre and Naoise, essentially two beings, represent in Yeatsian concepts, four selves. Each of their daimonic selves is that of the lover. Through the purification of their contingent selves by means of their love they heroically unite in a *Unity of Being*. Yeats recognizes the daimonic *mask* created by love:

> It seems to me that true love is a discipline, and it needs so much wisdom that the love of Solomon and Sheba must have lasted, for all the silence of the Scriptures. Each divines the secret self of the other, and refusing to believe in the mere daily self, creates a mirror where the lover or the beloved sees an image to copy in daily life;

for love also creates the Mask. [2]

Their great love creates their anti-selves in their different persons.

Confronted with betrayal by King Conchubar, who in his old age has ostensibly pardoned the sin of their young love, Deirdre and Naoise choose their true destiny in death rather than accept the lie of a false objective existence.

The play works allegorically in terms of unity with the daimonic Self. Deirdre (mind/soul) and Naoise (body) comprise a being which achieves intuitive insight revealed in dramatic context by means of its daimonic voices — the three musicians. King Conchubar appears to be secular thought and social pressures. Fergus, in legend a gullible former king deposed by Conchubar, appears to be a possible folly figure — the human folly that brings man back to the state of *primary* existence. Fergus continuously urges the lovers to trust Conchubar and return to Conchubar's protection. But at Conchubar's house "dark-faced messengers" intimidate Deirdre, representative of her baser nature which would lure her back to objectivity.

Unlike the three witches in *Macbeth*, who lead him to a nemesis of evil, Deirdre's three musicians guide her to heroic realization of Self. They do, however, function as the three witches did in Macbeth, as dramatized states of Deirdre's being, and as very definitely 'otherworld' persons. All three are women, and are thus (traditionally) highly subjective. Further, they are:

> . . . come , by chance
> Into King Conchubar's country. (11. 3-4)

---

[2] W.B. Yeats, *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats*, (New York: Collier Books, 1978), p. 313.

As well, Fergus recognizes that they are "not of this country," (l. 50) placing them out of Time. Yeats reveals their prophetic status in the early moments of the play as the first musician asks Fergus:

> Are Deirdre and her lover tired of life: (l. 49)

Fergus identifies their knowledge as inspired as he observes:

> You have learned something in your wanderings.
> (l. 58)

The musicians are physical manifestations of Deirdre's courage and heroic *Vision of Evil*, and from the beginning she relies on their support:

> These women have the raddle [2] that they use
> To make them brave and confident, although
> Dread, toil or cold may chill the blood o' their
> cheeks. (ll. 154 ff.)

Macbeth relies on his witches for support too, but he lacks a *Vision of Evil*. His deluded mind cannot conceive life in its totality. In contrast, Deirdre's musicians persistently intuit danger, warning the lovers of:

> . . . terrible mysterious things,
> Magical horrors and the spell of wizards.
> (ll. 289-290)

The women recognize Deirdre's existential crisis and foretell the spiritual reunion of the lovers in their opening song:

> What is all our praise to them
> That have one another's eyes? (ll. 146-147)

---

2 Raddle is a pigment used to colour the cheeks. (p. 392)

But the lovers must first recognize their ultimate situation and relate this recognition to their daimonic destiny. This recognition occurs long after the women have predicted their heroic choice:

> We listened to the counsel of the wise,
> And so turned fools. (Deirdre to Fergus)
> (11. 404-405)

Naoise makes his decision - union with his other self in the lines:

> The crib has fallen and the birds are in it;
> There is not one of the great oaks about us
> But shades a hundred men. (11. 418-420)

Yeats's stage directions for Naoise as he speaks these lines read:

> Naoise [who] is calm, like a man who has passed beyond life.

Yeats portrays the lovers' oscillating attempts to resist their daimonic urgings and to save one another through normal dialogue, symbolized in the game of chess, and Yeats's skillful use of the verb 'weigh', as one 'weighs' a move on the chessboard:

> Had you been here when that man and his queen [3]
> Played at so high a game, could you have found
> An ancient poem for the praise of it?
> It should have set out plainly that those two,
> Because no man and woman have loved better,
> Might sit on there contentedly, and weigh
> The joy comes after.

This scene, revealing their heroic anxiety for each other, corresponds to Macbeth's inner conflict through his sufferings in physical combat.

---

[3] Refers to Lugaidh Redstripe and seamew wife legend, and death. (11. 180-181)

Macbeth's internal conflicts, however, become apparent in all their magnitude, through the horrible words and actions of the 'otherworld' witches; and Yeats, like Shakespeare, employs the 'otherworld' chorus of musicians to illuminate through their soft whisperings the terrible courage of the lovers effectively. Their soft, awestruck attitude subtly conveys the tragedy:

> They are gone, they are gone. The proud
> may lie by the proud.
> Though we were bidden to sing, cry
> nothing loud.
> They are gone, they are gone.
> Whispering were enough.
> Into the secret wilderness of their love.
> A high, grey cairn. What more is to
> be said?
> Eagles have gone into their cloudy bed. (11. 733-738)

The supernatural *Unity of Being* chosen by the lovers in their dramatic realization impacts in the last line spoken by the musicians:

> Eagles have gone into their cloudy bed.

Intuitive knowledge in both *Macbeth* and *Deirdre* occurs through the use of demi-mythical beings devoid of secular existence, in the general sense. The focus on the imagery of light perception seems to indicate both Shakespeare and Yeats conceive a flashing insight that does not come through deductive reasoning. Macbeth's eventual destiny is lit by a "fool's candle" — Deirdre and Naoise lie, united in death, in a "torch-lit" house, symbolic of their Yeatsian *Condition of Fire*.

This light imagery concurs with the otherworld manifestations of Macbeth's hidden illusions and the lovers' revelation of truth. Macbeth's Weird Sisters embody cowardly falseness in an environment of black lies (IV,i,47ff.). The lovers' musicians embody heroic truth in an imagery of confidence, trust, glittering jewels and bravery (11. 154 ff.).

CHAPTER TWO

LEAR AND CUCHULAIN
(FOOLS AND BLINDNESS)

The Tragedy of King Lear is a study of man's blind indifference to the ultimate nature of his true Self. Conversely, it is a study of a fool's truth — the truth a fool intuits and conveys in simple, but imaginative language.

Lear's tragedy is that he thinks only as a king. In terms of universal empathy, he does not relate. Yet Lear's eventual cosmic believability lies in his sovereign nature, — for his end-state, that of empathetic love for all, is achieved in a unified spirit that is limitless.

Through the blinded and erring Gloucester, and the jesting truths of the fool, Lear plods to an awareness of his complete existence and dramatic realization of his real potential. He achieves Yeatsian *Unity of Being* in a climactic freedom of spirit. Lear, in Yeats's terms, creates and engages his daimonic Self in a heroic death.

Cuchulain, the hero-king in *On Baile's Strand*, creates and engages his daimonic Self in a *Unity of Being*, but only momentarily. This momentary achievement is Phase Fifteen, the totally subjective phase on the Yeatsian *Wheel of Life*, and thus supernatural.[1]

---

[1](See Appendix One, (The Great Wheel), which constitutes a summary of Yeats's *Primary* versus *Antithetical* man.

Cuchulain is Yeats's legendary hero-man striving for union with his daimonic Self. Yeats describes him as a being in the *antithetical Will* and his *primary Body of Fate*. Yeatsian heroes return repeatedly to a painful, irresistible recognition and need of not only the world's love, but also its evil. *On Baile's Strand* (1903) is but a phase of Cuchulain's struggle for self-realization. Yeats continues this symbolical struggle in the ensuing plays, *The Only Jealousy of Emer* and *The Death of Cuchulain*, both to be discussed later in this paper.

On Baile's Strand is appropriate in its illustrative aspects of the Fool and Blind Man as parallels to Lear's foils, his Fool and Gloucester.

Clearly, if we combine the above attributes of *antithetical* man with Yeats's concept of a *Vision of Evil* (a world of continual conflict), the conclusion is that the desired *Unity of Being* must evolve through defeat and heartbreak as the nucleus for realization of Self.

All of the above suggests a choice to Yeats's reader. His *Cuchulain* plays can be digested at their surface level only — satisfying indeed in their exquisite poetry. Or they can be examined in terms of their symbolical values in which Yeats's complex metaphorical structure of the journey of the self is revealed.

Lear's journey of the self, unlike Macbeth, does not originate from evil design. Lear neither consorts with evil spirits nor entertains evil desires. Lear's great failing is a total obsession with his

external self. Lear rationalizes and measures all his affiliations in worldly terms: notwithstanding all the political implications of his reasoning, he still equates love with actual physical boundaries:

> Which of you shall we say doth love us most,
> That we our largest bounty may extend
> Where nature doth with merit challenge? (I,i,51 ff.)

Thus, when Lear relinquishes his kingdom, and realizes he is not loved by Goneril or Regan, he loses all, because his externality comprises his whole being. Lear is blind — spiritually.

Gloucester manifests this blindness in a parallel sub-image. Gloucester, led by an Old Man, after his eyes have been stomped out, says:

> I have no way, and therefore want no eyes,
> I stumbled when I saw. (IV,i,18 ff.)

Gloucester errs in not recognizing his true son. He reflects the king's blindness, but in a miniature image: for Lear errs because he lacks awareness of the essence of humanity — and therefore of his true Self.

This image of blindness recedes as Lear's body weakens. As his sensual state recedes, his inner comprehension grows. It is this thematic structure in the play which justifies Shakespeare's constant interplay with sight imagery and the concept of knowing.

In the beginning, Lear accepts Goneril's verbal expression of love:

> Sir, I love you more than [words] can wield the matter,
> Dearer than eyesight, space and liberty. (I,i,55 ff.)

Only Cordelia extends true love, but Lear fails to recognize it. He delivers his denunciation of Cordelia in images of radiant light and evil darkness:

> For by the sacred radiance of the sun,
> The [mysteries] of Hecat and the night;
> By all the operation of the orbs,
> From whom we do exist and cease to be;
> Here I disclaim all my paternal care. (I,i,109 ff.)

Thus Shakespeare emphasizes Lear's lack of insight in his ironic oath by "the sacred radiance of the sun." (While we recognize that "operation of the orbs" in the above passage can refer to the heavenly spheres, the word *orb* is poetic language for *eyeball*).

Kent refers to Lear's actual eyeball as he reproves Lear's denial of Cordelia:

> See better, Lear, and let me still remain
> The true blank of thine eye. (I,i,158 ff.)

Lear curses Kent: "Now, by Apollo" — but his qualification for the god's warning: "know thyself" is remarkably non-existent. Lear presses on in his blind path, and his farewell to Cordelia stresses this lack of true perception:

> Thou hast her, France, let her be thine, for
> we
> Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
> That face of hers again. (I,i,262 ff.)

Cordelia predicts that Time will uncover what Lear cannot see at present.[2] Thematically this is appropriate from Cordelia, as it is

---

[2]The affinity between Cordelia and the fool Shakespeare clearly indicates, (I,iv,74). As well, Lear refers to his "poor fool" (V,iii,306), which presumably is Cordelia. As both characters prophesy to Lear, they would both seem to qualify as 'fool' figures, in terms of intuitive knowledge.

through her ministry that Lear achieves his insight:

> Time shall unfold what plighted cunning
> hides,
> Who covers faults, at last with shame derides.
> (I,i,280 ff.)

Time does indeed deliver revelation. After Goneril's rejection, Lear suffers the first of his many tentative gyrations towards his true identity:

> Does any here know me? This is not Lear.
> Does Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes?
> . . . 'Tis not so.
> Who is it that can tell me who I am? (I,iv,226 ff.)

The fool's terse reply: "Lear's shadow," intimates immense meaning, for indeed the true Lear is shadowed by his power ego. Lear hides from himself. The word *shadow* can be interpreted in Shakespearean terms to mean *genius*, which would seem to approximate Yeats's concept of man's *daemon*.[3] Thus, viewing the fool's reply in Yeatsian philosophic terms, the fool implies that it is only Lear's inner *genius* or *daemon* that can "tell [him] who he is " (italics mine).

As Lear continues to debate with his inner instinct his desperation grows:

> O Lear,Lear,Lear!
> Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in
> And thy dear judgment out! (I,iv,270 ff.)

The stage directions here read: "striking his head." Shakespeare in these lines strikes at the heart of his theme, for Lear is finally beginning to recognize his greater reasoning power, that of *soul* or *mind*.

---

[3]The Latin root of *genius* (*gen*) carries a general meaning of "to beget" or "to come into being," and *demon* has an ancient Greek origin of *genius* or guiding spirit.

Lear's adversity increases, and it is interesting that with Regan's final treachery, Shakespeare's imagery transfers momentarily from eyes to heart:

> You think I'll weep:
> No, I'll not weep.
> I have full cause of weeping, but this heart
> Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws
> Or ere I'll weep. O Fool, I shall go mad!
> (II,iv,282 ff.)

Lear is coming to terms with his *Vision of Evil*. The above lines concur with the Yeatsian concept of the *consumption of the heart* whereby, through inner dialogue born of the heart's agony, man purifies his *contingent* self. In fact, Lear is coming to terms with his inner truth. And, as it was the fool who told Lear to consult his inner *shadow*, it was also the fool who, earlier, cautioned Lear of his 'truth' that must be "whipt out":

> Truth's a dog must to kennel, he must be
> whipt out, when the Lady Brach may stand by th' fire
> and stink. (I,iv,111 ff.)

Lear scorns the fool. But later, as Lear's intellect begins to realize his true existence, Shakespeare concentrates all essential dialogue between the fool and Lear. The fool constitutes, in dramatic terms, Lear's intuitive voice. He is a part of Lear's actual thinking process — an objectification of Lear's growing empathy with mankind:

> Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?
> I am cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow?
> The art of our necessities is strange
> And can make vild things precious. Come, your hovel.
> Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
> That's sorry yet for thee. (III,ii,68 ff.)
> (underscore mine).

This universal empathy is a Yeatsian prerequisite to his concept of *Unity of Being*. Paradoxically, as man's being gyrates further and further away from objective desires in terms of longing for inner fulfillment, it is then that he feels a growing affinity with all of mankind and experiences new insight into his individual humanity. Cuchulain, in *The Death of Cuchulain*, wherein he finally achieves *Unity of Being*, demonstrates this love and understanding of all mankind, and of his own nature. He tells his mistress, nearing death:

> You thought that if you changed I'd kill you for it,
> When everything sublunary must change,
> And if I have not changed that goes to prove
> That I am monstrous. (11. 56-59)

The hero's mistress does not know this Cuchulain. She says to him:

> You're not the man I loved,
> That violent man forgave no treachery. (1. 60)

She cannot realize that Cuchulain's evolving state of being subjects him to new insight. Lear experiences this same uncertainty — when he sees Cordelia again, he says:

> I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
> Methinks I should know you, and know this man.
> Yet I am doubtful: for I am mainly ignorant
> What place this is, and all the skill I have
> Remembers not these garments; nor I know not
> Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me,
> For (as I am a man) I think this lady
> To be my child Cordelia. (IV,vii, 62ff.)
> (underscore mine)

Lear trades rationality for insight. He does not know his objective environment; but he does now acknowledge Cordelia as his child. Lear's lack of deductive perception enhances his achieved realization of his true existential being.

Shakespeare continues this sensual emphasis through to Cordelia's death. As Lear carries her, dead, in his arms, he calls for a glass so that he may see her breath:

> Lend me a looking-glass
> If that her breath will mist or stain the stone
> Why then she lives (V,iii,262)

Has Lear ever strained his sight so minutely? He recognizes Kent in another passage of sight imagery; as reigning King he spurned him:

> Mine eyes are not o' th' best, I'll tell you straight.
> . . . This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?
> (V,iii,280 ff.)

He bends over Cordelia and exclaims:

> Pray you undo this button. Thank you, sir.
> Do you see this? Look on her! Look her lips.
> Look there, look there! (V,iii,310 ff.)

Seconds before, Lear, in painful awareness, says:

> And my poor fool is hang'd! (V,iii,306)

His command: "Look!" embodies the tragedy. The King, Lear, would not "look" on Cordelia. She was "nothing." The King, Lear, would not listen to his fool. A man called Lear now commands all to "Look on her!" The "fool" in his arms is everything. He now strains for a "breath" from his "fool."

As Lear approached dramatic realization his "fool" left him. He was the blind Lear's guide to inner truth.

Now a man called Lear, possessing total awareness of Self, holds a "fool" in his arms. Cordelia is Lear's Truth.

Cuchulain, Yeats's hero-king in *On Baile's Strand*, differs from Lear with respect to knowledge of their internal Selves. Cuchulain knows from early childhood that he is fathered by an Irish sea-god, and that his true existential state is union with his immortal daimonic Self.

Yeats, like Shakespeare,[4] chose an ancient legend on which to base his *Cuchulain* plays. In the original Cuchulain legend, (the bulk of which is older than the twelfth century),[5] Cuchulain is born of Dechtire, who was spirited away to the dwelling place of the Sidhe, (the immortal race of Ireland). The only reference to Cuchulain's immortal father is to a "young man in shining armour." Dechtire, along with Cuchulain, is subsequently returned to her earthly husband, Sualtim. Cuchulain in his early years is called Setanta. Yeats confirms Cuchulain's immortal beginnings when Cuchulain scorns a mortal offspring:

> As I have that clean hawk out of the air
> That, as men say, begot this body of mine
> Upon a mortal woman. (11. 284-287)

Cuchulain's son, Conlaech, is quasi-divine too, as his mother, Aoife, is a *Woman of the Sidhe*. The hero had knowledge of Conlaech's pending birth. The legend reads:

> And when he [Cuchulain] was leaving her, he told her [Aoife] what name to give the child, and he gave her a gold ring, and bade her keep it safe till the child grew to be a lad, . . . and to send him to Ireland, and he would know he was his son by that token.

---

[4] *Lier* made its first literary appearance in the twelfth-century *History* of Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Riverside Shakespeare*, p. 1250.

[5] Lady Augusta Gregory, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne with a Preface by W.B. Yeats* (London: John Murray, 1902), p. 313 ff.

Just as Shakespeare objectifies Lear's blindness in Gloucester and Lear's conflict in his fool, (both in terms of his internal being), so Yeats objectifies Cuchulain's conflicting states of being in Fintain, the Blind Man and Barach, the Fool. Together they constitute Cuchulain's objective and subjective warring natures, conveyed by means of a sub-plot structure. Yeats carefully justifies the fool's intuitive nature, based on his otherworld origin coupled with his subjectivity. Yeats's subjective fool "runs with the witches at the edge of the waves," and the Sidhe women cry for a kiss from him:

> There are some that follow me.
> Boann herself out of the river
> and Fand out of the deep sea. Witches
> they are, and they come by in the wind, and
> they cry, 'Give a kiss, Fool, give a kiss',
> that's what they cry. (11. 24-28)

Yeats's careful justification is necessary, as it is Barach who informs Cuchulain that he has killed his son. Barach also sees and reports the hero's fight with the waves.

The fool's name, Barach, identifies with the legendary Sidhe Barach who enticed King Fergus away "to a feast," symbolic of this world's folly.

Vendler quotes Yeats from *A Vision* (1925):

> It is said of the Spirits at Phases 15 and 1 that the first need help and the second give it . . . The first give what is called the "Kiss of Death." The Spirits at 15 need help that, before entering upon their embodied state, they may rid themselves of all traces of the primary Tincture, and this they gain by imposing upon a man or woman's mind an antithetical image which requires primary expression.

> It is this expression, which may be an action or a work of art, which sets them free, and the image imposed is an ideal form, an image of themselves, a type of emotion which expresses them, and this they can do but upon one man or woman's mind; their coming life depending upon their choice of that mind. They suffer from the terror of solitude, and can only free themselves from terror by becoming entirely antithetical and so self-sufficing, and till that moment comes each must, if a woman, give some one man her love, and though he cannot, unless out of phase and obsessed to the creation of a succuba [female daemon having sex with a man] know that his muse exists, he returns this love through the intermediary of an idol. This idol he creates out of an image imposed upon his imagination by the Spirit. This Spirit is said to give the "Kiss of Death" because though she that gives it may persecute other idols, being jealous, the idol has not come out of the man's desire. Its expression is a harmonisation which frees the Spirit from terror and the man from desire, . . .[6]

The above quotation is given in full because it is pertinent not only to *On Baile's Strand*, but also to the other plays this paper will examine: *The Only Jealousy of Emer* and *The Death of Cuchulain*.

In *On Baile's Strand* the Irish Muse is represented by Aoife, the mother of Conlaech. She is the legendary *Woman of the Sidhe*, the daimonic "image of imagination," with whom Cuchulain longs to unite.[7] She is therefore unfulfilled, because Cuchulain's state is unfulfilled, torn as he is between his primary and antithetical aspirations. The hero's conflicting states appear (in argument) as Cuchulain, possessed by daimonic *Will*, and Conchubar, representing objective pressure upon his daimonic *Will*.

---

[6]Helen Hennessey Vendler, *Yeats's Vision and Later Plays* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 150.

[7]See Appendix Two, Figure Two.

In the dialectic of self between Conchubar and Cuchulain, Conchubar, who is a more powerful king, reminds the hero that the young man "out of Aoife's country" has been allowed entry into his domain, because "the shore [was] ill-guarded " (l. 207) — the domain is symbolically Cuchulain's being.

Conlaech, in Conchubar's view, must be destroyed. He objectifies the hero's subjective union with Aoife and Conchubar strives to turn the hero's gyrating cone towards the objective world. Viewed for its symbolical content, the death of Conlaech can be interpreted as Cuchulain's momentary resignation to the demands of his objectivity. In the same context Aoife's desire for Cuchulain's death can be interpreted as the *death-in-life* trance imposed by the Irish Muse upon her heroes:

> The Leanhaun Shee (fairy mistress) seeks the love of mortals . . . The fairy lives on their life, and they waste away . . . She is the Gaelic muse, for she gives inspiration to those she persecutes . . . She is of the dreadful solitary fairies. To her have belonged the greatest of the Irish poets, from Oisin down to the last century.[8]

The Blind Man, being from Aoife's country, knows about the Shee. He informs Barach the fool (and the audience) of Cuchulain's conflict, and also that Conlaech is Aoife's son:

> I am sure it is her son.
> I was in Aoife's country for a long time.(l. 135)

---

[8]W.B. Yeats, ed., *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, pp. 86, 156, quoted in Vendler, *Yeats's Vision*, p. 53.

The chorus of kings and the three women represent Cuchulain's ethical obligations and external ties. As such, they promote Cuchulain's oath of allegiance to his earthly affairs. Initially, the hero declares:

> I'll not be bound,
> Give up my will to yours? (l. 217)

Yeats emphasizes the *Will* here, as Cuchulain's *Creative Mind* evolves his daimonic *Body of Fate* and gyrates towards it.

Conchubar accuses the hero, recognizing his daimonic fixation:

> Now as ever
> You mock at every reasonable hope,
> And would have nothing, or impossible things.
> (ll. 287-289)

He reminds Cuchulain he has no earthly heir. Cuchulain retorts he does not desire earthly heirs:

> I think myself most lucky that I leave
> No pallid ghost or mockery of a man (ll. 260-261)

Cuchulain is in trance: his subjective intellect rejects external ties. Further along in the dialogue with Conchubar, he says:

> The most of men feel that
> But you and I leave names upon the harp.
> (l. 271)

Conchubar presses his argument, basing his privilege on the fact that he is a part of Cuchulain:

> For we have slept under the one cloak and drunk
> From the one wine-cup. I know you to the bone.
> (ll. 274-275)

Cuchulain fights Conchubar. He dismisses all of Conchubar's talk of a mortal son:

> For I would need a weightier argument
> Than one that marred me in the copying,
> As I have that clean hawk out of the air
> That, as men say, begot this body of mine
> Upon a mortal woman. (11. 282-286)

The objective world is powerful, and Yeats's theory of *The Great Wheel* returns man time and again to his external existence. Conchubar presses his argument:

> . . . You are but half a king and I but half;
> I need your might of hand and burning heart,
> And you my wisdom. (11. 353-354)

The hero's burning heart reiterates Yeats's theory of man's passionate defeat before rising again to inner triumph, and recalls Lear's heart, broken "into a hundred thousand flaws" (II,iv,285 ff.) before his eventual dramatic realization.

Cuchulain eventually succumbs to Conchubar and accepts his oath of allegiance, chanted by the three women. These wanderers, possessing no secular identification, deliver the thematic core of the play: Cuchulain's conflicting selves:

> May this fire have driven out
> The Shape-Changers that can put
> Ruin on a great king's house
> Until all be ruinous. . . .
> Those wild hands that have embraced
> All his body can but shove
> At the burning wheel of love
> Till the side of Hate comes up.
> Therefore in this ancient cup
> May the sword-blades drink their fill
> Of the home-brew there, until
> They will have for masters none
> But the threshold and hearthstone. (11. 393-432)

The "Shape-Changers" are the Sidhe and represent the subjective state. The "threshold and hearthstone" represent Cuchulain's objective state. Yeats, in the oath passage, projects his theory of man's spiritual hatred of his daimon. He is torn between love of his true "Self' and hatred for his daimonic obsession. Yeats notes:

> it may be 'sexual love, which is founded upon spiritual hate,' is an image of the warfare of man and Daimon. [9]

Cuchulain recognizes Conlaech as the objective image of his love for Aoife and bargains for his friendship; the hero desires worldly love:

> I will give you gifts
> That Aoife'll know, and all her people know,
> To have come from me.
> My father gave me this. [showing cloak]
> He came to try me, rising up at dawn
> Out of the cold dark of the rich sea.
> . . . It was woven
> By women of the Country-under-Wave
> Out of the fleeces of the sea. O! tell her
> I was afraid, or tell her what you will.
> (11. 541-550)

For Cuchulain, if he were killed by Conlaech, the result would be Aoife's absolute victory and his complete union with her. But the hero kills Conlaech. His objective emotions are still strong enough to return him to his objective existence. It is the fool that tells Cuchulain that he has killed his son. For Cuchulain it is only a confirmation:

> He [Fintain] said a while ago that he heard Aoife boast that she'd never but the one lover, and he the only man that had overcome her in battle. (11. 739-741)

---

[9] W.B. Yeats, *Mythologies*, p. 336.

Barach's aimless speech, delivering the key line in the play, impacts powerfully. Yeats continues this tremendous reverberation in the babbling of Fintain:

> Somebody is trembling, Fool! The bench
> is shaking. Why are you trembling? Is Cuchulain
> going to hurt us? It was not I who told you,
> Cuchulain. (11. 742-745)

Cuchulain's tragic irony, contrasted against the ironic ignorance of these otherworld characters, is vivid. This is the moment of Cuchulain's dramatic realization of his daimonic destiny, and it has been precipitated from the words of a fool.

Yeats concentrates the sub-plot's low-style bickering of the Fool and Blind Man in tragic contrast to the hero's intense intellect. The sub-plot, in effect, advances the action in preparation for the hero's final relevation of tragedy. Cuchulain, now in complete self-awareness, strikes out at his tyrannical external self, Conchubar, striking Conchubar's chair with his weapon:

> 'Twas you who did it — you who sat up there
> With your old rod of kingship, like a magpie
> Nursing a stolen spoon. No, not a magpie,
> A maggot that is eating up the earth. (11. 763-766)

Yeats, in his image of the "maggot that is eating up the earth," hints darkly at a universal illness of mankind which he believed was coming into prominance in his age: the onslaught of man's materialistic greed into the sacred boundaries of his soul.

Although the hero, in his symbolic fight against the waves, sees the crown of Conchubar on every wave (11. 779-780), and fights valiantly, his objective waves overwhelm him. Momentarily, Cuchulain succumbs to

his objectivity. This is not important. Cuchulain now, after the killing of his son, has total self-awareness of his heroic destiny, realized in the agony of his heart's loss. In reality Aoife has won. Cuchulain, like Lear, will rise out of his heart's defeat to inner triumph.

To depict the internal conflict of man's intellect is to attempt the ineffable. Only through analogy and symbolism, interpreted through imaginative knowledge, can internal values be projected.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is brought to his moment of crisis through the prophecies of the Weird Sisters. *Lear* achieves enlightenment by means of an inner monologue, initiated in heartbreak and madness, and driven by the nonsensical words of his fool. Yeats's *Deirdre* intuits and resolves her heroic destiny from the vague whisperings of three wandering women, and in Yeats's play, *On Baile's Strand*, Cuchulain's final recognition of his true Self comes through the chance remark of a fool.

In all four plays, the main thematic stress is carried by sub-characters possessing little attachment to the protagonist's external existence; yet they are portrayed as conveyors of esoteric knowledge. The conclusion of this paper will attempt to expose and justify both Shakespeare's and Yeats's reasoning underlying this approach.

CHAPTER III

PROSPERO AND CUCHULAIN

(NATURE AND SPIRIT)

On Baile's Strand concludes with Cuchulain, the hero-king, still in conflict, his inner being torn between primary and antithetical states. Yeats continues Cuchulain's search for fulfillment in *The Only Jealousy of Emer* (1919), and culminates the trilogy with *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939).

Cuchulain's attainment of *Unity of Being* in *The Death of Cuchulain* compares with Prospero's resolved existence in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, (1611).

Prospero's existential crisis, objectifies in a stormy tempest, very like Cuchulain's waves of objectivity, which the hero fought at Baile's Strand, and will fight again, until he realizes reconciliation of his conflicting selves.

Both Shakespeare and Yeats emphasize the importance of Time in these plays, and in a similar train of thought. Shakespeare constantly refers to Time, from the opening when Prospero tells Miranda "Tis time I should inform thee" (I,i,23) to his scene of compassion (V,i,1 ff.). Shakespeare's time is linear. Prospero must acknowledge his need for mercy, even as he pardons all. Yeats's time is cyclical. Emer, in *The Only Jealousy of Emer* relinquishes Cuchulain's love to break the Sidhe's hold on his intellect, thus returning him to his external primary state:

> There is still a moment left; cry out, cry out!
> Renounce him, and her power is at an end.
> (11. 294-295)

In *The Death of Cuchulain*, Aoife, the hero's daimonic other-self, confronts Cuchulain. The hero is in a subjective trance, and aware that his time has come for fulfillment of his inner Self. Here too, the emphasis lies on Time:

> Aoife: That time was long ago,
> And now it is my time. I have come to kill you.
> (1. 99)

Although differing in mode of Time, all three plays contain one common factor. Prospero and Cuchulain need Time to purify their contingent selves, and the basic requisites are identical in all three works to achieve this purification: they are love, compassion and forgiveness, on a universal level.

In *The Tempest* the repetitive references to Time are justified in the last act, as Shakespeare weaves a continuity from the sixth hour deliverance of Jesus in reunification with the Holy Trinity to Prospero's dramatic realization of his true Self. He attains this state in an environment of *Order* and with scriptural references:

> Prospero: Now does my project gather to a head:
> My charms crack not; my spirits obey; and Time
> Goes upright with his carriage. How's the day?
>
> Ariel: On the sixt hour, at which time, my lord,
> You said our work should cease.
>
> Prospero: I did say so,
> When first I rais'd the tempest. Say, my spirit,
> How fares the King and 's followers? (V,i,1 ff.)

Ariel's reference to the sixt hour, and his plea for forgiveness of the Milan assembly, establishes Ariel as Prospero's higher Reason. Prospero's humanity is moved to compassion:

> Ariel: Your charm so strongly works 'em
> That if you now beheld them, your affections
> Would become tender.
>
> Prospero: . . . and shall not myself
> One of their kind, . . . be kindlier moved then
> thou art? (V,i,17 ff.)

Prospero struggles to reconciliation of being in a tempest-torn island-trance. This struggle, as in the Cuchulain plays, is in his intellect, and, similar to Cuchulain, the warring states of Prospero's being project themselves through otherworld characters. As well, a minor theme of fertility accompanies the major theme of Prospero's inner fulfillment. These otherworld characters need not be allegorized. Their actions clearly contribute thematically to the necessary action which leads to Prospero's reconciliation of selves.

Prospero's daimonic partner, Ariel, parallels Cuchulain's daimonic self, Fand, the seductive *Woman of the Sidhe*. His wistful "Do you love me, master? no?" (IV,i,48) springs from a similar source as Fand's seductive question to Cuchulain:

> Could you that have loved many a woman
> That did not reach beyond the human,
> Lacking a day to be complete,
> Love one that, though her heart can beat,
> Lacks it but by an hour or so? (ll. 234-238)

Because both characters are integral portions of the protagonists' minds, their wistful need for love springs from the protagonists' torn natures: they would love only the spirit, but their objective worlds draw them back to it.

Ariel, in Yeatsian terms, is Prospero's *Creative Mind*, which Yeats recognizes as *Imagination*.[1] Ariel is Prospero's magic — but he is magic out of sixteenth-century concepts of *Order*.

Prospero's earthly nature, Caliban, parallels Cuchulain's earthly loves, Emer and his mistress, Eithne Inguba. In Yeatsian terms they indicate the essential self. These characters concur with Yeats's theory of total being, which demands recognition of man's physical nature, as an essential agent in the process of his purgatorial gyrating ascent to purification of his *contingent* self. Caliban possesses capabilities of love and creative concepts of beauty:

> When thou cam'st first
> Thou strok'st me and made much of me,
> . . . and then I lov'd thee and show'd thee
> all the qualities of th' isle (I,ii,332 ff.)

Caliban is Nature as Prospero once viewed it — Nature for Nature's self — absorbed by his senses. When Prospero replies:

> Thou most lying slave, . . . I have us'd thee . . .
> with human care, and lodg'd thee in mine own cell,
> till thou didst seek to violate
> The honor of my child (I,ii,344 ff.)

he is acknowledging that his Reason and the consuming obsession to realize his potential Self has forced him to constrain his baser nature. The "honor of [his] child" is Miranda. She represents the essence of Prospero's creativity. Miranda is a child of Prospero's nature too — but she is nature endowed with Reason, not merely Understanding.

---

[1] See Appendix One, p. 87.

Ariel and Caliban are unreal, devoid of inductive/deductive reason. Yet they constitute the play's thematic matrix. Ariel is Prospero's inner voice urging him to creative bondage. Caliban is Prospero's bondage to the flesh. He is the "born devil, on whose nature Nurture can never stick" (IV,i,188). Still, Prospero accepts him: "this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" (V,i,275). Thus Shakespeare through two otherworld beings, dramatizes Prospero's physical and spiritual conflict.

The poet's cloud and sleep imagery also contributes toward the otherworld atmosphere. In this respect Prospero's island-exile is analogous to Cuchulain's death-trance in *Emer*. As Prospero resolves his inner conflicts, this imagery recedes: the "cloud-capp'd tow'rs . . . are melted into air" (IV,i,150ff.) Prospero renounces his magic as Cuchulain eventually renounces all his objective ties:

> and when I have requir'd
> Some heavenly music (which even now I do)
> To work mine end upon their senses that
> This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
> Bury it certain fadoms in the earth,
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound
> I'll drown my book. (V,i,51 ff.)

The significant point is that they both, by their free will, determine the time for renunciation. This is consistent with Yeats's theory that the daimonic impulse drives a being's *Creative Mind* to a confrontation with his true *Body of Fate*.[2] This confrontation necessarily involves superhuman renunciation.

---

[2]W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, p. 84.

The central pattern of the play focusses on an *Ordered* existence, one which allows for humanity in all its transgressions. For Prospero finally confronts his own mortality: ". . . retire me to my Milan, where Every third thought shall be my grave" (V,i,311 ff.), as he simultaneously forgives the repentant Caliban, who pleads:

> Ay, that I will; and I'll be *wise* hereafter,
> And seek for *grace*. What a thrice-double ass
> Was I to take this drunkard for a god (Italics mine)
> And worship this dull fool! (V,i,295 ff.)

These are strange words indeed for Shakespeare's otherworld low inhabitant to employ from the depths of his conscience: where did Caliban cultivate the words *wise* and *grace*? Does Ariel, in his plea for forgiveness, and Caliban, in his vow of repentance, constitute the final daimonic thrust which ejects Prospero from his "island" to "Milan" again? Certainly Prospero intuits (through dialogue with conflicting states within himself) that true wisdom originates in a unified concept of the essence of our reality and that genuine grace stems from within; and *The Tempest* closes on a protagonist who recognizes his transitory nature which must necessarily defeat his ego, in order to strengthen him for a reasonable coexistence with his alter-ego — the daimon of his internal Self.

At the conclusion of *On Baile's Strand*, Cuchulain, bewitched by Conchubar's Druids (in legend) fell while fighting the waves. In thematic essence, the human waves of his objectivity engulf him. The legend and poetry are both exquisite. Yeats, however, adapts the legend to his metaphysical beliefs, and our concern is this visionary theme, that of man's daimonic desire for fulfillment.

Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* devotes a chapter to "The Only Son of Aoife," with an ensuing sub-title "Cuchulain and the Waves." The last paragraph reads:

> Then he fought with the waves three days and three nights, till he fell from hunger and weakness, so that some men said he got his death there. But it was not there he got his death, but on the plain of Muirthemne. [3]

This is important to establish here. Cuchulain is, in fact, not dead in *The Only Jealousy of Emer*. He is in a trance.

Cuchulain's "trance" corresponds to Prospero's "exile." Their extreme subjectivity prohibits any interaction with the external world. Prospero's obsession with his books rendered him a "stranger [to his state], being transported and rapt in secret studies" (I,ii,76-77). The pitch of the trance is such that memory itself intrudes on the daimonic possession of the mind. Helen Hennessey Vendler distinguishes the mind in this state from death as:

---

[3]Gregory, *Cuchulain*, p. 319.

> That constellation of images represents the mind in aesthetic suspension; and all the purgatorial terms used in relation to the Ghost of Cuchulain (who, incidentally, is never explicitly said to be dead, although he is "among the dead") have no reference to real death at all. [4]

This is the situation of Cuchulain in all the Cuchulain plays, culminating in *The Death of Cuchulain*. It is the love/hate duo present in his soul/mind, which precipitates the hero's 'trance-in-death' and the consequent battles for his soul. Yeats in various instances makes it clear that he recognizes this tendency to self-persecution as essential to heroic intuition concerning one's Self:

> The Daimon, by using his mediatorial shades, brings man again and again to the place of choice, heightening temptation that the choice may be as final as possible, . . . leading his victim to whatever among works not impossible is the most difficult. [5]

> The other self, the anti-self or the antithetical self, as one may choose to name it, comes but to those who are no longer deceived, whose passion is reality. [6]

> We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry. [7]

and finally, this image of the Yeatsian symbolic 'sexual love':

> . . . it may be 'sexual love,' which is 'founded upon spiritual hate,' is an image of the warfare of man and Daimon; [8]

---

[4] Vendler, *Yeats's Vision*, p. 223.

[5] W.B. Yeats, *Mythologies*, p. 361.

[6] Ibid., p. 331.

[7] Ibid., p. 331.

[8] Ibid., p. 116.

The Only Jealousy of Emer further develops Cuchulain's journey of the self. Bricriu, God of Strife, manipulates objective domination of Cuchulain's mind, just as his counterpart Conchubar did in *On Baile's Strand*. Cuchulain again gyrates toward his secular existence, forsaking (temporarily) his Irish Muse, Fand. This gyration towards the hero's internal or external selves, and the avenues wherewith insight occurs, are respectively objectified and delineated by means of Yeats's 'otherworld' figures from Irish lore.

Yeats begins *Emer* with the "white frail bird" of subjective intellect buried in the "dark furrows" upon the "ploughed land." The whole structure of man's inner loneliness is paralleled to a "woman's beauty" — "that loveliness" — "a fragile, exquisite pale shell" and then this "loveliness" is "wounded and bloodied" whilst it is "dragged into being" (11. 15-28). Thus, the poet creates the seductive Muse, Fand. Simultaneously he insinuates Bricriu, Cuchulain's terrible masked dichotomy. The Figure of Cuchulain, masked in Bricriu's image, eventually thwarts Fand's daimonic union with her love. Significantly (for the trilogy is progressing) the struggle intensifies, compared to *On Baile's Strand*. The struggle endures longer, and Cuchulain's obsession builds to heroic proportions. This thematic structure is reasonable in terms of Yeats's Wheel of Life.

Yeats identifies Cuchulain in the beginning as "dead of swooning" and Emer later tells Eithne Inguba, Cuchulain's mistress, (and the play's symbol of sexual conflict), that "He is not dead." Emer says: "It is hard to make them hear amid their darkness." She pleads with

Cuchulain's young mistress to lure him back from the trance:

> I am his wife, but if you cry aloud
> With the sweet voice that is so dear to him
> He cannot help but listen (11. 97-99)

Eithne Inguba represents the hero's passionate ties to his physical existence, but sexual love in this instance horrifies Cuchulain's mistress. She shudders as she kisses the figure on the bed:

> It is no man
> I felt some evil thing that dried my heart
> When my lips touched it. (11. 139-140)

For Cuchulain's objective form, Bricriu, is all that remains of the hero's objectivity for Eithne Inguba, and he is horrible lust, discord, and hate. Yeats confirms Bricriu's deformed Hunchback status:

> Look at that arm
> That arm is withered to the very socket.
> (11. 142-143)

Bricriu knows that Emer has lost Cuchulain. Emer desires one thing only: Cuchulain's return to normal existence. Cuchulain's subjectivity, his adherence to the dictates of his soul, his insatiable need for inner knowledge, his love for Fand, — this is Emer's only jealousy. Eithne Inguba is Emer's ally. She is only another portion of Cuchulain's earthly memory. She is transitory. Fand is eternal. Emer knows this. She speaks of the Sidhe woman, Aoife, (Fand's counterpart in *On Baile's Strand*), as the woman Cuchulain loved ". . . as no man ever loved." Emer fears the Sidhe, the people of the wind. She tells Bricriu:

> You people of the wind
> Are full of lying speech and mockery:
> I have not fled your face. (11. 153-154)

But Bricriu bargains:

> You spoke but now of the mere chance that some day
> You'd be the apple of his eye again
> When old and ailing, but renounce that chance
> And he shall live again. (11. 166-169)

Why does Bricriu ask for Emer's renunciation of Cuchulain? Bricriu aims to deprive Fand of complete fulfillment with her daimonic love, Cuchulain. He also desires Emer's heart's agony. He is the false deformity of Phase 26, signified in the Hunchback's self-abandonment. He must know that he can create his own victims. This is his perverted self-fulfillment. If Emer renounces Cuchulain's love, Cuchulain will revert to his endless existence, his Wheel of Life. As Bricriu is the God of Discord, he can only perform through externalized man, for objectivity is necessary to strife. Cuchulain, in subjective trance lies beyond the external, beyond Bricriu, beyond flux and memory.

Emer clings to these very facets of objective existence. She refuses Bricriu:

> I have two joyous thoughts, two things I prize,
> A hope, a memory, and now you claim that hope.
> (11. 178-179)

Bricriu, seeing Emer's blindness to the hero's obsession, reveals Cuchulain to her, bewitched, crouching, and shading his eyes to shut out old memories (Emer and his objective reality). Fand, the Sidhe, hovers over him. Cuchulain clearly recognizes Fand as his daimon in lunar Phase fifteen, and Yeats's imagery of light and the "labouring crescent" confirms the fifteenth night:

> Who is it stands before me there
> Shedding such light from limb and hair
> As when the moon, complete at last
> With every labouring crescent past,
> And lonely with extreme delight,
> Flings out upon the fifteenth night? (11. 220-225)

Once again, as in *Baile's Strand*, the hero confronts his incomplete Muse, longing for his kiss which will fulfill her. Fand tempts him:

> Because I long I am not complete.
> What pulled your hands about your feet,
> Pulled down your head upon your knees,
> And hid your face? (11. 226-229)

Cuchulain admits to old memories, revealing his inner conflict. Fand reminds him of his obligations to his daimonic psyche: she refers to 'beauty' as the only desirable. Fand's 'beauty' is immortal Truth:

> Then kiss my mouth. Though memory
> Be beauty's bitterest enemy
> I have no dread, for at my kiss
> Memory on the moment vanishes:
> Nothing but beauty can remain. (11. 254-258)

Cuchulain gyrates within an instant's touch to Fand's mouth. Then he reverts to Emer and "impure memory":

> O Emer, Emer! (1. 268)
>
> Fand: So then it is she
> Made you impure with memory. (11. 269)

Fand presses, taunting Cuchulain with his destined immortal existence with Truth; the Truth that demands eyes washed of earthly desire:

> . . . what could make you fit to wive
> With flesh and blood, being born to live
> Where no one speaks of broken troth,
> For all have washed out of their eyes
> Wind-blown dirt of their memories
> To improve their sight? (11. 281-285)

Cuchulain succumbs to his inner Self, Fand, and begs for her kiss: "Your mouth, your mouth!" (1. 286), but Bricriu intercedes, urging Emer to renounce his love or lose him. Emer cries out her

renunciation and Cuchulain wakes, torn from Fand's kiss, in the arms of his mistress, Eithne Inguba. The hero gyrates, in this sequence, into his objective existence. But, in terms of his mortality, all is temporal. Cuchulain's daimonic love will continue to tempt him.

The closing dialogues before Fand's dance of despair dramatize the conflict by means of comparable opposites. In the instant's breath between Fand's kiss and Emer's denial, the hero desperately attempts a reconcilation of his two worlds — to justify his vacillation. He brutally rebuffs Fand's love, with a significant allusion to her "fool's face," a Yeatsian nod to Fand's non-secular truth:

> That face, though fine enough, is a fool's face
> And there's a folly in the deathless Sidhe
> Beyond man's reach. (11. 288n ff.)

Then, repentent, Cuchulain tries to explain away his mortal ties:

> Forgive me those rough words,
> How could you know
> That man is held to those whom he has loved
> By pain they gave, or pain that he has given —
> Intricacies of pain. (11. 288y ff.)

Fand rejects his objective ties for she knows no objectivity. She maintains her relentless pursuit:

> I am ashamed
> That being of the deathless shades I chose
> A man so knotted to impurity. (11. 288cc ff.)

Eventually Fand admits defeat, and attacks Bricriu in a bitter confrontation, accusing him of treachery:

> To you that have no living light, but dropped
> From a last leprous crescent of the moon (refers to 26th phase)
> I owe it all. (11. 288ee ff.)

Bricriu merely replies that he had "tangled [Cuchulain's] life" for her purposes, then perversely admits he had lured the hero from Fand's arms because of his inherent need to corrupt: "You know what being I am."

In the closing dialogue all is dichotomy — indecision: there is no solution. Cuchulain is caught on the horns of his twin desires: his two selves. The song recalls Cuchulain's too-human passions and vulnerability to human love:

> He that loved the best
> May turn from a statue
> His too human breast. (11. 323-325)

The statue, Fand, then dances her dance of despair. All seems lost. Yet, it is these closing dichotomies and the song which recognizes Cuchulain's objective defeat, that set the scene for his final heroic triumph and his song of immortality in *The Death of Cuchulain*.

Yeats brings his Cuchulain saga to a close in *The Death of Cuchulain*. It presents, in legendary form, the story of Cuchulain's actual death. Considered in terms of Yeatsian *Unity of Being* the play might have been more aptly entitled The *Birth* of Cuchulain, for it presents the total eclipse of Cuchulain's external self to his internal Self, or his purified contingent Self. The hero finally achieves *Unity of Being*, and, as such, the Cuchulain in this last play is vastly changed. He is eager for his heroic fate. He is "already armed" (1. 10). He has accepted his conflict.

The play has received criticism because Cuchulain is passive — not rebellious; he is forgiving and resigned, as if in a "trance." But why should this be strange? He is verging on daimonic unity, and Yeats clearly expresses the hero's *Condition of Fire*, and the soul's attitude when consumed within itself:

> . . . one is furthest from symbols when one is busy doing this or that, but the soul moves among symbols and unfolds in symbols when trance, or madness, or deep meditation has withdrawn it from every impulse but its own. [9]
>
> It is only after years that we begin the supreme work, the adapting of our energies to a chosen end, the disciplining of ourselves. [10]

What then is this 'supreme work', this 'disciplining' — what else but abetting the purification of one's contingent self? It is the elimination of "every impulse but [one's] own." This elimination process must include eradication of memories and old hurts and therefore means forgetfulness of our trespassers. This disciplining is total forgiveness for all; for anything less than total forgiveness implies retention of objective thought.

This total forgiveness was the achievement of Prospero's "deep meditation". Prospero refers to this "disciplining" as the exercise of his "nobler reason":

> Though with high wrongs I am strook to th' quick,
> Yet, with my nobler reason, 'gainst my fury
> Do I take part. The rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance. They being penitent,
> The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
> Not a frown further. (V,i,26 ff.)

This is the "deep meditation" Cuchulain undergoes prior to his daimonic union. It constitutes Cuchulain's release from objective reason, and the unity found in his *imaginative* intellect. Yeats, in his essays, distinguishes reason from higher reason, with reference to Blake's thought:

---

[9] W.B. Yeats, *E&I*, p. 162.

[10] W.B. Yeats, *Autobiography*, p. 322.

> Blake, who deified imaginative freedom,
> held 'corporeal reason' for the most accursed
> of things, because it makes the imagination revolt
> from the sovereignty of beauty and pass under
> the sovereignty of corporeal law, and this is 'the
> captivity in Egypt.' [11]

And, just as the last Cuchulain receives criticism, so the Old Man's Prologue is questioned by some critics. Why the harangue, the bitterness, the beggar image, the brutal language? Did Yeats need the Old Man? Should one discount his 'wisdom'? The Old Man's prologue is fragmentary. He rants on about old names, useless sound, the music of beggars, a dance, severed heads, and the dead. And he "spits." This is madness. But then this play concerns *madness*. Cuchulain scorns all reason but his highest soul's *imagination*. Cuchulain scorns all secular knowledge. Cuchulain scorns all objective art. All but Truth. He desires the intuitive Truth of the Self. Yeats's Cuchulain is like the Old Man in the poem "Why should not Old Men be mad?" —

> And when they know what old books tell
> And that no better can be had
> Know why an old man should be mad. (*Poems*, p. 625)

The otherwise unidentified Old Man, in his ranting, distinguishes the genuine from the sham, (as Lear came to do); rejects the approval of the world, (as Prospero came to do); and he seeks the timeless (like Cuchulain who would "leave names upon the harp." The Old Man is kin to the poet in Yeats's poem "A Coat" whose song is [worn] in the world's eyes:

> Song let them take it
> For there's more enterprise
> In walking naked. (*Poems*, p. 320)

---

[11] W.B. Yeats, *E&I*, p. 139.

The Old Man is Yeats's otherworld projection of Cuchulain's intellect in 'trance', for the hero's intellect now seeks only intuitive Truth. And the Old Man, in dramatic terms, is a true otherworld character: his appearance is ambiguous, he owes no allegiance to vulgar time, and he is *mad*. But, the Old Man is wise.

The opening scenes of *The Death of Cuchulain* differ from *On Baile's Strand* and *Emer* in that they lack conflict. In *Baile's Strand* Cuchulain fought against the waves of objectivity to the point of coma. In *Emer* he vacillated in an agony of internal conflict, again to a pitch of 'death-in-life.' But the last Cuchulain does not retaliate against Maeve. Rather he is resigned to fight and intuits his defeat. He does not condemn his mistress, even though he thinks she deceives him. He forgives her. He gives her away to another man. Cuchulain is done with his earthly ties. Eithne Inguba recognizes this:

> You're not the man I loved,
> That violent man forgave no treachery.
> If, thinking what you think, you can forgive,
> It is because you are about to die. (11. 60-62)

It is worthwhile reiterating at this point that the words "you are about to die," in Yeatsian terms, do not refer to physical death. Eithne Inguba, as a dramatic image of his objectivity, must recognize the hero's consummation of self. In the metaphysical context of the play, Cuchulain is dead to all earthly desire. The farewell to Eithne Inguba equates the hero's rejection of his physical nature.

After a darkened stage, the next scene reveals Cuchulain wounded. Aoife, the *Woman of the Sidhe*, enters, and Cuchulain's long scene of his physical death begins.

In the legend, Cuchulain expresses resignation to his 'death':

> . . . Then Dechtire tried hard to persuade him to go back and to wait till he would have the help of Conall. 'I will not wait,' he said, 'for anything you can say; . . . for a great name outlasts life.' [12]

The legend therefore stressed immortality. The Sidhe Muse, Aoife, first appears in *At the Hawk's Well* where Cuchulain yearns to drink of the "waters of immortality." The Old Man, Cuchulain's self-styled protector in this encounter, warns him of the Sidhe's tenacity:

> Old Man: The Woman of the Sidhe herself,
> The mountain witch, the unappeasable shadow.
> She is always flitting upon this mountain-side,
> To allure or to destroy. . . . There falls a curse
> On all who have gazed in her unmoistened eyes
> (11. 162 ff.)

Later on, Cuchulain does battle with Aoife, (as predicted by the Old Man) and in *Baile's Strand* he kills his own son (also predicted by the Old Man). The Old Man in Yeats's *Hawk's Well* represents the intellect in search for intuitive truth. The battles represent the hero's conflict between his internal and external selves. The Old Man is yet another instance of both Shakespeare's and Yeats's predilection for old age in dramatic terms of prophecy. The Old Man embodies Yeats's *Vision of Evil:* he has felt the curse of the Sidhe. He is consumed in the conflict of the 'unquiet heart.'

In *The Death of Cuchulain* the hero's recognition of Aoife indicates his yearning inwardly:

> And now I know your name,
> Aoife, the mother of my son. We met
> At the Hawk's Well under the withered trees.
> I killed him upon Baile's Strand, that is why
> Maeve parted ranks that she might let you through.
> You have a right to kill me. (11. 106 ff.)

This encounter is, objectified in physical death, Yeatsian

---

[12] Gregory, *Cuchulain*, p. 334.

Unity of Being, but it cannot be too strongly stressed that this unity is but an instant's rapture. Philosophically, it is inspiring, because of its heroic overtones. The concept of a being rising, reborn, from the ashes of defeat into a glorious knowledge of Truth is the ultimate in man's heroic hope for justification of one's worldly existence.

The Blind Man is the otherworld character chosen to kill the hero. His presence is not relevant to Cuchulain's dramatic realization, but in dramatic terms the hero must die a physical death in order to objectify his culminating experience of unity. The Blind Man's senseless brutality contrasts to Aoife's intellectual loveliness. Aoife fastens the hero to a stone with a veil of gold threads, the shimmering light symbolizing the lunar phase fifteen. The Blind Man intends to use the same paper bag he uses for chicken thieving in which to place the hero's head. The Blind Man is Yeats's Deformed Phase 26 in *A Vision* who "commits crimes, not because he wants to, . . . but because he wants to feel certain that he can . . . ." [13] Still, the hero's death is but an objectification, and Yeats carefully verbalizes Cuchulain's yearning for objective freedom in the following dialogue:

> There floats out there
> The shape that I shall take when I am dead,
> My soul's first shape, a soft feathery shape,
> And is not that a strange shape for the soul
> Of a great fighting-man?
>
> Your shoulder is there,
> This is your neck. Ah! Ah! Are you ready, Cuchulain!
>
> I say it is about to sing.
>
> (11. 178 ff.)

---

[13] W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*, p. 177.

The external worlds of protagonists in Shakespeare and Yeats vary considerably. Shakespeare creates Prospero's Milan through the protracted action-line of *The Tempest;* while the Old Man's prologue, in *The Death of Cuchulain,* briefly stages a world of "sciolists, pick-pockets and opinionated bitches." But the internal world of Prospero and that of Cuchulain, must, of necessity, be all flux. For their inner worlds constitute the soul's "tempest." Their reconciliation point is spiritual awareness after a painful journey through (and from) tempest-tossed conflict.

The dramatic interpretation for this conflict of the soul consistently centres in otherworld characters; *Macbeth's* Weird Sisters and *Deirdre's* Three Musicians; and the Fool figures in *Lear* and *Baile's Strand.* In *The Tempest,* Prospero's lower nature (Caliban, a creature who exhibits little reason) forces Prospero, faced with Caliban's limited understanding and evil, to a recognition of his own lack of human empathy; while Ariel, (another creature), is the spirit who fosters Prospero's insightful revelation.

In *The Death of Cuchulain,* a legendary fairy-vamp lures the hero to his designated *Unity of Being.* Aoife is his daimonic obsession. She is Cuchulain's inspired intellect.

An interesting comparison occurs in the Book of Job, in terms of imagery and characterization as found in Shakespeare and Yeats. Throughout the allegorical Book of Job, there are numerous references to Job's temptations as a "tempest" or like terms:

> For my sighing cometh before I eat,
> and my roarings are poured out like the waters.
> (3:24)

> The waters wear the stones: thou washest away the
> things which grow out of the dust of the earth;
> thou destroyest the hope of man. (14:19)
> (underscore in text)

> And said, (the Lord says this) Hitherto shalt thou
> come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves
> be stayed? (38:11)
> (underscore mine)

Job's "proud waves" constitute the basis for his "righteousness":

> For Job hath said, I am righteous:
> and God hath taken away my judgment. (35:5)

Job's desire for judgment (he has not yet acknowledged his need for ultimate truth) as weighed against "judgment" — is relayed in visionary language throughout:

> Then thou scarest me with dreams, and
> terrifiest me through visions:
> So that my soul chooseth strangling,
> and death rather than my life. (7:14,15)

in debate with his other primary selves:

> What ye know, the same do I know also;
> I am not inferior unto you.
> Surely I would speak to the Almighty,
> and I desire to reason with God. (13:2,3)

his inner conflict:

> I was at ease, but he [the Lord] hath broken me
> asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and
> shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark.
> (underscore in text)

This last quotation is particularly significant, for like Cuchulain, Job is aware of his destined heroic "mark."

Elihu tells Job (in sleep imagery similar to Prospero's and Cuchulain's deep meditative sleep):

> For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. (33:14-17)

Elihu is but one facet of Job's states of existence. His inner conflict (or tempest) is depicted through argument with his three "friends," allegorically the three major avenues of his reasoning process. After these three long arguments, Job's judgment (or right reason) returns, with his Lord's forgiveness, when Elihu speaks. Elihu is angry with Job for reason of his self-styled and persistent justification. He is angry with Job's three friends because they have condemned Job, and yet not provided an answer to Job's conflict (32:2,3). Elihu is younger; he is represented as being inferior in wisdom. He could be considered as a parallel figure to the fools in Shakespeare and Yeats:

> And Elihu . . . answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion. (32:6)

Who is Elihu? He is Job's finer self; he is Job's inner voice:

> My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly.
> The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. (33:3,4)

Yet, in two instances, it is confirmed that Elihu speaks from within Job; and further that his words represent God's truth:

> Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead:
> I also am formed out of the clay. (33:6)
> (underscore in text)

> For truly my words shall not be false; he that is
> perfect in knowledge is with thee. (36:4)
> (underscore in text)

Thus Elihu confirms both Shakespeare and Yeats in their view that man's ultimate destiny and perfect knowledge lies within his own intellect.

Elihu's dialogue in the Book of Job constitutes four chapters approximately; and there are forty-two chapters in the book. Yet, Elihu's dialogue immediately precedes the Lord's entrance onto Job's intellectual stage; and for purposes of dramatic emphasis and fulfillment of thematic design, it is Elihu who initiates Job's "spiritual awareness."

Spiritual awareness — perceiving the mystery of things — *Unity of Being* — all inadequately express man's search for an inner fulfillment — his odyssey to his eternal Self. Yeats, in his autobiography, recognizes that there are some men who do not reach this peak of fulfillment:

> I now know that there are men who cannot possess "Unity of Being," who must not seek it or express it — and who, so far from seeking an anti-self, a Mask that delineates a being in all things the opposite to their natural state, can but seek the suppression of the anti-self, till the natural state alone remains. [14]

---

[14] W.B. Yeats, Autobiography, p. 166.

In effect Yeats is saying that some beings are caught up in a constant whirl of non-fulfillment, non-achievement of their *contingent* Selves. Interpreted in negative terms this necessarily implies that these beings never do rise above the limits of their objectivity. Their journey of the self is incomplete. They never realize their daimonic Self.

Shakespeare's *The Life of Timon of Athens* and Yeats's *Where There is Nothing* concern two men who cannot possess *Unity of Being*: Timon and Paul Ruttledge. As an antithesis to this paper, their depiction is interesting as, in both instances, certain fundamental lacks in both characters are consistent. The plays are interesting because of another mutual distinction: both works are considered to be incomplete; Yeats's *Where There is Nothing* being withdrawn from publication and rewritten by Lady Gregory (in substance) as *The Unicorn from the Stars*, and Shakespeare's *Timon*, although now regarded as totally Shakespearean, is thought to be "an unfinished work" (p. 1441).

CHAPTER FOUR

TIMON AND PAUL RUTTLEDGE

(ILLUSIONS AND DISORDER)

J. Dover Wilson, in his 1936 lecture (Newcastle upon Tyne) stated: "He wrote, or partly wrote, a play called Timon of Athens, one of the bitterest and gloomiest reflexionsof humanity in the mirror of art in the whole of English literature." [1]

Recent criticism stresses the play's carefully structured study of a being's lack of inner resources. Although the presentation of Timon is "bitter and gloomy," the play has intriguing psychological overtones which Wilson overlooks.

The minor theme of *Timon* is man's greed and Timon's lack of self-realization. The major motif of the play is loss of control, excess, and *Disorder*. Shakespeare presents a character living a lie: Timon is obsessed with a false magnanimity towards humanity. He does not love on a personal level as Lear or Cuchulain: his whole being is directed towards his philanthropic abstraction of love for humanity. In his deluded state, Timon lies to himself. In order to justify his philanthropy, he refuses to recognize mankind's greed. The play contains lengthy dialogues, and numerous soliloquies by Timon. Yet, throughout, Shakespeare gives no indication of Timon's inner awareness. The poet shuns any inward reachings, by Timon, for ultimate realization. Shakespeare does indicate at various times Timon's awareness of a falsity in nature, but always in others. And unlike Macbeth, Deirdre, Lear or Cuchulain, this protagonist is not guided, warned, or lured to any inner fulfillment of heroic destiny.

---

[1] J. Dover Wilson, *Meaning of the Tempest* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, The Literary and Philosophical Society, 1936), p.2.

Timon has his *madness*: "He's but a mad lord" (III,vi,111), but no enlightenment ensues from this madness -- only static objectivity. This old man, Timon, differs considerably from Yeats's Old Man. Timon grows old (III,vi,61), bereft of self realization. In his deluded state he believes his "dependants." Apemantus, (Shakespeare's Philosopher/Fool figure) chides him for his concern about worldly opinions:

> He that loves to be flatter'd is
> worthy o' th' flatterer. (I,i,227)

This contrasts with Yeats's Old Man in *At the Hawk's Well*, who yearns for self-fulfillment, and is totally aware of his inner emptiness. He tells Cuchulain, speaking of the miraculous water that gives immortality:

> And do you think so great a gift is found
> By no more toil than spreading out a sail,
> And climbing a steep hill? . . . I have lain in wait
> For more than fifty years, to find it empty.
> (11.108 ff.)

Timon's Poet and Painter, determined that their respective arts present only the truth in Life, both depict a Timon in conflict. But they prove false. The Poet evaluates the painting:

> It tutors nature. Artificial strife
> Lives in these touches, livelier than life.
> (I,i,37 ff.)

But the Poet justifies the conflict in his prediction of Timon's reversal of fortune:

> When Fortune in her shift and change of mood
> Spurns down her late beloved, all his dependants
> Which labor'd after him to the mountain's top
> Even on their knees and hands, let him slip down,
> Not one accompanying his declining foot.
> (I,i,84 ff.)

The Poet's depiction of Timon is ironic. Timon is personally convinced that his whole being, and for that matter humanity itself, is involved in a euphoric state of reciprocal love. The Poet and the Painter, although they are false friends, do see the truth concerning Timon. The last half of the play reverses the irony, for here Shakespeare reveals that while the artists were realistic concerning Timon, they are totally false to themselves. They are but instruments of greed. Upon hearing of Timon's discovery of new gold they begin scheming again to share in his new wealth, regardless of their integrity:

> Poet: What have you now to present unto him?
> Painter: Nothing at this time for my visitation;
> Only I will promise him an excellent piece,
> Poet: I must serve him so too: tell him of an intent
> That's coming toward him. (V,i,17 ff.)

This imagery of greed, value and figures is established by Shakespeare at the outset, and maintained. Everything has its price for Timon. All value is expressed in terms of quantity or growth. All value is objective:

> Poet: I have not seen you long, how goes the world?
> Painter: It wears, sir, as it grows. (I,i,3 ff.)

The prisoner has his ransom:

> Timon: I will send his ransom
> And being enfranchis'd, bid him come to me.
> (I,i,106 ff.)

The daughter has her price for marriage:

> Timon: Give him thy daughter;
> What you bestow, in him I'll counterpoise,
> And make him weigh with her. (I,i,144 ff.)

The senators from Athens know well how to express their love to Timon:

> Ay, even such heaps and sums of love and wealth
> As shall to thee blot out what wrongs were theirs,
> And write in thee the figures of their love,
> Ever to read them thine. (V,i,152 ff.)

This value theme defines Timon's excessiveness, whether in terms of actual content or in terms of his expansive idealism concerning humanity. For Timon there is no *golden mean* — no moderation. All is objective plethora:

> He pours it out: Plutus, the god of gold,
> Is but his steward. No meed but he repays
> Sevenfold above itself; no gift to him
> But breeds the giver a return exceeding
> All use of quittance. (I,i,276 ff.)

Apemantus refers to Jesus' love feast and warns Timon of hypocrisy. But this is ironical, for Apemantus himself knows no moderation:

> . . . what a number of men eats Timon, and he sees 'em not!
> . . . so many dip their meat in one man's blood,
> . . . now parts bread with him,
> . . . is the readiest man to kill him . . .
> (I,ii,39 ff.)

Timon refuses to concede there could be a false Judas within his roster of friends. His grace before the banquet of sensuality reflects his excessive misplaced love — a love which serves to gratify his objective-centred self:

> . . . We are born to do benefits; and what better or
> properer can we call our own than the riches of
> our friends? O, what a precious comfort 'tis
> to have so many like brothers commanding one
> another's fortunes! O, joy's e'en made away ere't
> can be born! Mine eyes cannot hold our water, methinks,
> To forget their faults, I drink to you.
> (I,ii,10 ff.)

Timon's tears foretell his next banquet: a banquet shorn of all pleasure, wherein he serves only water, as an indication of his scorn for mankind. It is a complete reversal of the Christian love feast.

Timon's fortune falls, and his fellow-men fail him. Caphis provides a true picture of mankind's reciprocal attitude (and differing value of love and honor than that of Timon) as he orders his servant to collect his dues from Timon:

> I love and honor him,
> But must not break my back to heal his finger.
> (II,i,23 ff.)

Shakespeare now brings into play the "Three Strangers," one named Hostilius. They are not identified, and literally appear from nowhere. Yet they are not otherworld types, and do not present Timon with any guiding prophecy. They serve to bridge the period between Timon's financial ruin and his estrangement from men and to predict the paucity of human charity. They cannot tutor Timon regarding subjective insight, for Timon entertains no inwardness:

> Why this is the world's soul, and just of the same piece
> Is every flatterer's sport. Who can call him
> His friend that dips in the same dish? (III,ii,64 ff.)

The term "flatterer" above was employed by Shakespeare in Act I when Apemantus warned Timon of flatterers.

The Stranger can only predict, ostensibly for the audience, that

> Men must learn now with pity to dispense,
> For policy sits above conscience. (III, ii, 85 ff.)

Shakespeare does provide the reason for the Stranger's existence in the name "Hostilius." The Latin meaning is "victim or sacrifice" (hosti-a-ae), and Timon is to be sacrificed to his own illusions.

Stripped of his illusions, Timon does not moderate his concepts of humanity, nor negotiate their faults. He completely reverts to total misanthropy. His banquet of water, a table of nothing for nothing, is preceded with his grace which clearly indicates his new state of non-empathy:

> For these my present friends,
> as they are to me nothing,
> so in nothing bless them, and
> to nothing they are welcome. (III,vi,82 ff.)

Nor does Timon relinquish his misanthropy, or relent to an inward state of forgiveness:

> And grant, as Timon grows, his hate may grow
> To the whole race of mankind, high and low!
> Amen. (IV, i, 39 ff.)

Again, Shakespeare carries the objective imagery of quantity forward: even Timon's hate must 'grow.' These words form the closing lines to Timon's vicious soliloquy which begins the second half of the play. This soliloquy stressing his hatred for men, is an absolute picture of *Disorder*. This soliloquy mirrors the *Disorder* in Timon's soul, fostered there in neglect for reasons of his own lack of inner awareness. *Order*, being so important to the Shakespearian age, was a prime indication of the characterization of a protagonist. Shakespeare has, therefore, clearly ordered the existential crisis of Timon for his audience. But Timon does not cope with his crisis. No

metamorphosis occurs as in *The Tempest*. Timon remains firm in his absolute objectivity. All of the earth-root imagery of the play's second half confirms Timon's external fixation — whether in love or in hate with the world, Timon is firmly rooted in the world:

> Therefore be abhorr'd
> All feasts, societies, and throngs of men!
> His semblable, yea, himself, Timon disdains;
> Destruction fang mankind! Earth, yield me roots!
> (digging)
> (IV,iii,20 ff.)

Flavius, bemoaning Timon's condition, concedes that Timon is "brought low by his own heart" (IV,ii, l. 37), and it is this concession which we might expect is the play's turning-point, where Timon's concerns now would centre in his internal self; but the play does not take this direction. Rather, Timon rejects the friendship of Alcibiades and Apemantus. The fool/philosopher tells Timon that he has always lacked the "golden mean":

> The middle of humanity thou never knewest,
> but the extremity of both ends. (IV,iii,300)

Timon, in a revealing statement, says to Apemanthus:

> And what a beast art thou already,
> that seest not thy loss in transformation!
> (IV,iii, l. 344)

This is Timon's tragedy, a lack of inner sight, and the poet uses the verb 'sees' to accentuate Timon's lack of awareness. Timon can recognize Apemantus' own lack of empathetic love for men. He cannot conceive of his own necessary inner illumination.

Shakespeare carries the earthbound imagery of Timon through to his death:

> Come not to me again, but say to Athens,
> Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
> Upon the beached verge of the salt flood,
> Who once a day with his embossed froth
> The turbulent surge shall cover. (V,i,214 ff.)

In metaphysical terms, this can be interpreted as the "surge" of Timon's objectivity submerging his immortal subjective intellect. The senators note Timon's objective preoccupation in a brief, but significant line:

> His discontents are unremovably
> Coupled to nature. (V,i, 1. 225)

Nature, in this instance, is no more than objective earth.

Timon's epitaph expresses Shakespeare's major theme: the total lack of Timon's subjectivity. Timon's Reason has been consumed in the fire of his hate. He has lost his soul (intellect):

> Here lies a wretched corse,
> of wretched soul bereft;
> Seek not my name; (V,iv,69 ff.)

It was Cuchulain that coupled his glorious name with his immortality. Timon has refused to acknowledge his own name. The reverse of Cuchulain, who achieves a union with his subjective Self in an instant of absolute Truth, Timon achieves a union with his objectivity, soulless and nameless.

The Life of Timon of Athens cannot be viewed as an heroic odyssey to fulfillment of Timon's complete being, and this may explain why some have considered the play incomplete. *Timon* can be viewed as a fine study of man caught on the horns of his objectivity, forever. In this respect, Shakespeare has drawn a complete portrayal as that of Macbeth, who meets his ultimate evil destiny; or Lear, who acknowledges

his humanity; for Timon continues on his relentless objective path, and fulfills a destiny of nothingness.

W. B. Yeats wrote *Where There is Nothing* in 1902, and candidly acknowledges Paul's extreme detachment from the world:

> People love Paul because they find in him a certain strength, a certain abundance. This abundance comes from him in the first three acts with a kind of hard passion, but his five years in the monastery as I understand him fills him with dreams, and reverie, and detaches him from the things about which men are passionate. [2] (*Plays*, p. 1167)

Yeats later withdrew the play from circulation, and rewrote it under the new title *The Unicorn from the Stars*. Paul Ruttledge in *Where There is Nothing* and Timon in Shakespeare's *The Life of Timon of Athens* both exhibit characters rigidly disciplined to their ego-obsessions. Neither is capable, because of this discipline, of achieving that intuitive knowledge gained through *imagination* necessary for insight into one's true Self. Such extreme discipline prevents passionate insight, which evolves from man's sensual experience, in part, — the pain and pleasure of loving and hating — or, in Yeatsian terms, from the "unquiet heart." Neither Timon or Paul expose them-

---

[2] W.B. Yeats, in his essay "William Blake and the Imagination," writes: "The reason, and by the reason he (Blake) meant deductions from the observations of the senses, binds us to mortality because it binds us to the senses, and divides us from each other by showing us our clashing interests; but imagination divides us from mortality by the immortality of beauty, and binds us to each other by opening the secret doors of all hearts. . . . Passions, because most living, are most holy — and this was a scandalous paradox in his (Blake's) time — and man shall enter eternity borne upon their wings." (*E&I*, pps. 112 ff.)

selves to the completeness of life. Hence a conclusion: failing to absorb the complete meaning of their existence, they lack the prior knowledge from which evolves inner truth.

Both plays parallel one another in structure, although the order of the theme is reversed. *Timon* begins with a protagonist full of philanthropic delusions and ends with a dedicated misanthropist. Timon loses all his material possessions and dies, hating and unrepentant. *Nothing* begins with a protagonist full of misanthropic delusions and ends with a character labouring under a misguided, abstracted ideal of love for humanity. Paul dies desiring only martyrdom — the "second freedom — the irresponsibility of the Saints" (l. 401 ff.). Paul is abandoned at his death by his fellow monks and dies in the company of beggars. (Compare the similarity of Jesus here: dying, abandoned by his apostles, and in the company of the Roman rabble).

Neither protagonist exhibits the quality necessary for complete fulfillment of their existence. There is no purgatorial renunciation by Timon of his enmity. No forgiveness for his fellow-man. And, there is no objective concrete action by Paul in order that he might guide his fellow-man to achieve a relationship with his God. Paul exhibits only passive subjectivity. In his narrow adherence to the "joyful" element in his unique faith, Paul lacks a *Vision of Evil* and thus, in Yeatsian metaphysics, is incomplete: "We begin to live when we have conceived life as tragedy." [3]

---

[3] W.B. Yeats, *Autobiography*, p. 128.

Timon of Athens is rooted to earth, and as discussed in the above analysis of the play, the imagery confirms his existential state. Paul's intellect is totally divorced from the world; and Yeats establishes and maintains this imagery throughout:

> . . . if you could see their minds instead of their bodies. (I, 1. 17)
>
> As I can't leap from cloud to cloud I want to wander from road to road. (I,11. 350 ff.)
>
> Let us send messengers everywhere to tell the people to stop working, and then the world may come to an end. He spoke of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Perhaps it would be a good thing to end these one by one. (III,1. 190 ff.)

Yeats establishes Paul's lack of human empathy early:

> Of course I am only talking in parables. I think all the people I meet are like farmyard creatures, they have forgotten their freedom, their human bodies are a disguise, a pretence they keep up to deceive one another. (I,11. 97 ff.)

Yet, in the same day, Paul decides to run off with the Tinkers; to live with itinerants; to marry one. Paul views this action as "escape" (I, 1. 397). In reality, he is only deceiving himself. His mind is so finely honed to his subjective ideals that mere physical trappings suffice to satisfy his whims for the moment. Objectively, his reason is as ineffective as the rags he dons. Yeats employs a similar symbolism in Act IV when Paul sheds his religious habit:

> One by one I am plucking off
> the rags and tatters of the world. (IV 11. 422 ff.)

Here Paul reverses his reasoning, albeit this reasoning remains as ineffective as before; for in shedding his habit Paul believes he has shed all the objective illusions and vices of the external world. Paul justifies his decision to "escape" with the Tinkers as the beginning of the "regeneration of [his] soul (I, 11. 370-371).

This erratic reasoning process points to yet another similarity between Timon and Paul. Timon displays lack of control long before his opening soliloquy in the second half of the play: his first banquet grace is excessively lavish in terms of emotion:

> But where there is true friendship,
> there needs none. Pray sit, more
> welcome are ye to my fortunes
> Than my fortune to me. (I,ii,19 ff.)

Paul, although aware and desiring a "regeneration of his soul," cannot conceptualize within a reasonable context of action in order to motivate this regeneration. Paul deals only in abstractions:

> The dark. Yes, I think that is what I want.
> The dark, where there is nothing that is anything,
> and nobody that is anybody; one can be free there,
> where there is nothing. (II, 11. 102 ff.)
> (underscore mine)

It is true that one must relinquish or restructure certain aspects of the external to obtain passage into one's internal being. But it is significant here that Paul says: "The dark. Yes, I think that is what I want," for, in order to realize true being, one's wants are not of the essence, but rather one's needs.

In Acts II and III Yeats continues to stress Paul's unsettled existence: in his marriage to Sabina in the "usual way" (II, 1. 221), in the drunken trial, and in the demoralized town. This disorder culminates in Paul's cruel remark to his brother: "You have begotten fools" (III,11. 366 ff.).

In Act IV Paul is hurt and left on the monastery steps, and so begins his five-year sojourn there. Paul preaches here to destroy humanity and all organized religion:

> The Laws were the first sin. . . . We must put out the towns as I put out this candle. . . . We must destroy the Church, we must put it out as I put out this candle. . . . We must get rid of everything that is not measureless eternal life. . . . We must put out hope as I put out this candle. . . . And memory as I put out this candle. And thought, the waster of Life, as I put out this candle. And at last we must put out the light of the Sun and of the Moon, and all the light of the World and the World itself. We must destroy the World; we must destroy everything that has Law and Number, for where there is nothing, there is God.
> (IV, 11. 301 ff.)

The above quotation serves to clarify Paul's fixation with the "wild beast, Laughter" that Paul refers to in Act III:

> My wild beast is Laughter, the mightiest of the enemies of God. I will outrun it and make it friendly.
> (III, 11. 304 ff.)

For man's "laughter" indicates a joyous state. It indicates hope, and posits memory and thought, and it means <u>something</u>. Paul desires <u>nothing</u>.

Paul's trance and sermons create chaos. He and his fellow monks leave the monastery. Yet Paul and his fellow monks have no plan to convert the people; no progress to advance Paul's gospel; no attainment of enlightenment. Paul refutes any suggestions to organize a campaign:

> To organize? That is to bring in law and number? Organize — . . . that is how all the mischief has been done. I was forgetting, we cannot destroy the world with armies, it is inside our minds that it must be destroyed, it must be consumed in a moment <u>inside our minds</u>. (V, 11. 332 ff.)
> (underscore mine)

This is exactly what Paul does. He destroys his world. His concerns remain totally with his internal existence. His monks observe:

> He has such holy thoughts and visions no one would like to trouble him. He ought not to be in the world at all, or to do the world's work. (V, 11. 48-49)

> He is too far above them; they have not education to understand him. (V, 11. 57-58)

> We had something to offer then; [when they were in the monastery] absolution here, and heaven after. (V, 11. 60-62)

His monks desert him, whispering "maybe we can bury him tomorrow" (V, 1. 442). The people kill him. Paul cries before his death: "I go to the invisible heart of flame" (V. 1. 425), a Yeatsian reference to Dante's flaming heart. Paul's "invisible heart of flame" is his soul/intellect's goal: the nothingness of his God. It is strange that dying for *nothing* Paul should cry that he is going to *something*.

Paul's death, like Timon's, is his own choosing. Both characters advance irrevocably toward their existential obsession. And Paul, like Timon, dies in a vacuum of emptiness, lacking completeness of being.

The most significant similarity between *The Life of Timon of Athens* and *Where There is Nothing* lies in the fool or prophetic figure. Timon has his philosopher, Apemantus; Paul his Tinker friend, Charlie Ward. Both of these fool figures presume to utter words of wisdom; neither character finds a responsive ear to their observations. Further, neither of these fool figures concur with the fools that have spoken to Lear, or Cuchulain, or the otherworld characters that advised Deirdre or Macbeth. They are not otherworld characters but normal persons involved in the

secular world. Apemantus does warn Timon of hypocritical friends, of his obsession with the world's opinion, of excessive pride, but is rejected. Timon, ego-centred, cannot recognize his internal potential. Charlie Ward offers Paul his friendship, but Paul is incapable of a reciprocal relationship. Paul, narrowly subjective, cannot recognize his external potential.

The actual nakedness of King Lear, at the peak of the storm, is an external sign of his inner torment: a torment which leads to inner metamorphosis.

In contrast, Timon of Athens trades his courtier's clothing for that of a common workman; and Paul Ruttledge changes from a gentleman, to a tinker, and finally to a monk. But these are mere external signs of their obsessions, narrowly limited to their own concepts, and excluding those of humanity.

The metaphorical nakedness of both Timon and Paul lies in their vulnerability of Self: there is no inner metamorphosis.

The excessiveness of both protagonists is irreconcilable. There is no communication with the total soul/intellect. Thus, in these two plays, there occurs no transition of intuitive knowledge.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TOTAL REALITY

(EVIL AND GOOD)

Both Shakespeare and Yeats posit the good in life, in terms of man's eventual destiny. The thematic action of their drama argues that man can, indeed, realize fullness of being. Paradoxically, they both stress the argument for good based on the coexistence of evil in man's nature.

Shakespeare's protagonists oscillate between evil and good, and eventually reconcile in a revelation of self. Yeats not only reveals this dichotomy in his plays, he defines evil's necessity in a variety of critical and philosophical comments:

> Had not Dante and Villon understood that their fate wrecked what life could not rebuild, had they lacked their *Vision of Evil*, had they cherished any species of optimism, they could but have found a false beauty, and suffered no change at all, or but changed as do the wild creatures, or from devil well to devil sick, and so round the clock.
>
> They and their sort alone earn contemplation, for it is only when the intellect has wrought the whole of life to drama, to crisis, that we may live for contemplation, and yet keep our intensity. [1]

---

[1] W.B. Yeats, *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats* (New York: Collier, 1978), p. 183.

It is this passionate intensity, in the Yeatsian view, which forces defeated man to his daimonic rebirth, and it is this passionate intensity which reveals to the Shakespearean protagonist his eventual dramatic realization of self. Yeats refuses to validate an artistic work as comprehensively complete which does not comprise both evil and good:

> Shelley, . . . in whom even as poet unity was but in part attained, found compensation for his "loss", for the taking away of his children, for his quarrel with his first wife, for later sexual disappointment, for his exile, for his obloquy — there were but some three or four persons, he said, who did not consider him a monster of iniquity — in his hopes for the future of mankind. He lacked the Vision of Evil, could not conceive of the world as a continual conflict, so, though great poet he certainly was, he was not of the greatest kind. [2]

Yeats's hopes for the future of mankind then, are not idealistically wedded to those of Shelley, but nevertheless Yeats is a true Romantic. He believes in the inspiration of the moment — the divine imaginative spark, albeit experienced in the pulse of an instant. His imagination, like Blake's, must not be harnessed to objective reason. His imagination is a free bird on passion's wings:

> The reason, and by the reason he [Blake] meant deductions from the observations of the senses, binds us to mortality because it binds us to the senses, and divides us from each other by showing us our clashing interests; but imagination

---

[2]Yeats, *A Vision*, p. 144.

> divides us from mortality by the immortality of beauty, and binds us to each other by opening the secret doors of all hearts. . . . Passions, because most living, are most holy — and this was a scandalous paradox in his [Blake's] time — and man shall enter eternity borne upon their wings. [3]

Consequently, Yeats's *Vision of Evil* and his demand for imaginative freedom of the moment conflicts with Wordsworth's theory of sensual association reflected in the retrospective intellect in imaginative terms. It is this Wordsworthian philosophic tendency which prompts Yeats to write:

> I have finished "The Excursion" and begun "The Prelude". . . . He [Wordsworth] strikes me as always destroying his poetic experience, which was of course of incomparable value, by his reflective power. His intellect was commonplace, and unfortunately he had been taught to respect nothing else. He thinks of his poetic experience not as incomparable in itself but as an engine that may be yoked to his intellect. [4] (italics mine)

Suffice to observe here that Yeats's insistence on the inclusion of the totality of man's dramatic experience is comparable to Shakespeare's relentless, candid portrayal of man, in every aspect of his environment. Neither poet spares the reader's sensibility.

Yeats demands an uncompromising view of good and evil, (and these same demands are evidenced in the plays of Shakespeare):

---

[3] W.B. Yeats, "Ideas of Good and Evil, in *Essays and Introductions* (New York: Collier, 1977), p. 112.

[4] Quoted in *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Allan Wade, ed., (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p. 295.

> There is no laughter too bitter, no irony too harsh for utterance, no passion too terrible to be set before the minds of men. . . . Only in this way can mankind be understood, only when we have put ourselves in all the possible situations of life, from the most miserable to those that are so lofty that we can only speak of them in symbols and in mysteries, will entire wisdom be possible. [5]

Given that man's imaginative intellect can conceive entire wisdom of self, it still remains for the poet to establish the imaginative bridgework necessary to stimulate audience response, or what Yeats called the "emotion of multitude."

Shakespeare aroused this responsive emotion by language, motion and environment, employed at his will, and to the extent they were justified.

Yeats, on the other hand, placed considerable emphasis on the dance, and the mask, verging considerably into the Japanese area of the *Noh* dramatic method - believing that the atmosphere created by the masks, music and dance would distance his audience from their objective worlds and increase their receptivity to his subjective theme:

> The masks of tragedy contain neither character nor personal energy. They are allied to decoration and to the abstract figures of Egyptian temples. Before the mind can look out of their eyes the active will perishes, hence their sorrowful calm. . . . The soul knows its changes of state alone, and I think the motives of tragedy are not related to action but to changes of state. [6]

---

[5]Richard Ellman, *The Identity of Yeats* (London: Faber & Faber, 1953), p. 245.

[6]W.B. Yeats, *Autobiography*, p. 319.

CHAPTER SIX

THE STAGE AND THE SENSES

(MOVEMENT AND THE MASK)

Man's varying states of being are crucial to this study. And, as the poet must relay all of man's emotional growth or regression in order to fully convey the meaning of dramatic realization, this section deals briefly with the methods of Shakespeare and Yeats in terms of similarities and differences.

To realize the ultimate nature of things is to experience one's destiny and, in addition, to possess total awareness of that destiny. Thus Macbeth achieves his kingdom on earth, briefly, but tragically realizes he has relinquished his spiritual legacy. Deirdre conversely, knowingly relinquishes a queen's life in favour of her heroic destiny — an honourable death, in union with her anti-self. Both Lear and Prospero gratify their daimonic thirst for self-truth after painful realization of their existential crises; while Cuchulain eventually gains freedom from his objectivity by submitting to his daimonic destiny.

All of these protagonists possess one common characteristic. They traverse the unknown. Their objective unreality eventually dissolves before their subjective Reality. They whirl in a dialectic of transshifting states of being before a final metamorphosis achieved in the comprehensive light of their true identity.

All of these protagonists, however, are propelled by very different dramatic means by Shakespeare and Yeats to their final state.

Yet the sounds, actions, clothing, metaphorical language depicting the Shakespearean protagonist in his metamorphosis, in terms of image-clusters, equate the mask and stylized movements surrounding the Yeatsian protagonist struggling to imaginative enlightenment. All of the devices of drama are, from the view of their internal truth, basically disguises. Their dramatic utility lies in the shedding of their disguise.

When Prospero discards his 'magic' cape in favour of his "sometime Duke of Milan" appearance, in a dramatic sense his *disordered* being is restored to a balanced empathetic existence with humanity, accompanied by Ariel's rejoicing music.

When Cuchulain discards his warrior's mask for a headless, "soft, feathery shape," through his choice of 'death', in a dramatic sense his brief glimpse of immortality is symbolized in the lonely, subjective bird-notes.

Initially, Caliban's ponderous and earthy, yet demi-human body and Ariel's buoyant ethereality appear irreconcilable. Shakespeare, however, complements these two natures in an incongruous blending. Caliban's exquisite poetic speech and ultimate sincere penance confirms his human potential; while Ariel's spiritual utterances sometimes carry mutinous undertones, and his understanding, forgiving nature confirms his human potential. Thus Shakespeare, in this mingling of the two creatures objectifies Prospero's transshifting states of being.

Yeats's Cuchulain wears many masks, all designed to depict his existential crises, originating from his conflict of selves.

In *At the Hawk's Well* (1917) Cuchulain wears a young man's mask. The players' movements suggest the movements of marionettes (p. 401). Thus Yeats creates the trance-like state of the characters. In significant contrast, when Cuchulain rushes out to fight "the clash of arms" (l. 245) movements are rapid and normal, signifying his return to objectivity, in a primary sense. Cuchulain does not remove his mask, but the musicians, singing "Wisdom must live a bitter life" in "desolate" places, ask for "human faces" because they have found "hateful eyes" (l. 412 ff.). "Hateful eyes" are the stare of those entranced in total subjectivity.

Van Krop made the masks for *The Only Jealousy of Emer* (1919):

> The Sculptor Hildo Krop made the masks ("of papier-mache, with woollen hair, painted basically in ivory, with deep shadows",) and the costumes were "severely stylized in deep pure colours . . . with very simple geometrical patterns, in sharp contrast."[1]

All are masked, including the daimonic *Woman of the Sidhe*. Here the masks identify Cuchulain's varying states of being, as do the dramatic functions of Caliban and Ariel in *The Tempest*. The Ghost of Cuchulain wears a face of passive subjectivity, with "deep shadows" accentuating his stare. The Figure of Cuchulain, representing *Discord* [2] horrifies

---

[1]D.J. Gordon, *W.B. Yeats: Images of a Poet* (Manchester, 1961), in John Rees Moore's *Masks of Love and Death* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1971), p. 225. (See also Appendix Two, Figures 2-8).

[2]Substantiates Yeats's theory of Concord/Discord. See *A Vision*, pp. 67-68: ". . . Concord of Empedocles fabricates all things into "an homogeneous sphere", and then Discord separates the elements and so makes the world we inhabit, but even the sphere formed by Concord is not the changeless eternity, for Concord or Love but offers us the image of that which is changeless. (underscore mine).

the viewer. He symbolizes external evil. As is the function of Ariel and Caliban, the *Cuchulain* masked characters objectify the hero's inner conflicts in terms of his transshifting states of being.

Ariel's "sea-change" song in *The Tempest* parallels Yeats's golden-masked *Woman of the Sidhe* in *The Only Jealousy of Emer*. Both characters present, metaphorically, the longed-for inner state of unity with one's true Self. Both poets employ language, music and concise movements to convey their metaphysical meaning. The similarity of poetic intent is striking:

> Full fadom five thy father lies,
> Of his bones are coral made:
> Those are pearls that were his eyes:
> Nothing of him that doth fade,
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange,
> Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
> Ding-dong. (I,ii,397ff.)

On surface, the poet seems to refer to Ferdinand's drowned father, the King of Milan. As far as Ferdinand is concerned, Ariel's message is literally and physically true — but when Ferdinand's father does reappear, he is physically unchanged from his appearance before the wreck. His clothes are not even "salt-stained." But Ferdinand is indeed in a dream. In reality Shakespeare is metaphorically relating the 'rich and strange' change that has to take place in a man before he experiences dramatic realization. *The Tempest* throughout refers to Time: and here the constant emphasis is not on vulgar time, but on the essence of infinity, Time immortal. [3] Immortality is Yeats's theme too, but in his play the change is physically real, for the *Woman of the Sidhe* is indeed the embodiment of immortal Beauty:

---

[3] Yeats writes: "The identification of time with subjectivity is probably as old as philosophy; all that we can touch or handle, and for the moment I mean no other objectivity, has shape or magnitude, whereas our thoughts and emotions have duration and quality, a thought recurs or is habitual, a lecture or a musical composition is measured upon the clock. *A Vision*, pps. 70-71.

> Who is it stands before me there
> Shedding such light from limb and hair
> As when the moon, complete at last
> With every labouring crescent past,
> And lonely with extreme delight,
> Flings out upon the fifteenth night? (II.220 ff.)

Yeats's staging for the Sidhe's entrance verifies his metaphorical intent. The *Sidhe* woman appears on stage manifesting the physical reality of the spiritual Truth:

> The Woman of the Sidhe moves round the crouching Ghost of Cuchulain at front of stage in a dance that grows gradually quicker, as he slowly awakes. At moments she may drop her hair upon his head, but she does not kiss him. She is accompanied by string and flute and drum. Her mask and clothes must suggest gold or bronze or brass or silver, so that she seems more an idol than a human being. This suggestion may be repeated in her movements. Her hair, too, must keep the metallic suggestion. (p. 551)

Yeats's careful instructions concerning the *Sidhe's* "metallic" suggestion refer to the necessary light imagery in keeping with her lunar phase fifteen. She is the immortal daimon, the dark hidden portion of man's intellect. She is his unspoken desires — his awareness of potential destiny. She is his daimonic temptress, urging him to the antithesis of all his objectivity. Yeats grants to the *Sidhe* all the seductive weight that his art allows.

Shakespeare and Yeats, thus, would seem to carry the dichotomy of man's dual nature forward in their art at all times, relying on man's *imaginative* faculties for recognition of his potential. Yeats expresses his respect for the *imagination's* perceptive powers in definite terms:

> I thought, so far as I can recollect my thoughts after so many years, that if a powerful and benevolent spirit has shaped the destiny of this world, we can better discover that destiny from the words that have gathered up the heart's desire of the world, than from historical records, or from speculation, wherein the heart withers. . . . I have observed dreams and visions very carefully, and

> am now certain that the imagination has some way of lighting on the truth that the reason has not, and that its commandments, delivered when the body is still and the reason silent, are the most binding we can ever know.[4]

Yeats's plays concern the particular daemonic destiny and the dramatic realization of that potential of one protagonist. But, in the quotation, Yeats infers a universal daemonic destiny. A spirit that shapes the "destiny of this world." Yeats's essay, "The Celtic Element in Literature" (1902), intimates a cumulative imagination in terms of a macrocosmic intellect:

> Men did not mourn merely because . . . learning was bitter in the mouth, . . . but because they had been born and must die with their great thirst unslaked. And so it is that all the august sorrowful persons of literature, Cassandra and Helen and Deirdre, and Lear and Tristan, have come out of legends and are indeed but the images of the primitive imagination mirrored in the little looking-glass of the modern and classic imagination. 5

Although Shakespeare's own thought is not accessible, still his serious study of the Fool's (mankind's) complexity in *As You Like It* (1599) refers constantly to not only the perpetuation of "birth, death and decay" but also to its universality:

---

[4]W.B. Yeats, *E&I*, p. 65.

[5]Ibid., p. 182.

> And then he drew a dial from his poke,
> And, looking on it, with lack-lustre eye,
> Says very wisely, "It is ten a'clock.
> Thus we may see," quoth he, "how the world wags,
> 'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,
> And after one hour more 'twill be eleven,
> And so from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,
> And then from hour to hour, we rot and rot:
> And thereby hangs a tale." (II,vii,20ff.)
>
> Thou seest we are not all alone unhappy:
> This wide and universal theatre
> Presents more woeful pageants than the scene
> Wherein we play in. (II,vii,136ff.)

The "wide and universal theatre" of man is, in Yeatsian imagery, the stage for what Yeats calls the "one great memory, the memory of Nature herself." [5] This is the Yeatsian *Anima Mundi*. Yeats's autobiographic writings prove that his thought extended beyond man's particular contingent Self to a universal contingent Self — to a universal destiny:

> Is there nation-wide multiform reverie, every mind passing through a stream of suggestion, and all streams acting and reacting upon one another no matter how distant the minds, how dumb the lips? . . . Was not a nation, as distinguished from a crowd of chance comers, bound together by this interchange among streams or shadows; that Unity of Image, which I sought in national literature, being but an originating symbol? . . . Was modern civilisation a conspiracy of the subconscious? . ... When Locke's French translator Coste asked him how, if there were no "innate ideas," he could explain the skill shown by a bird in making its nest, Locke replied, "I did not write to explain the actions of dumb creatures," and his translator thought the answer "very good, seeing that he had named his book *A Philosophical Essay upon Human Understanding*." Henry More, upon the other hand, considered that the bird's instinct proved the existence of the Anima Mundi, with its ideas and memories. Did modern enlightenment think with Coste that Locke had the better logic, because it was not free to think otherwise? [6]

---

[5] W.B. Yeats, *E&I*, p. 28.

[6] W.B. Yeats, *Autobiography*, pps. 176-177.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DAIMONIC DESTINY —
THE PARTICULAR AND THE UNIVERSAL

Maud Bodkin, in *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (published 1934) discusses C.G. Jung's belief that certain poetry conveys a "special emotional experience" through association in the reader's mind with "primordial images," or "archetypes." Jung believed that "these results are inherited in the structure of the brain, *a priori* determinants of individual experience." Ms. Bodkin quotes Gilbert Murray comparing thematic patterns in Hamlet and Orestes:

> such stories and situations are 'deeply implanted in the memory of the race, stamped as it were on our physical organism. We say that such themes are strange to us. Yet there is that within us which leaps at the sight of them, a cry of the blood which tells us we have known them always . . . a strange unanalysed vibration below the surface, an undercurrent of desires and fears and passions, long slumbering yet eternally familiar, which have for thousands of years lain near the root of our most intimate emotions and been wrought into the fabric of our most magical dreams. How far into past ages this stream may reach back, I dare not even surmise; but it seems as if the power of stirring it or moving with it were one of the last secrets of genius!

Ms. Bodkin observes that:

> . . . it is not mere contact with an idea's expression that secures its assimilation. . . . that for the capture of objects complete, by the assimilative imagination, there must stir within us 'larger systems of feeling, of memory, of ideas, of aspirations.' [1]

---

[1]Maud Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (London: Oxford, 1963), pps. 1-5.

These 'larger systems of feeling, of memory, of ideas, of aspirations' appear to be related to Yeats's theory of *great memory*. Ms. Bodkin proposes that "this spiritual power" is

> the common nature lived and immediately experienced by the members of a group or community 'the collective emotion and activity of the group' [2]

and she cites F.M. Cornford's term of *collective emotion* and Jung's term of the *collective unconscious* as approximating her thought.

In Yeats's essay "Emotion of Multitude (1903), he writes of the Greek chorus stimulating the emotion of the multitude in ancient drama, and places the situation of Shakespeare's *Lear* into one of world-wide continuity:

> We think of *King Lear* less as the history of one man and his sorrows than as the history of a whole evil time. Lear's shadow is in Gloucester, who also has ungrateful children, and the mind goes on imagining other shadows, shadow beyond shadow, till it has pictured the world. [3]

Yeats's comparison is apt for his purposes of the "image of multitude", as the archetypal kings, Oedipus and Lear, with their blind prophetic counterparts, Teiresias and Gloucester, exemplify the universal collective imaginative experience.

This collective imaginative experience concerns itself with the identical dreams, passions and conflicts of individual man: all

---

[2]Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns*, p. 20.

[3]W.B. Yeats, *E&I*, pps. 215-216.

the emotions arising from the timeless ideas of sacrifice, fertility, renewal, initiation, rebirth, love, hate, beauty, truth, — and all welded, from "shadow to shadow" into universal concepts.

Yeats, in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, states that the daimonic impulse can be particular, or be general:

> Each Daimon is drawn to whatever man or, if its nature is more general, to whatever nation it most differs from, and it shapes into its own image the antithetical dream of man or nation. The Jews had already shown by the precious metals, by the ostentatious wealth of Solomon's temple, the passion that has made them the money-lenders of the modern world. If they had not been rapacious, lustful, narrow, and persecuting beyond the people of their time, the incarnation had been impossible; but it was an intellectual impulse from the Condition of Fire that shaped their antithetical self into that of the classic world. So always it is an impulse from some Daimon that gives to our vague, unsatisfied desire, beauty, a meaning, and a form all can accept. [4]

This wider application of the daimonic thrust can be traced in the writings of Shakespeare. The continuity of *Lear* occurs in its archetypal design, but Shakespeare also extends the imaginative horizons of Lear to an implied internal limitlessness through his metaphorical treatment of the king's states of being. Lear, during his tempest:

> . . . tears his white
> hair,
> Which the impetuous blasts with eyeless rage
> Catch in their fury, and make nothing of,
> Strives in his little world of man . . .
> (III,i,7ff.)

Lear is limited in his objectivity. He is in a "little world," where

---

[4] W.B. Yeats, *Mythologies*, p. 362.

"The little dogs and all, Trey, Blanch, and Sweetheart, . . . bark at [him]." (III,vi,62ff.)

Shakespeare leads his protagonist to an all-encompassing love of humanity when Lear realizes the truth of his situation:

> No,no,no,no! Come let's away to prison:
> We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage;
> When thou does ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
> And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live,
> And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
> At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
> Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too—
> Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out—
> And take upon's the mystery of things
> As if we were God's spies; and we'll wear out,
> In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones,
> That ebb and flow by th' moon. . . .
> Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
> The gods themselves throw incense. (V,iii,8ff.)

The image of the "cage" — the physical prison — accentuates Lear's cosmic status. His spiritual boundaries now enclose the very "mystery of things," the tides of the moon, "blessing" and "forgiveness," and will outlast "packs and sects of great ones." Lear's achieved *Unity of Being* cannot be bounded by any earthly "cage," — he is ultimate mankind, reborn.

Yeats's poem "The Second Coming" refers specifically to an all-pervasive world spirit:

> . . . The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
> When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
> Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
> A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
> A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
> Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
> Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
> The darkness drops again; but now I know
> That twenty centuries of stony sleep
> Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
> And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
> Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born? (p.402)

Perhaps this rough beast of Yeats' preshadows the universal daemon, yet to evolve — mankind's *contingent* self — perfected. Yeats seems to conceive of a continuous development of universal dialogue, in terms of mankind's imaginative intellect:

> Once a symbolism has possessed the imagination of large numbers of men, it becomes, as I believe, an embodiment of disembodied powers, and repeats itself in dreams and visions, age after age. [6]

The concept of a universal imaginative intellect, contained in a *Unity of Being* is indeed supremely heroic. On an individual basis, Yeats exhibits firm faith in the *imagination's* passionate power:

> I know now that revelation is from the self, but from that age-long memoried self, that shapes the elaborate shell of the mollusc and the child in the womb, that teaches the birds to make their nest; and that genius is a crisis that joins that buried self for certain moments to our trivial daily mind. There are, indeed, personifying spirits that we had best call but Gates and Gatekeepers, because through their dramatic power they bring our souls to crisis, to Mask and Image . . . [7]

The above assertion appears to validate the thesis of this paper: that intuitive knowledge lies within man's inner being.

---

[6]W.B. Yeats, *Variorum Poems*, p. 810.

[7]W.B. Yeats, *Autobiography*, p. 182.

APPENDIX ONE

THE GREAT WHEEL

Yeats's "Great Wheel" [1] in A *Vision* consists of twenty-eight incarnations of man. Two of these incarnations, or phases, are not human embodiments. Phase One is the condition of complete objectivity, and thus it is supernatural. Yeats says "and human life cannot be completely objective." [2] Phase Fifteen is the phase of complete beauty and total subjectivity, and therefore it is too supernatural:

> . . . all effort has ceased, . . . the soul [is in an] immovable trance. . . . Its own body possesses the greatest possible beauty, being indeed that body which the soul will permanently inhabit, when all its phases have been repeated according to the number allotted; that which we call the clarified or Celestial Body. [2]

The other twenty-six incarnations represent different phases of man's experience. Each phase has degrees of the *Four Faculties — Will, Mask, Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*. When the primary or objective faculties lie uppermost in a man's being, he is "reasonable and moral." When the antithetical or subjective faculties lie uppermost in a man's being, he is "emotional and aesthetic." The faculties are represented by opposing cones that whirl in a continuous motion gyrating through predominance into, and/or, away from one another, motivated by the thoughts, desires, and actions of the being.

---

[1] W.B. Yeats, A *Vision* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), p. 183. Also see Appendix One, Figure 1.

[2] W.B. Yeats, A *Vision* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), p. 136.

Yeats summarizes the Wheel and its classifications thus:

> The *antithetical tincture* is emotional and aesthetic whereas the *primary tincture* is reasonable and moral. Within these cones move what are called the *Four Faculties*: *Will* and *Mask*, *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*.
>
> It will be enough until I have explained the geometrical diagrams in detail to describe *Will* and *Mask* as the will and its object, or the Is and the Ought (or that which should be), *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate* as thought and its object, or the Knower and the Known, and to say that the first two are lunar or *antithetical* or natural, the second two solar or *primary* or reasonable. . . . Everything that wills can be desired, resisted or accepted, every creative act can be seen as fact, every *Faculty* is alternately shield and sword. [3]

Yeats clarifies the *Four Faculties* expressly attributing their origin and existence to man's daimonic consciousness, or as he says "the ultimate self of that man."

> The *Four Faculties* are not the abstract categories of philosophy, being the result of the four memories of the *Daimon* or ultimate self of that man. His *Body of Fate*, the series of events forced upon him from without, is shaped out of the *Daimon's* memory of the events of his past incarnations; his *Mask* or object of desire or idea of the good, out of its memory of the moments of exaltation in his past lives; his *Will* or normal ego out of its memory of all the events of his present life, whether consciously remembered or not; his *Creative Mind* from its memory of ideas — or universals — displayed by actual men in past lives, or their spirits between lives. [4]

---

[3] Ibid., p. 73.

[4] Ibid., p. 83.

Yeats then places these *Four Faculties* face to face in one man's scenario of life, describing the process for realization of the daimonic, essential self:

> The stage-manager, or *Daimon*, offers his actor an inherited scenario, the *Body of Fate*, and a *Mask* or rôle as unlike as possible to his natural ego or *Will*, and leaves him to improvise through his *Creative Mind* the dialogue and details of the plot. He must discover or reveal a being which only exists with extreme effort, when his muscles are as it were all taut and all his energies active. But this is *antithetical* man. For *primary* man I go to the *Commedia dell' Arte* in its decline. The *Will* is weak and cannot create a rôle, and so, if it transform itself, does so after an accepted pattern, some traditional clown or pantaloon. [5]

Phases Two to Seven are primarily involved with objective emotions and ambitions. Yeats describes the self's pursuit beginning with Phase Eight:

> Phase 8 begins the antithetical phases, those where the bright part of the moon is greater than the dark, and Phase 22 begins the primary phases where the dark part is greater than the bright. [6]

He continues, describing a man's thought learning to recognize his *mask*:

> When not affected by the other *Faculties* [the will] it has neither emotion, morality nor intellectual interest, but knows how things are done, how windows open and shut, how roads are crossed, everything that we call utility. It seeks its own continuance. Only by the pursuit or acceptance of its direct opposite, that object of desire or moral ideal which is of all possible things the most difficult, and by forcing that form upon the *Body of Fate*, can it attain self-knowledge and expression. Phase 8 and Phase 22 are phases of struggle and tragedy, the first a struggle to find personality, the second to lose it. After Phase 22 and before Phase 1 there is a struggle to accept the fate-imposed unity, from Phase 1 to Phase 8 to escape it.

---

[5] Ibid., p. 84.

[6] Ibid., p. 83.

A Vision was ostensibly begun at the occasion of Mrs. Yeats's automatic writing on October 24, 1917; but Helen Hennessey Vendler in her book *Yeats's Vision and the Later Plays* (1963) quotes Donald Pearce in his description of one of Yeats's diagrams found in an unpublished notebook (c.1896-98):

> In one of Yeats's unpublished notebooks for the years 1896-98 there is a drawing of a twenty-two petalled Cabbalistic rose, each petal marked with a Hebrew letter, and a Rosicross at the centre. Beside it is a corresponding geometrical diagram in which zodiacal and occult symbols have been substituted for the Hebrew letters. A schematic table follows in which Yeats correlated each of these symbols with: (a) classical deities, heroes and powers, (b) Celtic divinities and heroes, (c) forms of evocation and magical rites, (d) character and personality traits, (e) philosophic formulae concerning fate, death, birth, justice, etc., (f) elements and colors of magical and occult tradition, (g) symbolism of the Tarot cards. From this rose, whose numbered petals represented divinities and astrological and philosophical principles, to the lunar system of gyres and cycles is surely a direct step. Essentially it is a step of abstraction and amplification. One may indeed see in the symbolic Rose of the Nineties the nucleus of *A Vision*. [7]

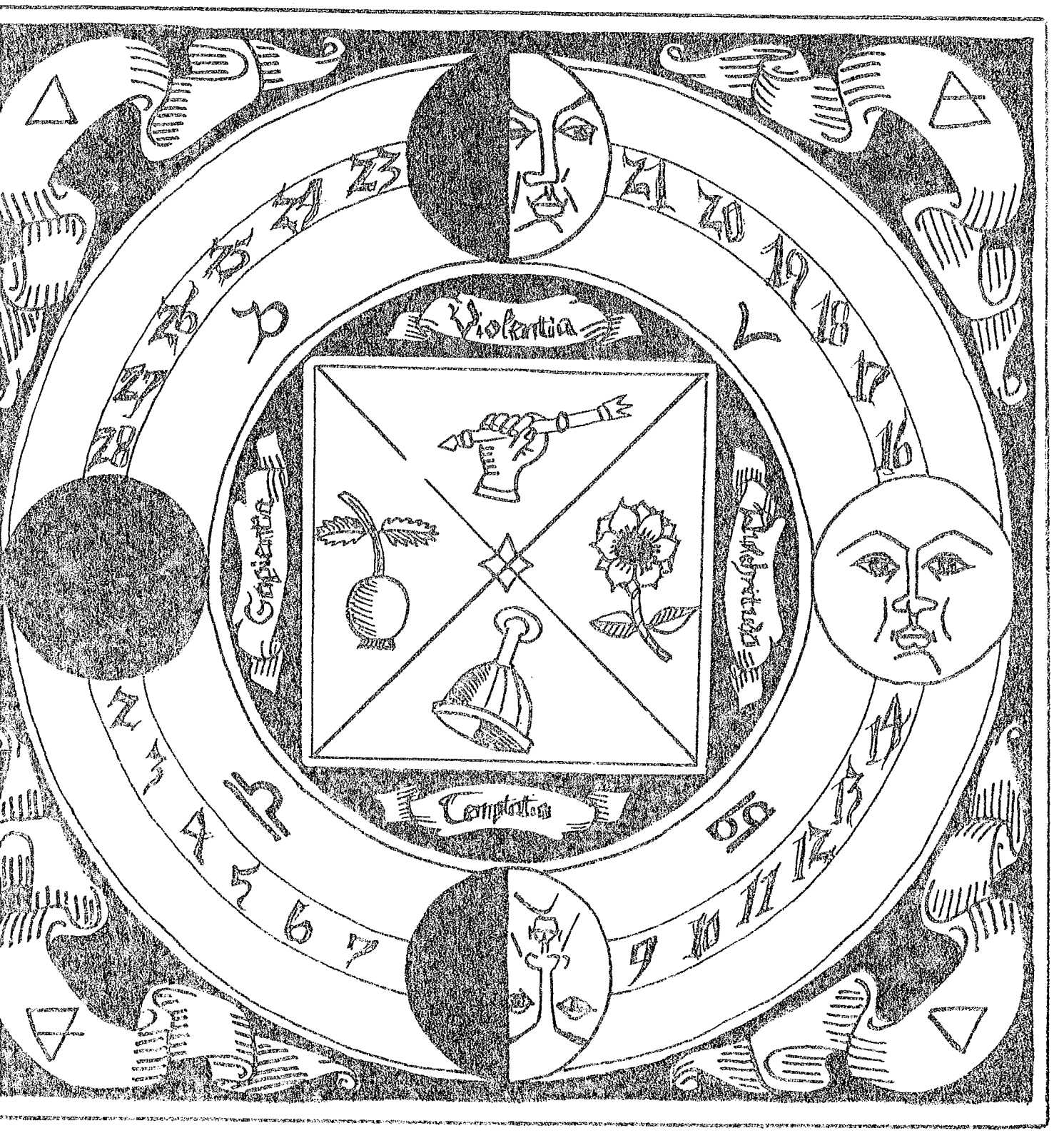
It would appear from the above dates that Yeats's *Wheel of Life* may evolve in part from his own *Creative Mind* (which he equates to the *Imagination*). As this was written almost twenty years before his marriage it is reasonable to deduce that his thought in *A Vision* influenced his plays, and therefore reference to this thought is valid in this paper.

---

[7] Donald Pearce quoted by Helen Hennessey Vendler, *Yeats's Vision and the Later Plays* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard, 1963), p. 14.

THE GREAT WHEEL

FROM SPECULUM ANGELORUM ET HOMINUM



APPENDIX ONE

FIGURE ONE

APPENDIX TWO

COSTUME AND MASK

SKETCHES

The sketch for Ariel from *The Tempest* was taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare.*

The remaining sketches (Figures Two through Seven) were taken from *The Noble Drama of W.B. Yeats* by Liam Miller (Dublin: The Dolmen Press, 1977.

APPENDIX TWO

FIGURE ONE

THE WOMAN OF THE SIDHE

"THE ONLY JEALOUSY OF EMER"

1926.

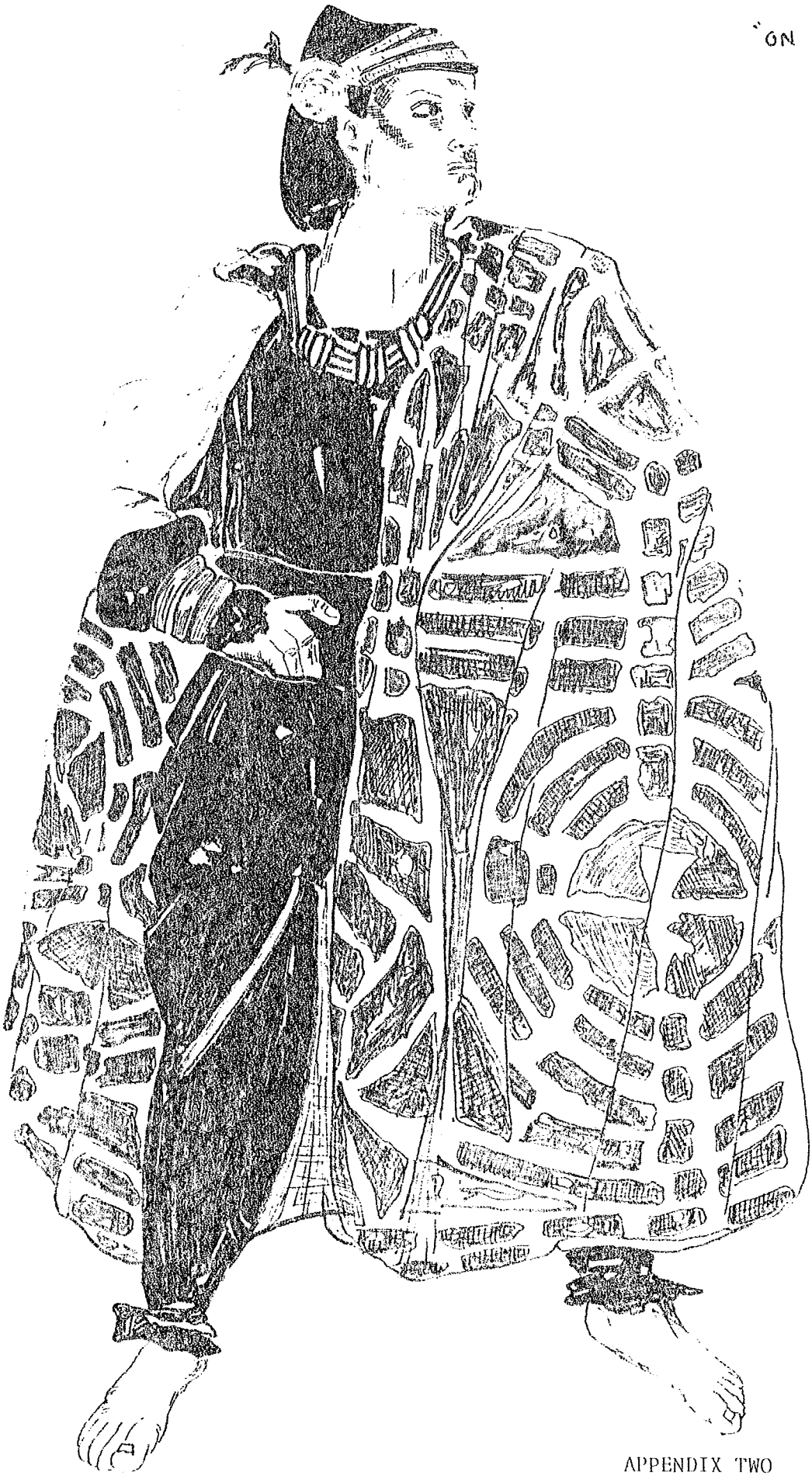
APPENDIX TWO

FIGURE TWO

CUCHULAIN -

'ON BAILE'S STRA

1915.



APPENDIX TWO

FIGURE THREE

THE BLIND MAN -

"ON BAILE'S STRAN

1915.

APPENDIX TWO

FIGURE FOUR

THE FOOL –

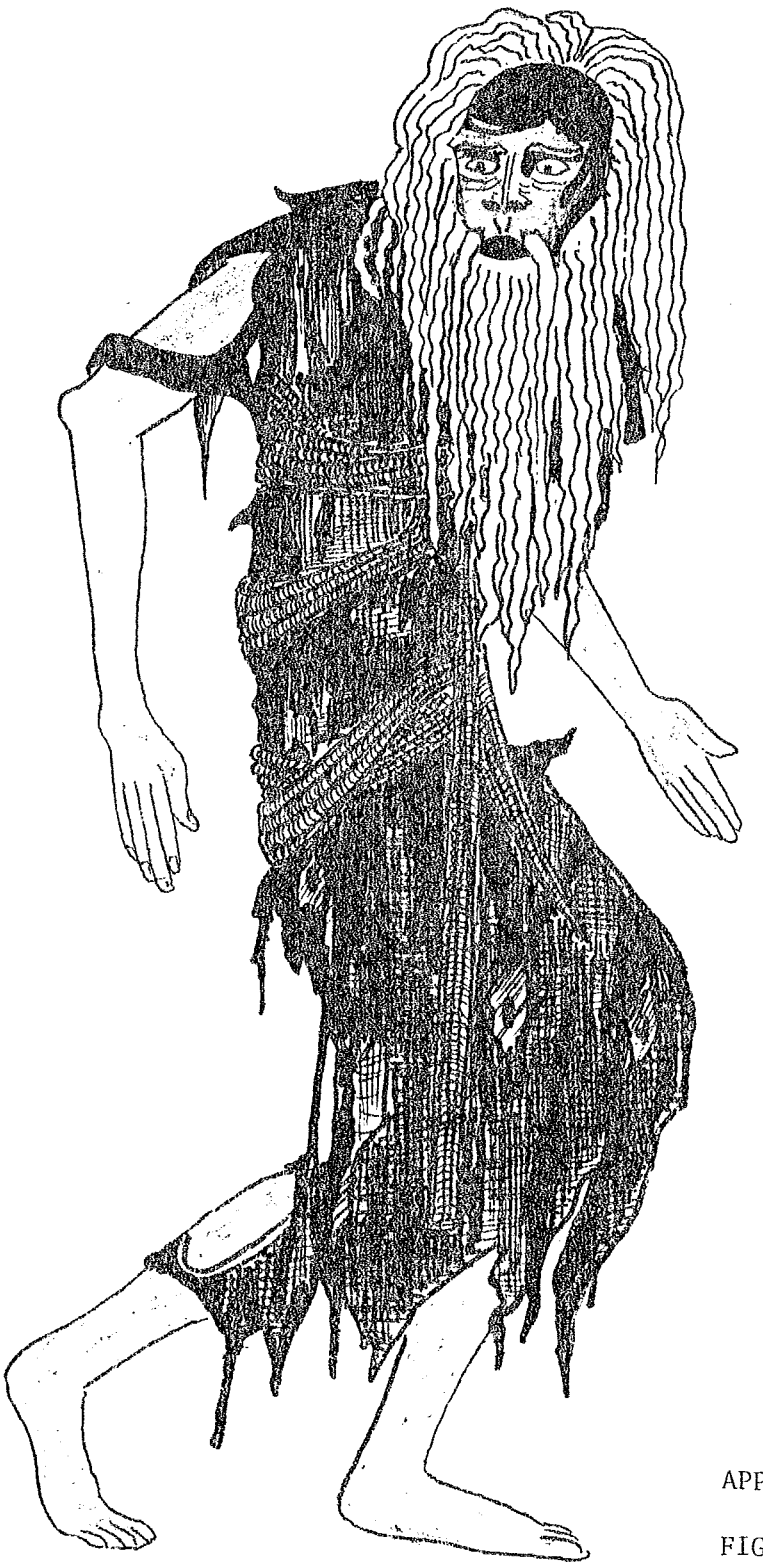
ON BAILE'S STRAN

1915.

APPENDIX TWO

FIGURE FIVE

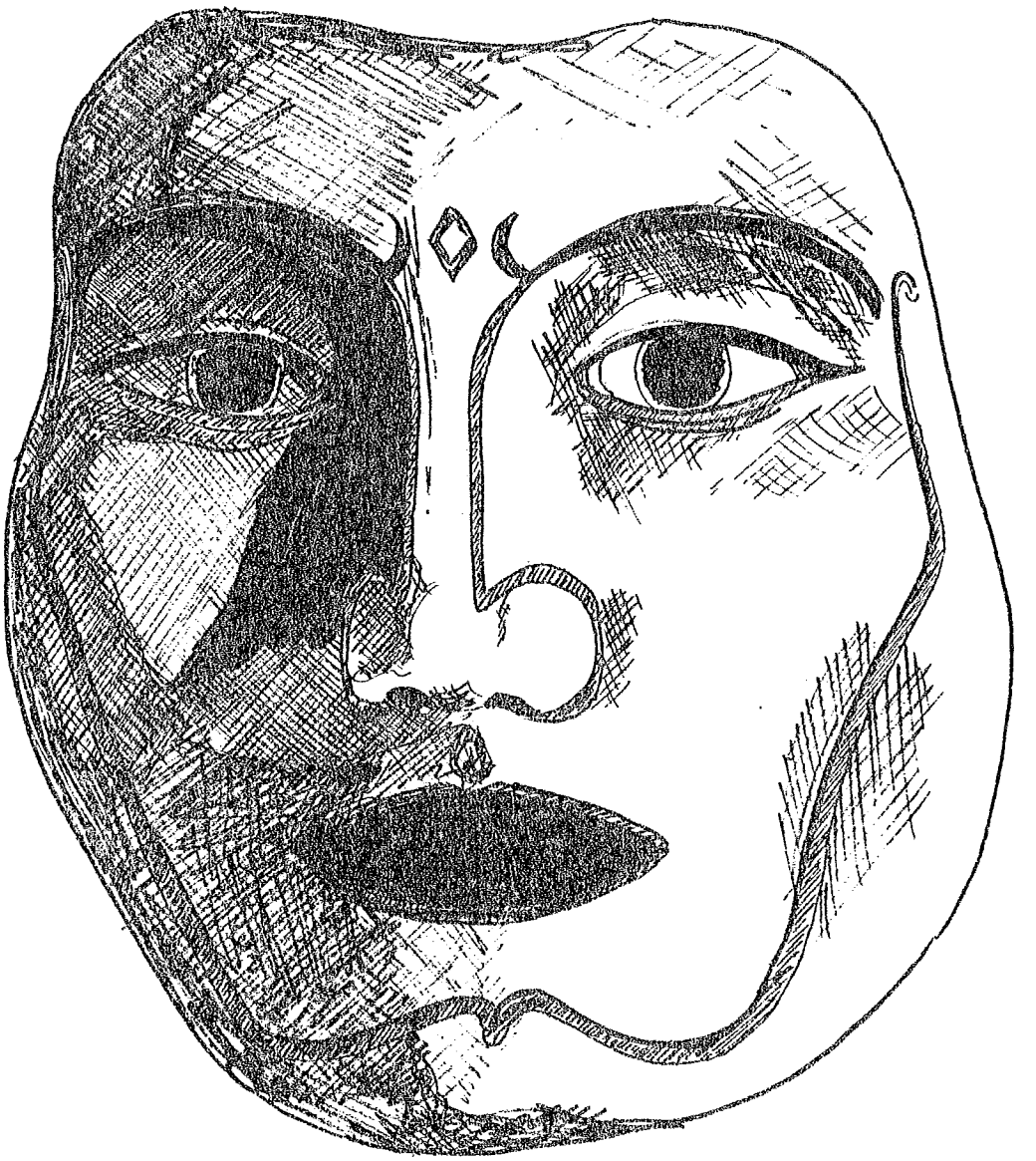
THE OLD MAN -
"AT THE HAWK'S WELL"
1916



APPENDIX TWO

FIGURE SIX

CUCHULAIN MASK -
"AT THE HAWK'S WELL
1916.



APPENDIX TWO

FIGURE SEVEN

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works by William Shakespeare referred to in this paper:

The History of Troilus and Cressida in *The Riverside Shakespeare*.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974.

The Life of Timon of Athens in *The Riverside Shakespeare*.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974.

The Tempest in *The Riverside Shakespeare*.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974.

The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra in *The Riverside Shakespeare*.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974.

The Tragedy of King Lear in *The Riverside Shakespeare*.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974.

The Tragedy of Macbeth in *The Riverside Shakespeare*.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974.

Works by W.B. Yeats referred to in this paper:

The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats
New York: Collier Books, 1978.

The Letters of W.B. Yeats. Edited by Allan Wade.
London: Rupert-Hart Davis, 1954.

Essays & Introductions.
New York: Collier Books, 1977.

Mythologies.
London: Macmillan, 1959.

Deirdre in *Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*.
Edited by Russell K. Alspach.
London, Melbourne, Toronto: Macmillan, 1966.

At the Hawk's Well in *Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*.
Edited by Russell K. Alspach.
London, Melbourne, Toronto: Macmillan, 1966.

Two Plays for Dancers.
Shannon: Irish University Press, 1970.

On Baile's Strand in *Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*. Edited by Russell K. Alspach. London, Melbourne, Toronto: Macmillan, 1966.

The Only Jealousy of Emer in *Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*. Edited by Russell K. Alspach. London, Melbourne, Toronto: Macmillan, 1966.

The Death of Cuchulain in *Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*. Edited by Russell K. Alspach. London, Melbourne, Toronto: Macmillan, 1966.

Where There is Nothing in *Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*. Edited by Russell K. Alspach. London, Melbourne, Toronto: Macmillan, 1966.

"Why should not Old Men be Mad?" in *Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*. Edited by Russell K. Alspach. New York: Macmillan, 1966.

"A Coat" in *Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats*. Edited by Russell K. Alspach. New York: Macmillan, 1966.

A Vision. New York: Collier Books, 1978.

Secondary Sources used for this paper:

The Holy Bible, Authorised King James Version. London: United Society of Christian Literature (Lutterworth Press), 1949.

Bodkin, Maud. *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*. London: Oxford, 1963.

Ellman, Richard. *The Identity of Yeats*. London: Faber & Faber, 1953.

Gordon, D.J. *Images of a Poet*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1961.

Gregory, Lady Augusta. *Cuchulain of Muirthemne with a Preface by W.B. Yeats*. London: John Murray, 1902.

Hone, Joseph. *W. B. Yeats.*
London: Macmillan, 1942.

Kyd, Thomas. *The Spanish Tragedy* in *Elizabethan Plays.*
Edited by Hazelton Spencer.
Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1953.

Miller, Liam. *The Noble Drama of W.B. Yeats.*
Dublin: The Dolmen Press, 1977.

Moore, John Rees. *Masks of Love and Death.*
Ithaca: Cornell, 1971.

Seiden, Morton Irving. *The Poet as a Mythmaker, 1865-1939.*
Chicago: Michigan State University Press, 1962.

Vendler, Helen Hennessey. *Yeats's Vision and Later Plays.*
Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1963.

Wilson, J. Dover. *Meaning of the Tempest.*
Newcastle-upon-Tyne: The Literary & Philosophical Society, 1936.