W.B. Yeats's *A Vision*: Magical and Poetic Symbols for Personal, Social, and Historical Contexts

by

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Abstract

W.B. Yeats saw himself as Ireland's poet of historical record, even titling key poems to convey the centrality of Irish history to those poems and, eventually, to Irish historical self-understanding. Several of Yeats's polemical, socially oriented poems have an internal logic that derives from, and is traceable to, *A Vision*'s occultist and aesthetic investments. *A Vision* is like a filter in a web where texts' symbolic imagery interacts—a web of philosophy, mysticism, occult doctrines, artistic beliefs, Irish literature and politics. The primacy of the poetic symbol—and the rhetorical authority of the logic of symbols—is central to the intersection of *A Visions* and Yeats's poetry (and central to my project) as well as his literary undertakings. By focusing on the Mask, Sun and Moon, Round Tower, and the Great Wheel as key symbols from Yeats's *A Vision*, this paper studies the balanced oscillation between objective and subjective experiences throughout Yeats's poetry, understandable as the poet's endless quest through abstraction, transcendence, and immanence. The project migrates between the esoteric, occult, aesthetic, theoretical, and material or social conditions influencing Yeats's thinking and writing. Seemingly, Yeats uses *A Vision* to filter and adapt the external world, like Irish folklore and events from the Irish Civil War, so he can look and speak through a reimagined perspective that invests in his experiences and provides personal means of expression for his poetry. Simultaneously, however, Yeats's canonical and public poems align (and sometimes misalign) with the symbolic logic outlined in *A Vision*. Ultimately, Yeats's symbols reveal that eternal conflict and oscillation are necessary for conceiving and creating poetry. The symbolic language in Yeats's work reconstructs artistic representations of Ireland's mythic past, historical present, imagined self and nation. Thus, my thesis also reassesses and suggests what Yeats sees as the modernist poet's role and responsibility in shaping a sense of individual and collective imagination and identity.

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W.B. Yeats's *A Vision*: Magical and Poetic Symbols for Personal, Social, and Historical Contexts

Yeats's *A Vision* (*AV*) provides an esoteric and aesthetic lens for Yeats to observe the rupture and emergence of distorted modernity—observations accompanied by inner strife between Yeats's excitement for change and simultaneous apprehension of violent change. Yeats hopes the *AV*'s System of symbolic language will promise reconciliation for the terrible beauty to be born. However, he perceives that its changes subject a being's individuality to violent dislocations. Thus, often in his poems, Yeats's abstraction from himself and his world via mythical and poetic symbols is presented as freeing the solitary soul to begin an afterlife in the infinite—the eternal cosmic oneness where the spirit of the world absorbs the self, the psyche becomes timeless, and all thought is objective. However, Yeats's middle and later poetry shifts towards a new appreciation for the subjective alongside the objective, emphasizing the continuous oscillation between the two states. By focusing on the Mask, Sun and Moon, Round Tower, and the Great Wheel as key symbols from *AV*, this paper studies the balanced oscillation between objective and subjective experiences throughout Yeats's poetry, understandable as the poet's endless quest through abstraction, transcendence, and immanence. Ultimately, Yeats's symbols reveal that eternal conflict and oscillation are necessary for conceiving and creating poetry.

By reading *AV* alongside Yeats's polemical, socially oriented poetry, my research migrates between the esoteric, occult, aesthetic, theoretical, and material or social conditions that exert influence on Yeats's thinking and writing. Seemingly, Yeats uses *AV* to filter and adapt the external world, like events from the Irish Civil War, so he can look and speak through a reimagined perspective that invests in his experiences and provides personal means of expression for his poetry. Simultaneously, however, the symbolic language in Yeats's work reconstructs artistic representations of Ireland's mythic past, historical present, imagined self and nation.

Thus, my thesis also reassesses what Yeats sees as the modernist poet's role and responsibility in shaping a sense of individual and collective imagination and identity.

Yeats saw himself as Ireland's poet of historical record, even titling key poems to convey the centrality of Irish history to those poems and, eventually, to Irish historical self-understanding. For instance, "Easter, 1916" and "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" are explicitly social and historical in their expressed aims; however, they also have an internal logic that derives from, and is traceable to, *AV*'s occultist and aesthetic investments. *AV* is like a filter in a web where texts' symbolic imagery interacts—a web of philosophy, mysticism, occult doctrines, artistic beliefs, Irish literature and politics. The project's approach suggests a possible trajectory of the texts that contribute to and emerge from *AV*—an accumulation of artistic thoughts over time. The primacy of the poetic symbol—and the rhetorical authority of symbolic logic—is central to the intersection of *AV* and Yeats's poetry (and central to my project) as well as his literary undertakings. I consider how Yeats's canonical and public poems align (and sometimes misalign) with the logic of symbols outlined in *AV*. I do so to redress a long-standing assumption among Yeatsian scholars that *AV* is an outlier text—obscure to the point of impenetrability—and of little import to the study of Yeats's poetic oeuvre. *AV* is more central to Yeats's poetics and politics than most critics admit.

Scholarly discussions tend only to translate *AV*, primarily tie the text to its roots in occultism and mysticism, and isolate Yeats's prose from his verse. Commonly, critical analyses interpret *AV*'s symbolism intending to excavate a definitive meaning of the System's symbolic language. According to Hazard Adams, Yeats's symbolism in *AV* does not require belief but only acceptance "as a language through which poetic statements are made" (430) and as "stylistic arrangements of experience—a medium for the expression of literal experience" (433). Arguably,

AV's System refuses to reveal one, central interpretation of its symbols' values. Richard Ellmann, for example, claims "it is hard to find specific passages which are incomprehensible to someone who has not read *A Vision*" (233). He continues, "Yeats was careful not to require knowledge of his prose from the reader of his verse, and has made it possible to suppose that the gyre is merely the falcon's flight" (Ellmann 237). Ellmann would be correct if readers handle Yeats's poems as texts wholly distinct from each other and not as interconnected pieces of a whole. Yeats's prose anticipates and backs his poetry. He also took care in the placement and arrangement of his poetic volumes, so that poems could illuminate or comment on each other (Howes 12). According to Nicholas Serra, "the vast majority of [Yeats's] later poetry is connected to its 'system' in one way or another" ("To Never See Death" 4).

Regarding the opposition at the root of *AV* and reflected in such verse, scholars tread close to misreading Yeats by mentioning reconciliation and resolution between his symbols, for "Yeats considers the dialectics of opposites essential for any change or progress" in his art and life generally (Antonielli 8). Initially, Oliver Hennessey claims that the symbol is central to Yeats's paradoxical writing, but his attempt to force a dialogue of resolution onto *AV* risks missing the discourse of opposing forces Yeats sees as so important in his work. Yeats emphasizes the continuous oscillation of opposing forces, like the gyres expanding and narrowing or the moon and sun darkening and lightening. Matthew DeForrest rightly explains how the attraction and repulsion of opposite pairs "keeps the system constantly in motion" and concludes that "Yeats would argue that this balance is necessary both in pursuit of the mystical and in life" (20). The System's symbols of opposition offer ongoing but fruitful dynamics that are never resolved but produce art from its oscillations.

The following paragraphs introduce Yeats's theories behind his thinking and writing practices (e.g., theories of the symbol, symbolism, and poetry), which are undercurrents permeating my historical and aesthetic analysis of his poetry's magical and poetic symbols. The framework and vocabulary I employ come from Yeats himself, with some help from Liliane Louvel's text, which situates Yeats's work in theoretical and historical studies of hybrid aesthetics focused on textual-pictorial texts with countless syntheses of text/image relations. I support Louvel's endorsement of digressive works dedicated to moving beyond rigidity, like Yeats's work. Yeats's work incorporates flexibility into structures of thinking about spatial and temporal, pictorial and textual bodies of art. Louvel analyzes the "aporetic forms born of the myriad fusions of literary texts and the range of images they contain" (Jacobs 2). Arguably, Louvel's analysis helps to understand Yeats's work. His symbolic language has a grammar of opposition and difference, which has a rubric yet expands beyond it to incorporate more interpretations and meanings. Yeats's work concerns poetic traditions—to which the study of semiotics and iconography within narration belongs—yet he works alongside and against these traditions.

The primacy of the magical and poetic symbol—and the rhetorical authority of its symbolic logic—is central to the intersection of *AV* and Yeats's poetry (and central to my thesis). To build a foundation for this claim, I will discuss relations between pictures and words in literary-poetic texts—texts like Yeats's work and its fascination with those "turbulent hidden place[s] where the two streams [of contrasting visions] meet" (Kinahan 68). Similarly, Louvel's poetics of the iconotext concerns "in-between, aporetic forms" (Jacobs 2) from the "constant seesaw movement between text and image" demonstrated in textual-pictorial texts (Louvel 41). Such forms include Louvel's *iconotexts*, which reconceptualize language coding and suggest the

arbitrariness of traditional dichotomies in systems of thinking, like rhetoric, semiotics, and symbolism—gesturing towards a typology of text-image relations that blurs spatial and temporal boundaries between text and picture as well as blurring their (supposedly) oppositional figurations, symptoms, and effects. Arguably, with Louvel's iconotext as "aporetic forms" (Jacobs 2) could be assimilated Yeats's images and symbols, especially because his thinking and writing are double and paradoxical in meaning.

To begin, it is important to remember that the etymology of the word "image" connects it to the root word *imitati*, a Greek word for "'idea', which means 'to see'. It is also linked to the notion of 'eidolon', the visible image in its relation to optics and perception" (Barthes qtd. in Louvel 25). In this understanding, an image blends the visual and mental, "two semiotic systems which are fundamentally heterogenous" (Louvel 15), for an image is both the visible image in one system and an idea in another system.[1] In addition to blending experiences of seeing-thinking, viewing-reading, an image embodies multiple sites/sights—the image as the subject in of itself, a reproduction of the subject before our very eyes, and a representation of the spectators' intense, emotional reaction to the subject in the eye of the mind. The latter site/sight of the image suggests it is "a place where meaning is increased, a place of over-saturation" or over-coding—meaning, the image is a representation of what is always already present, "the sensible world which was already represented," thus it "takes on an epistemic or heuristic value" (Louvel 48).[2] The image speaks to an operation occurring between textual-image relations—the opening and closing of a place where physical and mental experiences exist alongside, around, and between one another across their spatial and temporal divides. In other words, by viewing-reading Yeats's textual-pictorial works, we are also spectating-reading William Blake, Oscar

Wilde, John Milton, Emanuel Swedenborg, Friedrich Nietzsche, Helena Blavatsky, MacGregor Mathers, and more.

The image "function[s] as allegorical vehicles, sources of symbols," thus as an "objective correlative"; however, the "sources of symbols" include Yeats as a source (Carrassi 54). He adapts into symbols the image and its visions as well as his interpretations of them—meaning the symbol is a representation of a representation.[3] In "Symbolism in Painting" (1898), Yeats links the symbol to magic, writing that the symbol is "the sign or representation of any moral thing by the images or properties of [super]natural things'" (qtd. in Flannery 47). For instance, the symbol is like a record that grants access to information about the lives of those living and dead—whether that information includes feelings and emotions, personalities and characters, thoughts and memories, historical contexts, and events. In the early 1900s, Yeats evolved "his multifaceted symbol with the help of his readings in magic" and magical rituals (Kinahan 161). Some practiced rituals translate into Yeats's esoteric system of belief, with Yeats explaining that "'all sounds, all colours, all forms, either because of their preordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions, or, as I prefer to think, call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions'" (qtd. in Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 14). As a practicing occultist, Yeats believes that when he meditates on an image, he mediates from a collective imagination of living and dead spirits, which he later terms the Great Memory and *Anima Mundi*. Such practices supposedly engage the human imagination, which Yeats defines as the following: "In Imagination only we find a human faculty that touches nature on one side, and spirit on the other" (qtd. in Flannery 43).[4] In short, Yeats suggests that the imagination is a storehouse of all images that exist and existed, representing societal traditions of all ages and thus people's realities of life.

However, Yeats wrote in 1897 that human imaginations "'are but fragments of the universal imagination'" (qtd. in Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 154). By engaging the imagination, the symbol reveals the necessity of intermediating and distancing activities that occur between nature and the mind, or the thing and representation of it, especially in practices of art. Louvel explains that the artist's psyche will retain a fragment of the world made intimately present to its subjectivity and represent that fragment "in the form of an image, an effect, or a transfer," which "is not the thing but the impression left by the thing upon the mind" because "knowledge does not consist in the things themselves so much as in our representations of those things" (22, 24). To have the thing, whether some truth or desire, placed in the sphere of subjective life, it must remain separated from the human subject "by an actual distance which knowledge cannot abolish" (Louvel 22). In short, life is full of potentialities that people inevitably prepare for and pursue—including the artistic pursuit of the thing in the world only to find its impression on the mind—but the symbol's reproductive operation offers a bridge between the human and the infinite.[5] To fully unveil the universal imagination and see its whole and tangible reality, Yeats proposes that poets conduct "willed acts of imagination as instruments of temporal power by which the [hu]man, or the nation, might be remade in conformity with idea or image, the world be made flesh" (Sidnell 107). For example, symbolic language provides an opening for the possible transformative rebirth of Ireland's past rituals, like oral storytelling about Irish folklore and fairy tales. Because it is a product of imagination, however, the symbol similarly "adverts to some truth only partly glimpsed and never fully unveiled" (Pietrzak 102).

Literary and poetic texts that form language together with pictures choose to intervene with a symbol so they may trigger readers' poetic reverie and their "pleasure of mentally contemplating an array of colors and forms, a writing of light" (Louvel 14), which is a way to

reappear in the mind's eye but also to disappear from it. Such disciplined work of crafting textual-pictorial texts encompasses Yeats's idea of "the poet's artistic and spiritual quest," for it conveys "the 'ancestral stair' trod before [Yeats] by such Anglo-Irish luminaries as Jonathan Swift" (Holdeman 96). By using the symbol, the textual-pictorial text repeatedly presents to the reader a feeling of loss in front of the object, which constitutes the poet's impossible quest for truths about realities: "To get close to the thing, to represent it, while at the same time feeling that it is ineluctably slipping away" (Louvel 20). Overall, the symbol as mediator cleaves the spatial and temporal, thus "bind[ing] language to visual terms, frustrating [people's] sense of sight as well as revealing the inadequacy of traditional means of representational from which we derive historical [and mythical] knowledge" about ourselves, people, and the world (Slapkauskaite 327). If poetry is expression and development, then using only reason and realism to recognize how the world works, and how we work with it, means nothing in itself unless we also frame knowledge and experience in imagery.

The symbols in Yeats's poetry are situated at the intersection of writing and symbolism in literature. Despite the "'beautiful relation'" of the word with the idea in "'metaphorical or 'symbolic writing'" (Yeats qtd. in Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 13-14), symbols elude singular and assured meanings; their intricate and profound meanings associate with multiple subjects and concepts (Pietrzak 65). Wit Pietrzak continues that Yeats's symbol becomes "a vehicle of vacillation" that veers between and around the eternal and the linguistic, glimpsing at an essence of the idea while also "looking for and accumulating new meanings" (Pietrzak 66). Yeats employs his symbols to convey inseparable yet contrary relations—a truth about eternal recurrence and conflict that he believes is in all structures of thought and belief throughout history and humanity.

These inseparable yet contrary relations are at work in *AV.* In *AV*, words and images extend to each other—the divide seemingly "separating the textual from the pictorial is simultaneously also a screen, a permeable zone of contact" (Jacobs 2)—and their gestures carry "meaning across discursive borders recall[ing] the ambiguity of the [artist's and spectator's] interpretive endeavour and see[ing] intermedial translation as an act of trans/formation," rather than transcription or translation (Slapkauskaite 317). As a textual-pictorial text, *AV* is also an image-text archive, suggesting that it is an accumulation of adapted visual and spatial as well as verbal and temporal discourses, semiotic systems, and meanings of lived and liveable experiences. In short, *AV* is a survey of and is in of itself intermedial transformations of events, understood as both internal procedures (e.g., thoughts) and external actions (e.g., practices). As a site of intermedial transformations, *AV*'s words "measure [their] own limitation by attempting to explain, add to and reuse that which is suggested by the pictorial mediums" (Slapkauskaite 317). Similar to what Louvel calls the functions of the symbol, *AV* also fuses "the apprehension of the real and the apprehension of the mental process[es]," "mould[s] the thought into the image so as to give it shape," questions processes of perception and knowing, and "pass[es] it on to others" (Louvel 27).

Arguably, *AV*'s System of symbolic language is an example of aesthetic hybridity, or *iconotext*, which Louvel analyzes as textual events on the level of content and form as well as on the level of reflection and response (17). Louvel suggests that as an iconotext, the textual-pictorial text is an experience of double consciousness by engaging in self-reflection of itself, thus also the artist, and its readers through experiences of representation and transformation. Part of the experience of *AV* and its symbolic language as iconotext, as an event of intermedial *transformation*, is not just its "attempt to carry across media the time-bound meanings of

historical experience[s]" but also its "examin[ations] [of] the habits of our aesthetic judgment," our judgement of literature and art as well as their responses to changes in other works (Slapkauskaite 318). *AV*'s symbols and those evoked in Yeats's poetry open language to be that which humans speak but also that which speaks humans, preserving past and present thoughts (Louvel 41).

Chapter 1

Laying a Foundation of *A Vision* and its Symbols

Through a thorough but condensed exploration of *AV*, I will discuss examples of its contexts and source texts, provide possible meanings of its symbols, and establish its close relation to poetry. *AV* is a spiritual and personal treatise in which Yeats elaborates a system of symbolism underlying myths and histories of the self, people, and nations. As a "system of his own mythologies" (Flannery 74) and a symbolical map of history (Fogarty 65), *AV* is a synthesis of Yeats's readings of and conjectures about Irish, Eastern, and Western thoughts on myth and legend, art, literature, philosophy, religion, and spirituality. This synthesis of thoughts implicates *AV*'s System "not only at the microcosmic level that relates to every individual's lived experience, but also at the macrocosmic level" (Fogarty 65). This situation on an individual and collective level applies the system to cumulative life—meaning its processes are "stylistic arrangements of experience—a medium for the expression of literal experience" and thought throughout time (Adams 433). At first, *AV* reads mostly like occult speculation and fictional prose dialogue. But like *The Trembling of the Veil* (*c*. 1920s), *AV* is also a spiritual autobiography for "part of its importance is that [it] help[s] Yeats to codify, and thus to control, his turbulent and bewildering views" (Cullingford 226), juxtaposed interests, and development as a poet.

AV provides an esoteric and aesthetic lens for Yeats to observe the rupture and emergence of a distorted and divided modernity in Ireland—observations accompanied by inner strife between Yeats's excitement for change and simultaneous apprehension of violent change. Aligning with his belief of the necessity to constantly re-think himself and his writing, "Yeats used prose, in essays, in tales in *A Vision* and in his *Autobiographies,* to work through, to examine and to discover concepts he would later restate in poetry" (Flannery 81). In short, *AV*

makes Yeats's imagined Ireland possible for conceiving and creating his poetry.[6]

AV muses over concepts about life, the afterlife, and truth in art, coinciding with Yeats's contemporaneous writing of the first few sections of his *Autobiographies* (Flannery 18). In the 1880s and 1890s, Yeats developed his confidence and self-awareness as a poet while also searching for "some system in which he could believe" (Jeffares xiv), looking to adopt a doctrine that satisfies his "desire for some form of spiritual wholeness capable of easing the world" (Holdeman 5). Between 1887 and 1891, he explored spiritualism, finding interests, especially in theosophy, alchemy, astrology, and the Tarot (Jeffares xiv; Flannery 22; Fogarty 61). After studying systems in Blake's writings, Yeats's determination to be another major poet who could work from an occult system led him to immerse himself among mystic writers—commenting in 1917 about "the inadequacy of [modern] commentaries on the 'more ancient mystics'" (qtd. in Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 158). Such a comment anticipates the earlier occult exposition systematized *ars poetica* of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1917) (Fogarty 60; Ramazani 66). In letters, Yeats writes that *PASL* is "his idea of religion," "prose backing to my poetry," and an "explanation of the religious convictions and philosophical speculations that [he] hope[s] governed [his] life" (Yeats qtd. in Pietrzak 118).[7] According to Pietrzak, however, "only *A Vision* would be awarded as much attention and would be directly associated with his poems" (118). Furthering his immersion into and remediation of inadequate mystic writing, Yeats studies and participates in séances and automatic writing under the tutelage and mediumship of his wife, Georgie Hyde-Lees. Approximately between 1917 and 1923, the Yeatses conducted sessions with Spirit Guides, or Instructors, and recorded dialogues in the Automatic Scripts, attendant notebooks, and card files (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 211).[8] According to Matthew Fogarty, Yeats notes that the Spirit Guides "chose to communicate using the terminology and themes that

feature" in *PASL* (60), continuing and deepening *AV*'s association to Yeats's lifelong religious, occultist, philosophical, and poetic thoughts and practices.[9] Yeats had been establishing and adapting these thoughts and practices long before systematizing and codifying them in *AV* and contemporaneous poetry.

For Yeats, *AV* anticipates a milestone for his current and future writing—promising an aesthetic shift towards spiritual and psychological expressions of poetic thought, genius, and experience.[10] Yeats advertises that *AV* includes "'a mystic philosophy as radical as that of [Emanuel] Swedenborg'," "'symbolism sweet enough for those few who master my symbols'," and "'such wisdom of life, result of much toil & concentration, has been granted to me, that part of me that is a creative mystic, that made out of the shadow of Swedenborg'" (qtd. in Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 167).[11] Supposedly, Yeats's symbols require mastery, whom few will achieve to grasp the symbolism. But his readers are likely familiar with his poetry, for which he also takes "great pains to disguise his hidden intents and subject matter, like magical belief and esoteric meanings" (Kinahan 14). Arguably, readers' attempts to master the symbols' inner structures of meaning sidestep the task implied in Yeats's insistence that readers must grasp the symbols as "metaphors for poetry" (qtd. in Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 211).[12] In other words, the symbols neither offer a faith, require belief, nor convey an absolute, ultimate truth (Pietrzak 36). Instead, they require acceptance "as a language through which poetic statement are made" (Adams 430). The symbols provide partially glimpsed truths of reality, which convey conceived and conceivable thoughts as well as lived and liveable experiences.

I uphold that the Yeatses did not only investigate *AV*'s System itself but also his development and potential as an aging poet (Pietrzak 142); however, I add that they investigated the expansion and endurance of ancient, mystic symbols and, thus, Yeats's poetry (Kinahan 137).

AV and its symbols are "structure[s] for Yeats's thought, for the ideas" he is assimilating from all his readings, further contributing to his determination to work from an occult system and write "out of all the fullness of his interests" (Jeffares xix). He writes prose to process concepts he later argues about in poetry, so his poetry will have an internal logic that derives from, and is traceable to, *AV*. But the symbols are especially crucial to understanding his poetic process. According to Frank Kinahan, "it is rare that any work by Yeats can be pinned down by a single sentence … draw[ing] their energy from the clash of contrasting visions," lyrics speaking directly to "that turbulent hidden place where the two streams meet" (68). Kinahan synthesized this observation of Yeats's work by quoting Yeats himself, who writes that "'a hundred generations might write out what seemed the meaning' of a given symbol, 'and they would write different meanings, for no symbol tells all its meaning to any generation'" (qtd. in Kinahan 135). Yeats's symbolism performs a portion of his work through symbols that, when used correctly, will "take on lives of their own in the minds of readers" and, thus, provide poetic, not definitive, statements in response to his rhetorical questioning and conflicted, poetic voice (Serra, "To Never See Death," 2). *AV* refuses to reveal one, central interpretation of its symbols, denying Yeats and readers full comprehension of its knowledge. Arguably, these symbols attend to "that turbulent hidden place where two streams meet," which Yeats's poetry speaks of; they embody "varieties of a collision between subjective and objective apprehension[s] of reality" (Kinahan 68; Sidnell 58). In short, the symbols are dualistic, often with multiple meanings, and admit readings that are exoteric and/or esoteric (Kinahan 138). By allowing his symbols to be dualistic, Yeats's symbolism offers the potential for readings that are more profound and more sensitive glimpses into the expansive and enduring truths about art, literature, people, life, and Ireland—truths that have ramifications on personal, social, and historical levels across time.

Pre- and Inter-Textual Dimensions of A Vision

A common shortcoming among some Yeatsian scholars is rooting *AV* and its symbols primarily to its spiritual and occult influences. Arguably, this tactic supports a biographical approach that largely selects a singular channel of access to a text. Yeats's work endorsed a poet's freedom from biographical prejudice, meaning "the assumption that a unique access to a particular experience of life and memory of that experience must issue in a continuous and integral body of poetry" (Sidnell 66). Also, such tactics maintain *AV* as an outlier text, obscure to the point of impenetrability, unless a reader masters mystic writing. *AV* becomes a system of his mythologies, but he originally inherits and develops "from Irish folk belief what corresponds to his own accumulating set of beliefs" (Flannery 74). Yeats writes in the dedication to *AV* (1925) that his system of symbolism "was merely 'now an interpretation, now an enlargement of the folklore of the villages'" (qtd. in Serra, "When 'She' Is," 141). For instance, the folklore that inscribes human life on circular structures (e.g., wheels, circles), possibly to echo the religious word and the Celtic entanglements of the *Book of Kells* (Louvel 45), is one of Yeats's pre-existing beliefs of which he attempts to "intellectually justify and validate" through his intense studies in theosophy (Serra, "When 'She' Is," 149). He recaptures an Ireland and Irish poetics that he sees is in "final degradation" by codifying folk beliefs into his symbolism (Serra "When 'She' Is," 141).[13] For example, the Irish fairy tale is amidst transitions from oral storytelling to writing, situated in a greater context where "conversation and innovation were in perennial conflict" (Carrassi 35). The fairy tale is becoming a gradual fusion of two two-fold contexts that are different but consonant, which likely informed Yeats's developing beliefs of dualities. Irish folk beliefs, whether figured in folklore, art, or tales, and how they exert influence on Yeats's poetic symbols and poetry will receive further exploration and analysis in Chapter 2. Yeatsians should not just consider *AV* through a lens of Yeats's occultism, as folklore informs it as well.

Irish folk beliefs appealed to Yeats on personal and cultural levels. For example, the beliefs “appealed to [Yeats] on occult, philosophical, and literary grounds, and its pervasiveness throughout his *oeuvre* is part and parcel of one of his major concerns, identifying himself specifically as an Irish writer, and to assert the distinctiveness of ‘Irishness’ as a cultural identity” (Serra, “When ‘She’ Is,” 140). Establishing himself as a poet-editor more than a folklorist, Yeats adapts Irish folk beliefs to establish and clarify his poetry of Ireland and identity as a poet. Yet, he also sees himself as Ireland’s poet of historical and magician of mythical record. Exemplifying past writers of Gaelic literature and tradition, Yeats claims that Ireland has “in Berkeley and in Burke a philosophy on which it is possible to base the whole life of a nation,” a great folk literature that speaks (qtd. in Flannery 57). Yeats likely means the patrimony of tales circulating cottages of the Irish countryside that continue memories of a Celtic past through storytelling. Such literature shares similarities in the nature of the Celtic spirit, which is “all that goes beyond mere sense-perception, to an attraction to that unreachable world lying well beyond everyday reality, to the near-devaluation of pure corporeity in the name of a striving for the absolute, the infinite” (Carrassi 28). Such great folk literature contains an undisturbed folk-life and -spirit, offering subject matter, rooted in ancestral thought, that could make the past present, and possibly shape the future in a vision of union (Flannery 66). For Yeats, *AV* becomes his literature that speaks, and his symbols become the subject matter.

As his interests in spiritualism direct him to occultism, he believes that the dead and spirits bring symbols in visions which connect us with the past and the present.[14] Through Yeats’s double vision, his attitude toward history and mythology is magical. As a young poet and occultist, Yeats’s practices emphasize the “magical symbols, which, ‘taken from nature’, [are] ‘to be everything, in short, that one could put into poetry, or into pictorial design’” (Kinahan 154).

This then conveys thoughts, experiences, and a sense of being into "the realm of readers' intuition, interpretation, and culture" (Louvel 58). As an act of mediation in of itself, the magical symbol acts like symbols in Irish folklore and fairy tales, which are "a literature for whom everything is a symbol, every real event has the capacity to be read symbolically, and all fundamental incidents in life, whether birth, love, suffering, and death, are simple and understandable in their consistent, unchanging, and totalizing presence throughout history" (Carrassi 56). As Yeats grapples with being a poet and occultist in the eighties and nineties, he adopts an understanding and discipline of the poet. For Yeats, the poet is the one who has order, or authority, over reciting and regulating verse and speech so it has form and beauty (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 13). The magician, in turn, is the "one who controls and uses his will to create new possibilities for apprehension and understanding" (Flannery 48). The magical symbols shape Ireland's future by enabling Yeats and his poetry to correspond to Irish people's collective imagination and identity in the past, present, and future.

Through *AV*'s System of symbolic language, Yeats reveals that his writing works from citations of citations—a multi-layered web where systems and their symbols interact amongst accumulations of hypertextualized texts and thoughts throughout time. Attempting to work from correlations of numerous systems of thought, Yeats contemplates how his "burgeoning system" in *AV*, and contemporaneous writing, may recontextualize his occult-influenced symbolism and framework "within the framework of Irish mythology and folk belief" (Serra, "When 'She' Is," 145-46).[15] In the 1880s and 1890s when Yeats's spiritual interests directed him to Eastern mysticism and theology, two esoteric societies that significantly influence his occult studies and *AV*'s System of symbolic language: Madame Helen Blavatsky's Dublin Theosophical Society and MacGregor Mathers's Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. In the Theosophical Society,

Yeats "learned the basis for his lifelong interest in Eastern" theosophies; and with the Order, he conducted his first "successful magical experimentation [with rituals, spells, and symbols] as a member of a Cabbalistic society" (Flannery 22). Both societies exchange ideas from numerous schools of thought, including but not limited to Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Paganism, Gnosticism, Rosicrucianism, Cabbalism, Hermeticism, and Neoplatonism. As a specific example, *AV*'s System recontextualizes "the Golden Dawn's Egypto-Christian symbolism" (Serra, "When 'She' Is," 146), which includes sacred writings and diagrams of world histories translated from Ancient Egyptian theology.[16] In the Automatic Script on June 27, 1918, for instance, the Yeatses list Athanasius Kircher's *Lingua Aegyptiaca Restituta* [Egyptian Language Restored] (1643) among their readings that relate to or influence their thinking about *AV*'s System of symbolic language (Mann 168).[17] Combining Arab wisdom, Egyptian language, and European adaptation, Kircher's work serves as Cabalistic material and currency in Hermetic circles (Mann 176),[18] explaining the Yeatses familiarity with him and some "striking parallels with the System of *A Vision*, specifically the dualism of the *primary* and *antithetical Tinctures*, the associated imagery of light and dark, the intersecting cones and spiral gyres, and the characterisation of the Moon's phases" inspired by the order, progression, and sequences of the Mansions of the Moon (Mann 178). The influences on the dynamics of *AV*'s symbols and framework extend beyond occult and esoteric-magical-cabalistic societies and their readings, furthering the idea that the symbols are citations of citations.[19]

After writing *PASL*, Yeats educated himself in readings of philosophy (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 154). Such readings include, but are not limited to, Greek philosophers like Homer and Hesiod, pre-Socratic philosophers like Heraclitus, Platonists like Henry More, Neo-Platonists like Plotinus, as well as the philosophies of Nietzsche, Carl Jung, and Jacques Lacan (Fogarty

62; Hollis 294; Olney 46; Schwall 222; Daiya 274). Of note, each philosophical writer discusses demonstrations of intersecting dualities, eternal conflict, and recurring absence, all relating to an overall principle of concord, or union, and discord in the world.[20] Similarly, the Theosophical Society's symbol of the six-pointed star "is a primary embodiment of the equilibrium that exists between opposing poles…which contain the essence of truth but can only be fully expressed once they have been reconciled" (Antonielli 9). A similar view lies in the doctrine of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which holds that "creation manifests a continual war of opposites emanating from a single universal soul," and that one may merge with this soul and control its energies (Holdeman 18).[21] Although this belief in such a world principle of eternal conflict is vastly different from the attitude Yeats's upholds in *AV*, the belief is what he presents in his representations of Irish fairy-lore, specifically the Sidhe (Serra, "When 'She' Is," 149). Yeats claims "in the dedication to the 1925 of *A Vision* that the entire system of the Golden Dawn regarding the various planes of existence … within which [his] own personal system could be understood" is a synthesis of correspondences between numerous systems of thought, but specifically Irish folk beliefs (qtd. in Serra, "When 'She' Is," 141).

In early years, Yeats traced material he heard and read in print about "the Gaelic legends, the Cuchulain saga and the tales of the Fianna" (xiii), a practice "echoing Shelley and Spenser and the pre-Raphaelites" (Jeffares xiii). In his movement towards a revived and distinct Ireland, Yeats explains an underlying belief that "'a work beg[a]n in the Renaissance; we are reuniting the mind and soul and body of man to the living world outside us'. A like thought virtually concludes *A Vision*" (qtd. in Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 129). This thought verifies for him "the folklore of the country people that one might really be 'carried away body and soul'" (Serra, "When 'She' Is," 149). *AV*'s System of symbolic language gestures towards his boyhood belief

that an "equilibrium," or union of the individual, people, and nation, that "Western art verifies had been manifest in sixth-century Byzantium and in Italy around 1450" (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 151). Throughout his oeuvre's various themes and poetic speakers, Yeats "takes great pains to disguise his hidden intents and subject matter" (Kinahan 141), but the magical belief and esoteric meanings still underlay his writing.

The Symbols of Opposition in A Vision

AV's System is a language of symbols rooted in oppositions—from the *primary* and *antithetical* phases, to the Four *Faculties* and Four *Principles*, through relations of the *Daimon* and self, the objective and subjective, to layers of further tensions. In *AV*, the complex, geometric system of double gyres, the central symbol of wheels within wheels, operates as oscillating and interpenetrating cones that run antithetical to each other. In Book 1, the microcosmic Great Wheel is a metaphysical construct that demonstrates the Phases of an individual's lived and livable experiences; Book 3 includes a macrocosmic Great Wheel called the Historical Cones, which demonstrates cycles, or Great Years, of "all humankind's known history" (Fogarty 65). Of note, the Round Tower is a symbol that encompasses the Wheel, gyres, and cones. Arguably, the Round Tower exemplifies an emblem of circular or cyclical formations, which are important in Irish literature (Louvel 45) for several reasons, including that Irish folk beliefs carry "an exclusive predilection for the art of the world, so much so that 'there is scarcely a hill, rock, or river pool, a ruined castle or abbey which has not its own story" (Carrassi 29). Furthermore, the Round Tower is a forerunner for the Great Wheel, thus also the gyres and cones. From 1918 and 1922, Thoor Ballylee has great significance as being the site for Yeats's early composition of *AV* as he likely drafted parts of *AV* A, at least Book 1, at the tower.[22] Beyond his initial feelings of enchantment by the aesthetic and historical beauty of Thoor Ballylee, Yeats eventually

experiences the Tower specifically as a physical embodiment of *AV*'s system of double gyres; its structure of combined and intersected lines, planes, and funnels resembles for him the geometrical foundation and spiralling of the gyres.

Exemplary of a single gyre to a great, stationary cone, the Great Wheel diagram illustrates the (multi)linear and cyclical movement of the double gyres—the system's geometrical foundation and mathematical forms simplified. The Great Wheel illustrates the tense connections between the system's symbols—a design of overlapped and interwoven cycles that expand and retract with conical points that repulse and attract in relation to each other. The result is a structure resembling spiral knots in a double helix and a gyrating movement. According to Yeats, his "Great Wheel is 'an expression of alternations of passion', and the conflict between the gyres is a repetition on a cosmic scale of the old battle between the sexes" (qtd. in Cullingford 240). Essentially, his explanation is a Joycean reduction of the system, reducing elements of the geometric and mathematical structure to the sexual act. "'A row of numbers upon the sides" of the Great Wheel diagram are phasic divisions corresponding to phases of the moon and its synodic cycle with the sun, symbols which Yeats also sexualized and gendered (Fogarty 63; Mann 164, 167).

On the Great Wheel diagram, the conical points correspond to the phases of a being's life, which archetypally cycles through twenty-eight embodiments, analogous to sun and moon symbols. As a being's life cycles through the twenty-eight phases, "all their lived experiences correspond to a process that sees them pass from the primary, objective state, through the antithetical, subjective state, and ultimately returned to the primary, objective state, where the cycle begins anew" (Fogarty 64).[23] By objective, Yeats means the embodiments occupying the solar phases are primary man: "Under the Sun's light we see things as they are, and go about our

day's work" (*AV* A, 14). By subjective, Yeats means the embodiments occupying the lunar phases are antithetical man: "While under that of the Moon, we see things dimly, mysteriously, all is sleep and dream" (14). According to Yeats, the Great Wheel's sun and moon symbols can be understood as expressions alternations of passion, specifically "as 'symbols of the relations of men and women and of the birth of children'" (qtd. in Cullingford 240).[24] Unlike traditional systems of symbolism and gendered binaries, however, "the two antimonies are both active, if anything the lunar more active than the solar, since the antithetical or lunar force is creative and individual rather than receptive and communal" and passive (Mann 191). Both the primary, objective sun and antithetical, subjective moon battle for mastery—the contest for dominance analogous to the waxing and waning of the moon and eclipsing of the sun. Aside from Yeats's suggested sexualized and gendered reading, David Holdeman suggests that the fight for mastery between the sun and moon is also understood as continual playing with the birth of character or personality (69).[25] Yeats clarifies that Phase 15, or the wholly subjective state characterized as "entire beauty," and Phase 1, or the wholly objective state characterized as "entire plasticity", "are not human embodiments, as human life is impossible without the strife" (*AV* A, 15).[26] In this classification, Yeats suggests the necessity of conflicting and interpenetrating dualities, or a person would neither be a character with a conscience nor develop personality and become conscious of themself as an individual. The proportion in which the subjective and objective embodiments combine in an individual also determines their character and personality.

While cycling through the twenty-eight phases, a person's embodiment depends on the combined condition of their four mental powers or Faculties. The Four Faculties are *Will*, *Mask*, *Creative Mind*, and *Body of Fate*.[27] According to Yeats, the Will is without desire or bias because it is a feeling uninfluenced by thought, action or emotion—in other words, the Will is like the

self-will, or ego, for it functions as the basic act of choice.[28] Yeats continues, "the *Mask* is predestined, *Destiny* being that which comes to us from within," as opposed to fated, "because by fate is understood that which comes from without" (16). By this, Yeats means the Mask represents a choice of the self rather than a self forced upon us from the external environment. Through an analogy of an actor on stage, Yeats further explains that a being "must play a role and wear a Mask as unlike as possible to his natural character (or Will) and [that] leaves him to improvise…the dialogue and details of the plot. He must discover a being that only exists with extreme effort when his muscles are as it were all taut and all his energies active; for that reason, the *Mask* is "A form created by passion to unite us to ourselves" (18). In short, the Mask is our anti-self, for it is all the self lacks. Not only does the Mask compensate for lack, but it also provides visions of life possibly lived. Thus, a person may strive for their Mask to feel whole or unified. The Four Faculties engage in a continuous dance of contest and embrace, each working for dominance. Yeats expands on the opposition between Will and Mask by writing, "There is an enforced attraction between opposites, for the Will has a natural desire for the Mask" (23). By this, Yeats suggests that a person's life is a quest in pursuit of their Mask, a self in pursuit of anti-self.[29] However, they will endlessly search for their proper Mask—the self continuously failing to embrace its anti-self, unless it overcomes its darker double, the Daimon.

The Daimon, a concept interrelated with the Mask and the anti-self, is an exact inverted reversal of a being—a form "set before us by accident, or [that] swims up from the dark portion of the mind," and embodies "those emotional associations which come out of the dark" (Yeats, *AV* A, 24). In short, the Daimon embodies passions that belong to the entire dark of a being's mind—passions that come in subconscious dreams, not reality. The Daimon comes after "the being, through the intellect, selects some object of desire for a representation of the Mask as

Image, some woman perhaps, and the Body of Fate [e.g., time] snatches away the object" (64). After losing the original desired ideal, the person's intellect, or imagination, "must substitute some new image of desire" (64). In other words, they search for a Mask antithetical to their self (i.e., anti-self) as a substitute for the image of a lost desire. By so seeking, however, they risk repeating the loss because the Daimon is a subconscious force that forces dreaded images from the physical and mental environment, like ageing or mortality. Thus, the search simultaneously resorts in dreaded images of impersonated passions, which are deadly influences that stifle the person's thoughts and tangible expressions (Pietrzak 124, 126-28). The self struggles to find the appropriate Mask and define its anti-self to replace what it lacks, but for this very reason, it will never accomplish an absolute sense of wholeness. Every new act of substitution and representation becomes a small defeat, always failing to find the image of desires. Although these repeated failures are seemingly productive for the act of agency in itself—whether figured as intellectual or imaginative thought and spatial/pictorial or temporal/textual expressions—the effect will not be a passionate image that expresses entire, true beauty.[30]

Cruxes Between A Vision *and Poetry*

Several of Yeats's creatively strong precursors inspired the principle of conflict behind his symbols. Before public access to the *Automatic Script* and *Vision Papers*, Yeatsians "generally assumed that these [occult] interest[s] could be separated from" Yeats's poetic practices and works because, at the time, Yeats only overtly "acknowledged the abiding relevance of these occult interests in his 1921 preface to *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*" (Fogarty 60). However, *AV* contains several poetic cruxes related to Yeats's poetry as well as literary and poetic works influencing him. In the poetic prelude of *AV* A, Yeats imposes upon Renaissance examples of the pastoral dialogue a didactic, verse discourse about his occult

treatise, which "produce[s] a fictional prose dialogue with a connection in manuscript to the poem "'The Phases of the Moon'" (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 130).[31] For the poetic transitions, or intermissions, before chapters of *AV* A, Yeats uses excerpts from drafts of "The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid," "Leda and the Swan," and "The Hero, the Girl, and the Fool" in opposition to abstract illustrations and writings about elements of the System. The first poem sits opposite the gyres, a review of a person's journey through systems of astrological calendars; the second sits opposite the Historical Cones, a "review of history through the evidence of art" and culture; and the third in opposition to concepts of afterlife, a review of the way of the soul in death and rebirth (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 176, 178). In the poetic epilogue of *AV* A, Yeats dedicates "All Soul's Night: An epilogue" as an elegiac tribute to dead friends, who include William Horton, Florence Farr Emery, and MacGregor Mathers from Yeats's early life as a mystic in the Golden Dawn (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 176). Between November 5, 1917, and March 29, 1920, Yeats's poetry is directly part of bodies of writing for *AV*—aligning with readers' impressions that such poems, when read in their collections, are sections of a larger, interconnected arrangement (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 178).[32]

Wayne Chapman argues that the literary conditions orbiting Yeats's work "is characteristic of the poet's attempt to lend reality to the abstractions of psychic research in order to make them intelligible" and simple wisdom for readers (*Yeats's Poetry* 130). While I agree, I maintain that Yeats also seems to be intellectually confirming his pre-existing Irish folk- and poetic-beliefs (Serra, "When 'She' Is," 149). Chapman even notes, for instance, *AV*'s contextualization of "The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid" adapts from the poem's independent creative energy as "Yeats's most ambitious Noh adaptation from Ballylee legends" (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 130, 168, 178; Jeffares xiv). [33] Besides Irish folklore, the philosophical and poetic

readings exerting influence on *AV* include Blake, Wilde, and Milton.

Blake has a critically undisputed influence on Yeats, exemplified by the poetic crux of Blake in *AV*. While editing *The Works of William Blake* (1893), Edwin J. "Ellis and Yeats trace[d] the connection between [Blake's] system and that of Swedenborg or of Boehme" (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 160). Yeats's editorial notes, however, specifically recognize attributes in "the twenty-seven Heavens of the Mundane Shell…morphed from circle to helix in [his section] 'The Symbolic System', laying the signs of the Zodiac upon the geometry of heaven as described by Swedenborg" (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 167).[34] Drawing correspondences to fragments in occult doctrines,[35] the Yeatses conceive Blake's circulation of the Zoas as "countervailing, waxing and waning, male- and female-gendered gyres" (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 167)—a system which he works from to write poems like "The Mental Traveller."[36] The poem follows the lives of a man and woman, "bound to one another in unending sexual strife," who "grow alternately old and young" (Cullingford 240); and "like intersecting points of the primary and antithetical gyres, the points at which the protagonists of the two stories are of equal age (by turns, the one aging as the other grows younger) are marked by 'a plight'" (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 179). In *AV,* Yeats's attributes "The Mental Traveller" as an antecedent to his conception of the gyres and twenty-eight phases on the Great Wheel. In contradiction to Blake, Yeats's conception adapts the symbolic system to be a Great Memory or Universal Mind that is *alive* and *undivided,* for he believes "the imagination and society are inseparable" (qtd. in Flannery 44-45)—a precursory conceptualization for his later concept of *Anima Mundi*. By misreading Blake's poem, however, this poetic crux of *AV* "proves not to be a poem that Yeats could *not* understand; but it is a poem he understood *better* in light of his own intervention" (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry,* 181).[37] Yeats distinguishes himself as a poet and magician and Blake as prophet and mystic—as "one who

submits his will to a system or vision" (Flannery 48).

Arguably, Yeats's *AV* enacts the circulating and conflicting attributes of Blake's system. Yeats's poetry and prose work in a perpetually veering away and towards influences of Blake, thus also Swedenborg and Boehme—indicating that practices of writing involve a perpetual return to the same thing, a cycle of competing differences growing at one another's expense.[38] Similarly, Yeats's long-establishing and -developing theory of eternal recurrence and conflict was established in his earlier poetry, particularly in metaphorical representations of the body-heart-soul trifecta (e.g., "The Cap and Bells"). Yeats's ongoing creative process "rework[s] motifs and elements from [Oscar] Wilde's fairy tales," like "The Fisherman and his Soul" (Liang 145). Their poetry about fairies centers on the trifecta as they cycle through separation and reunion, which is on two planes: embodied by an inner war about identity within the individual and embodied by absent and inaccessible desires between lovers (Liang 145-46). This cycling between exhalation and decrepitude, striving and changing of the self, and seeking for and lacking union adapts into Yeats's concepts of the gyre, mask and Daimon, and dualities. For Wilde, the restoration of the trifecta occurs as death and union overlap, symbolizing God's divine love; but for Yeats, union through death does not celebrate divine love but pure, ideal love, and not love only celebrated in a world more ethereal than this one but also in the secular world (Liang 145-46).

Despite transcribing his misreadings and errors of Milton, Yeats discovers the symbols for his mythology. The Miltonic crux surfaces in *AV*'s "The Phases of the Moon," for example, in which the icon of Yeats "tower is the same one that Milton imagined" in "The Lonely Tower" (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 138). However, Yeats displaces the person of Milton, an emblem of the Tarot Hermit, with the personae of Owen Aherne and Michael Robartes, emblems of disguised old men, which correspond with the "Eternals" of Blake, the "Masters" of Mathers, the

"Spirit Guides" or "Instructors:"of Yeats (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 138-39).[39] Also, drafts of *AV* indicate that Yeats intends the poem's verse dialogue to associate with music, speech, and dance, regarding it as a song derived from Milton's Platonic dialect of love—a "direct appeal to Yeats's theory of the self and anti-self" as well as the primary and antithetical selves (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 140). This dialectic song indicates Yeats's readings included Milton's tractate, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643), which includes the legend of Eros and Anteros and teaches about reconciling the split self (Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 142). On the one hand, Yeats's practice and writing around *AV* adapts from Milton's work. On the other hand, Yeats distances himself, for example, by underestimating Milton's historical and contemporary effect on his "'unreality and cold rhetoric' on terms of the synthesis of form and subject matter and the 'awaken[ed] sexual desire' in much Italian paintings between 1500 and 1650" (qtd. in Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 147). In other words, Yeats alludes to Milton as an example of an artist who is out of phase with history because Yeats interprets that such artists and art seek to inspire and deepen reverie and passion across a nation, effectively transforming an image-text into a cognitive event, a symbolical state of the collective imagination.

I maintain critics' claims that Yeats's work repeatedly demonstrates "his own movement out and away" from writers like Blake, Wilde, and Milton—often seeming to still "be drawn even against his will towards" the shadows of his influences (Flannery 38; Liang 146). Despite his departures, however, Yeats ultimately returns to the poetry of his predecessors. Yeats chooses poetry to keep him from fully submitting to a spiritual system, indicated early on in life when, for instance, he quotes lyrics from Milton rather than submit his will during his first séance.[40] For Yeats, poetry involves a process of paradoxically developing and sustaining subjective personality. With Blake, Wilde, and Milton as examples, Yeats's work demonstrates an

anxiousness about literary and artistic influences on him creatively and personally, attempting to construct his unique identity and nationality. His work's simultaneous incorporation of and divergence from its poetic cruxes not only embodies the dynamics of *AV*'s System of symbolic language but also is a self-reflection of Yeats's thinking and poetic-writing practices—further commenting on how Yeats conceives his magical and poetic symbols as emphasizing the importance of eternal recurrence and conflict in personal, social, and historical contexts.

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[1] This interpretive understanding of the term image comes from Louvel endorsing W.J.T Mitchell's "larger conclusion that pictures must be read as arbitrary codes—as images in one system, say, and as descriptions in another (Jacobs 6). In her literature review, Louvel engages with other works that historicize text/image relations through their traditional dichotomies, like work by Nelson Goodman that "elaborates a general grammar of symbolic systems" and Ernst Gombrich that "elaborates a grammar of difference" around the term image (Louvel 40).
[2] The image is a full-fledged 'figure' of *enargeia*. See n. 44, 45, and 46 for explanations of *enargeia*.
[3] Yeats's conception of the symbol takes inspiration from Plato's Allegory of the Cave. According to Daiya, "Plato puts the concept of the natural world as an object not of thought and logic but that of opinion assisted by the senses. Its origin is traced to a cause and, as a creation, it is a copy generated in the image of what is eternal and unchangeable" (274). Daiya continues, "Plotinus too posits a similar idea, saying that the universe has sprung from the divine world, of which it is an image" (274). Also, see Porphyry's Cave of the Nymphs in the Thirteenth Book of the Odyssey for another philosophic viewpoint inspired by the Platonic tradition.
[4] Flannery continues, "The definition of imagination [Yeats] gives here follows not Blake but Coleridge and concisely presages Yeats's own belief and those of Wallace Stevens, who would write: 'Reality is life and life is society and the imagination and reality; that is to say, the imagination and society are inseparable'" (qtd. in Flannery 44). This defined concept of imagination will eventually be a short step away from his later concept of *Anima Mundi*, understandable as the universal imagination that encompasses the imaginations of all that live and lived.
[5] When explaining concepts of art and knowledge, Louvel cites Kant and Derrida: "For Kant, art is the connecting bridge: 'The bridge is a symbol, and the symbol is a bridge'. Derrida writes that a mediator between the things and the representation of the thing, a reproductive operation, an activity between the mind and nature" (24).
[6] I write 'imagined Ireland' because I agree that a younger "Yeats identified himself with an Ireland created from his own mind and, in a fierce and ultimately unsentimental fashion, loved the Ireland he had created" (Flannery 55)—meaning one yet to be made terrible by modern science and materialism. In *The Trembling of the Veil* (*c.* 1920s), Yeats also acknowledges his imagination of Ireland when "noting his growth into 'the man who would later see that the dream of my early manhood, that a modern nation can return to Unity of Culture, is false'" (qtd. in Flannery 20).
[7] The essays in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* include symbolism inspired by writers including Blake, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Athanasius Kircher. Pietrzak writes that "the two essays that comprise *PASL*, 'Anima Homini' and 'Anima Mundi', constitute mediation on [a] man's relation to the afterlife and the fate of the soul after the body dies" (118).
[8] The Yeatses' Spirit Guides or Instructors likely borrow from occult circles' concept of Masters. Yeats's poetry employs his earlier concept of a Great Memory and his later concept of Anima Mundi. From the Memory, 'Masters' transmit sacred thoughts and ideas of reality to the artist. For a mystic, the 'Masters' are "'the wind and the harlot, the virgin and the child, the lion and the eagle'. Elsewhere the 'Masters' are disembodied voices from 'a Great Memory', a general mind associated with the daimon and 'his meditorial shades', the passionate or 'illustrious dead', 'the dream martens that … are master-masons to the living martens'" (Yeats qtd. in Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 154).
[9] Fogarty also writes that in the preface to *A Vision B* (1937), Yeats does "contend that his paranormal communicators shared his 'symbolical map of history' with him before the 1918 publication of [Oswald Spengler's] *Spengler's The Decline of the West*," which he acknowledged shares "many similarities" with his "historical metanarrative" (61).

[10] Likely because of Yeats's "knack for anticipating trends" in literature (Kinahan 42), critics hypothesize that Yeats's timing for the publication and advertisement of *AV* (1925) anticipates the emerging "Surrealist atmosphere of the 1930s which encouraged artists to explore and expose the workings of the unconscious," which may support *AV*'s contents about "'naturalistic conception of poetic experience and a radically non-mimetic conception of poetic knowledge'" (Paul de Man qtd. in Schwall 231).

[11] I amend that in *AV*, Yeats does not toil directly in 'the shadow of Swedenborg' but, rather, works in a perpetually veering/weaving towards and away from influences of such mystic writers—essentially enacting an understanding of how functions of thought work, like how literature and people form and express understandings of the world. I maintain critics' claims that Yeats's work repeatedly demonstrates "his own movement out and away" from writers like Milton, Blake, and Wilde—often seeming to still "be drawn even against his will towards" the shadows of his influences (Flannery 38; Liang 146).

[12] The phrase 'metaphors for poetry' first surfaces in the Automatic Scripts for *A Vision* but is only written in "Introduction to *A Vision*" of *A Vision B* (1937). According to Yeats's notes, he reported the phrase during one of Georgie Hyde-Lees's automatic writing sessions on October 24, 1917 (Adams 432). The full phrase is, "We have come to give you metaphors for poetry," and supposedly refers to one of the 'Instructors' who uses Georgie as a medium to write and speak through (Adams 432; Chapman, "'Metaphors for Poetry'," 217).

[13] In his earlier work, Yeats straddles the line of modernism compared to his modernist contemporaries (e.g., Pound, Joyce, Eliot). Yeats does not deny breaks from tradition—a sense of discontinuity upheld by modernists—"but he will not submit to the notion that such a break has already made necessary … a new poetics" for Ireland at the time (Sidnell 65).

[14] Despite popular interpretations that Yeats's interests in occultism sprang from the mid- to late-eighties and nineties (e.g., Dublin Hermetic Society, Dublin Theosophical Society, Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn), Fogarty interestingly notes that Yeats's "occult interests were initially sparked by his relatives and their servants at the Pollexfen family home at Merville in County Sligo, who were unified by their infatuation with the paranormal, despite their disparate social backgrounds" (61).

[15] Among documents in the *Automatic Scripts*, the Yeatses catalogue parallels between corresponding systems (e.g., the Zodiac, Tarot, Mansions of the Moon, Ancient Egyptian Theology, and astrology) and various elements of *AV*'s system. For example, the scheme of "the 'four quarters' on which [Yeats] based his system in *A Vision* … closely resembles part of the [initiation] rituals Yeats began writing for an Irish Mystical Order while he worked on" co-editing *The Works of William Blake* (Flannery 42). Flannery continues, "The rite was to be based on the four ancient Talismans of Ireland: The Sword, The Stone, The Spear, and The Cauldron. Yeats associates each of them with parts of the body, states of the soul, colours, and geographical directions" (43).

[16] For a thorough exploration into Christian-Egyptian symbolism rooted in Yeats's ideas of dualities, reoccurring and eternal conflict, opposition and unity, see Mann, Neil. "George Yeats and Athanasius Kircher." *Poems and Context: Yeats Annual No. 16*, edited by Warwick Gould, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 163-193. Mann discusses several texts in library catalogues and the Yeatses personal library that they likely consult for information about the twenty-eight sectors of the Zodiac and twenty-eight lunar mansions, all corresponding to the system of the Mansions of the Moon. The possible texts include Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Franklin's Tale," Johannes Hispalensis's *Epitome totius astrologiae* [Epitome of the whole of astrology] (1548), Costa ben Luca's *De differentia spiritus et animae* (*c.* 870 A.D), H.C. Agrippa's *De Occulta Philosophia* [Books of Occult Philosophy] (*c.* 1553), Athanasius Kircher's *Lingua Aegyptiaca Restituta* [Egyptian Language Restored] (*c.* 1643) and *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (*c.* 1652-54), and Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Ibn Waḥshīyah's *Ancient Alphabets and Hieroglyphic Characters Explained* (1806). According to translations, edits, and versions of Ancient Egypt's traditional systems of language, hieroglyphic diagrams, religion, and writing, "Egyptian thought had fed into the Greek Mysteries and was the source of the Platonic idea of *Anima Mundi*, a pagan trope for God" (Mann 179), and this "pagan intimation of true deity had passed from the Egyptians' Hemphta to the Platonists' and Stoics' *Anima Mundi* to become Virgil's *Spiritus intus*" (Mann 182-83). Essentially, symbols express ideas concerning *Anima Mundi*—the divisions of "the containers of sacred thought links to the fragmentation of divine unity" (Mann 181). According to Yeats, the poet who dreams of the symbols draws inspiration from *Anima Mundi*, makes the ideas incarnate, and can re-create truths of lived and livable thoughts and experiences, thus "they may be 'part of the one history, and that the soul's'" (qtd. in Mann 192).

[17] On the same day as this document in the Automatic Scripts, Yeats questions the sequence of human life when inscribed on cyclical diagrams and seeks "clarification [from the Spirit Guides] that one solar day 'which equals one mansion of the moon would represent one incarnation and time after,' or from birth to the end of the after-life" (qtd. in Mann 165). Clearly, the catalogues in this document reveal initial lines of enquiry into systems, terms, emblems, and icons that influence symbols like the Sun, the Moon, the Wheel, and the gyres in *AV*.

[18] Mann explains that the Yeatses are likely aware of the "Arabian system of the Mansions of the Moon" from their practices in the Golden Dawn (164). Also, Yeats likely knew of Kircher's work since it "remained of interest and value to occultists," including "Madame Blavatsky, for instance, [who] quotes his original and wayward theories of magnetism in *Isis Unveiled*" (Mann 169).
[19] During the timeline of writing *AV A* (1925) and *B* (1937), Yeats is likely aware of more esoteric writers and their writings about conflicting and oscillating dualities, like Fludd, the writer in Rosicrucianism, and of Casanus, including Ludwig Fischer's book "dealing with the problem of the universe as 'an opposition in unity'" (Yeats qtd. in Mann 189).
[20] According to Nietzsche, for example, this accord of "the give-and-take of the real and the unreal, the original and the imitated" in art (Sidnell 56) "is the unison of the Apollonian and Dionysian principle," which suggests the necessity of deconstruction, or impairment, before restoration and union (Daiya 274).
[21] Re-introduced to the term via magical rituals in the Golden Dawn between 1896-1900, Yeats writes that "he was finally 'face to face with the Anima Mundi described by Platonic philosophers, and more especially in modern times by Henry More, which has a memory independent of embodied individual memories, though they constantly enrich it with their images and their thought'" (qtd. in Flannery 91).
[22] See Yeats's *A Vision* A (1925), Book 1, Chapter 1, "The Wheel and the Phases of the Moon" and the location signed at the end of Book 1 for indications of Ballylee as the setting.
[23] On the diagram, the Wheel divides into two halves that represent a light cone of antithetical subjectivity and a dark cone of primary objectivity (Mann 190), which attributes the light to lunar (i.e., light at full moon), not solar (i.e., dark at full sun) because the Wheel, based on the twenty-eight Mansions of the Moon, is a lunar version of the circle of the Zodiac (Mann 167).
[24] Mann recognizes that "the Moon and its phases bring with them such an atavistic range of association that the symbol has an independent life, which overwhelms any strictures about arbitrary notation" (164). Cullingford interestingly suggests that Yeats assigns his peers to "appropriate phases of the Moon" to classify and "codify, and thus control, his turbulent and bewildering feelings about women" (226).
[25] Analyzing the embodiments at Phases 1 and 15, Holdeman provides the following summary:

> The full moon of Phase 15 symbolizes a superhuman condition of pure subjectivity during which a being's body and soul become one completely beautiful and self-sufficient form; the unseen moon of Phase 1 stands for a similarly superhuman state of utter objectivity during which a being's essential stuff is beaten up into the primal dough in preparation for a new cycle. Between these extremes the being progresses through a series of material incarnations, deriving its changing selves and masks from changing proportions of objective and subjective influences. (69)

[26] The term "strife" relates the cycling of the Greater Wheel's Phases—thus the oscillating opposition between the sun and moon—to the macrocosmic structure and formation of the wheels, cones, and spheres. Holdeman describes Yeats's Historical Cones as "gradually widening spiral shape[s]" that "represent[s] the ebb and flow of the subjective and objective principles" (78). He continues: "One gyre stands for subjectivity, the other for its opposite; as one expands the other contracts until finally an extreme is reached and the process reverses itself" (Holdeman 78).
[27] See Yeats's *A Vision* A (1925) Book 2, Chapter 2, Section 11-24 for explanations of the Four Principles and details on how they relate to the Four Faculties*.* Four Principles correspond with the Four Faculties but are "those of spiritual life" instead of Natural life (Yeats, *AV* A, 129). The Four *Principles* are Husk, sensuous and instinctive; Passionate Body, passion without solitude; Celestial Body, a portion of Eternal Life; Spirit, nearly abstract mind.
[28] The Creative Mind "looks into a photograph" (Yeats, *AV* A, 15) of the external 'real', meaning it is external self-awareness and intellect, and the Body of Fate is a metaphysical force that occupies the physical and mental space and changes the human body—in other words, the surrounding phenomena in the environment that forces itself upon a person (e.g. aging, mortality). The being's embodiment also depends on the place of the Four *Faculties* on the Great Wheel. Here, place is determined by the *Faculties'* interrelations, inclination (antithetical or primary), predominance, quality (true or false), distance and direction. For instance, Will and Mask relate in emotional opposition, for they are opposite on the Wheel. According to Yeats, "The one has the *primary* in the exact strength of the *antithetical* in the other, and vice versa" (*AV* A 16-7).
[29] This search is effectively the person cycling along Phases on the Wheel and balancing between objective and subjective poles. In the search, they may displace objects at the heart of emotional experiences and substitute subjective images from lovely dreams in their place, but the pendulum may swing the other way. For instance, the self that occupies the subjective phases will seek to embrace its anti-self that occupies the objective phases.
[30] By 'entire, true beauty', please see the entire description of Phase 15 in *AV* A (1925), Book 1, Chapter 4, Section 17. Yeats writes that a being's "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*" (59).

[31] In adapting from Renaissance poets like Milton, Spenser, and Chaucer, Yeats's literary endeavours correspond with his socio-political context, for he is "active in creating the movement as the Irish literary Renaissance. After Parnell's death in 1891, there seemed an opportunity to draw youthful national feeling to a movement with a non-political aim" (Jeffares xiv).

[32] Chapman writes that "The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid" "took up a climactic position in *The Tower* (1928) before 'All Soul's Night'," and that "even Yeats's notes in *The Tower* cultivated the impression that the poem[s] [were] only one section of a broken field" (*Yeats's Poetry*, 178).

[33] Chapman notes that during his attempts to create his own mythology for Ireland, Yeats experimented with "new subgenre[s] of national literature," work which coincided with his "adaptation of Japanese dramatuic form to specifically Irish content" (*Yeats's Poetry* 86). Sources also list Boehme, Heraclitus, Palmer, Pater, Shelley, Spenser, and especially Swedenborg as more examples of Yeats's philosophical and poetic readings at the time of writing *AV*.

[34] Chapman continues, Yeats "and Ellis would have been shadowing Blake's own interests as indicated by the marginalia in part 1, on God and the Divine Essence (the essence of love and wisdom); in part 2, on the Lord as the Sun, with heat emanating; in part 3, on Swedenborg's cosmography; and in part 5, on 'All the things which can be known of the will and the understanding, or of the love and the wisdom' … Knowledge of 'human form' in Blake's sense was obtained from 'will itself', Yeats wrote in 1919" (*Yeats's Poetry* 175).

[35] Conceptual fragments from philosophers like Heraclitus serve as material and currency in Cabbalist and Hermetic circles, with Yeats claiming Heraclitus as one of his occult masters (Hollis 295). For example, Heraclitus's conceptions of contrary dualities, figured in his term for daimon or an antinomic other self, includes a second approach which states, "Immortal mortals, mortal immortals, living the others' death, and dying the others' life'" (qtd. in Olney 50).

[36] Chapman explains that after the Ellis-Yeats edition of Blake's *Works*, Yeats returned to his speculation that Blake's system is what he works from for his poetry—speculation made evident when Yeats introduces *AV*, Book 2, with "Blake's poem 'The Mental Traveller' both as forensic evidence and as a mystery their Spirit Guides had only recently allowed the Yeatses, husband and wife, to puzzle out" (*Yeats's Poetry*, 161).

[37] While establishing his discipline as the poet, Yeats distinguishes between himself as "the magician (one who controls and uses his will to create new possibilities for apprehension and understanding)" and Blake as "the mystic (one who submits his will to a system or vision)" (Flannery 48). Although Blake's work encouraged Yeats to work from occultism, he seemingly hesitates to be the poet as prophet. Like Blake, Yeats is skeptical if "the transcendent world can furnish the subject matter" a poet needs; but Yeats sees his subject matter is the terrible and beautiful changings of Ireland, so his poetry oscillates between his world and the monotonous and unmoving world of the supernatural (Kinahan 127-28).

[38] As Yeats establishes his poetry and poet identity in the 1890s, "Yeats proposes an antithetic possibility: perhaps his life has been but a preparation for something that never happens" (Flannery 18). Yeats likely reflects on this proposition while writing the first sections of his autobiography, which coincides with his contemporaneous writing around and drafts of *AV* (1925).

[39] As old men, Aherne and Robartes allude to figures like Aengus, described as crude, ragged, and old in earlier poems. Arguably, figures of beggars or shepherds in disguise are metaphorical representations of the anti-self as the primary or antithetical selves.

[40] From his first séance in 1886 with Katherine Tynan, Yeats records the event and his experience with possession, writing about his unwillingness to submit his will and emphasizing it by quoting Milton's lyric, "Of Man's mortal taste brought death into the world, and all our woe … Sing, Heavenly Music" (qtd. in Flannery 18).

Chapter 2

Yeats as Folklorist, Poet, and Magician: Developing Symbols of Myth and Magic for a New Poetry of Ireland

To answer the abstract statement of what poetry is, Yeats argues in "Symbolism in Painting" (1898) that poetic symbols come from an idea traceable to the fragment, "the things below are as the images above," of the Emerald Tablet of Hermes (qtd. in Flannery 47; Daiya 274; Olney 45). In addition to mysticism, similar ideas of poetics and symbolism are put forth in mythology. For example, the idea of "as above, so below" in Hermetic texts (Olney 45) is similar in myths of representation from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, particularly "The Four Ages," which reads that "Heaven was no safer / Giants attacked the very throne of Heaven" (7). Many of Yeats's pre-1900 poetic works adapt motifs of reflection. By adopting such ideas of doubling through representation, Yeats's poems and symbols offer a dualistic perspective of the world—the immanent world below as the constitution of a double of the abstract subject above. In "The Unappeasable Host," the speaker addresses the "Desolate winds that beat the doors of Heaven and beat / The doors of Hell" (Yeats 9-10). In this poem, Yeats adapts a motif of reflection via a metaphor of mirroring. The desolate winds are a metaphor for violent changes, or ruptures, which recur across collective and individual histories.[41] Arguably, such ruptures are advents before the (re)emergence of distorted times in culture. The poem alluded to such a historical metasystem by first showing it on an individual, personal level. While "the Danaan children…in cradles of wrought gold" experience birth and transform from immortal spirits to mortal children, the speaker and their child in "the narrow graves" experience death and transform from mortal humans into immortal souls (Yeats, "Unappeasable," 1, 6). Ultimately, the poem's inversed

mirroring suggests that Yeats's dualistic perspective of the world follows the paradoxical principles of generation, dualism, and destruction.

Reflective Surfaces: Self-Reflection, Self-Consciousness, and Self-Destruction

Both in "The Stolen Child" and "The Host of the Air," emblems of water generate reflections of images, but the reflections are also distortions of images.[42] In "Stolen," the speakers' lake-reflected figures transform into images of "flapping herons," "drowsy water-rats," and "slumbering trout" (Yeats 3-5, 10, 34). In "Host," the narrator seemingly drowns "in a dream" of "long dim hair," effectively transforming himself into the image of his bride, Bridget (Yeats 27-8). "Stolen" and "Host" exemplify people "engrossed in contemplated activities," like remembering and dreaming, that preoccupy them with their self-consciousness (Daiya 274). As Daiya analyzes, Yeats's poems with metaphors and emblems of water and mirrors adapt and reverse myths about narcissism, like the Narcissus myth (274). I more so uphold Rachel Billigheimer's analysis that Yeats's pitch of reversed narcissism adapts intently from Stéphane Mallarmé's *Hérodiade*. The goddess embodies "three major aspects of poetry," including "angelism, hermeticism and narcissism," according to Mallarmé (Billigheimer 21).[43] Herodiade's story is a metaphor for the Symbolist poet's cyclical path through abstraction, transcendence, and immanence. In other words, the Symbolist strives to separate themself from the physical world through contemplated activities to engage with their self-consciousness, which generates internalized and distorted representations of spiritual and natural beauty from realities immanent to their own.

Concerning self-consciousness, this concept conceptually parallels Yeats's dualistic perspective, for it similarly follows principles of generation, dualism, and destruction. As the speakers in "Stolen" remember a mythic past, emblems of water generate an image of "we" situated in a supernatural reality near "the waters and the wild;" meanwhile, the lake's watery

reflection also leads to the distortion of the "we" originally situated in their everyday reality near "the rocky highland / Of Sleuth Wood" (Yeats 1-2, 10). As the narrator in "Host" dreams "of the long dim hair," the dream generates images of "young men and young girls" in a faraway world; meanwhile, reality destroys figures of "old men and young men and young girls" in the waking world (Yeats 7, 13, 39). Following the Symbolist path, Yeats's poems are a means for and are an exemplary act of contemplating his mind, thus facing his consciousness—an act symbolized by his mind moving within its own circle in the poem and embodied in its poetic language (Louvel 20).[44] In "Stolen," the speakers speak the refrain—"*Come away, O human child! / To the waters and the wild / With a faery, hand in hand*"—and seemingly hail its words into existence for the rest of the verse lines narrate the actions spoken of (Yeats 9-11). Overall, Yeats's dualistic perspective and its principles are a "celebration, an homage" to practices of self-reflexivity in symbolism and poetry (Louvel 45).

As a medium, the symbol is the act of mediation in and of itself, an act that Yeats experiences vicariously by embodying it through his occultism and poetics. Yeats's beliefs around symbolism in poetry suggest that a poet should craft poetry with the ear at the service of the eye, as suggested in "Symbolism in Painting" and its allegory of painting and poetry. Louvel claims that the origin of painting is to make "absence present and replace it with an illusion" (36).[45] Similarly in poetry, the symbol is a reproduction of glimpsed reality and fragmented truth. As Louvel further explains, allowing mute images to speak is a wide domain reserved for *enargeia*, which "is 'the capacity of words to describe with a vividness that, in effect, reproduces an object before our very eyes'" (Murray Krieger qtd. in Louvel 46).[46] I argue that Yeats's symbolism aligns with the second type of enargeia, essentially a representation of intense emotional reaction(s) and an idealist reading of the symbol.[47] Echoing French poets and

Symbolists, Yeats explains poetic language that evokes "colour, sound, and form ought to be arranged in the 'musical relation, [the] … beautiful relation' of a 'metaphorical' or 'symbolic writing' that evokes emotion made of 'distinct evocations'" (qtd. in Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry*, 13-14). Yeats's choice to create symbolism and poetry arranged in the musical relation—full of rhythm as if mimicking speaking or chanting—can be ffor multiple reasons: to reawaken a passion for his politics and Irish nationalism; to recreate a private, spiritual experience like in his occult rituals; to refashion a performative self and self-dramatized personality; and/or to recover a hidden Ireland that exists in the time of oral storytelling.

The theme of destruction arising from reflection and doubling is partial to developing an early "idea of the Mask as the inverted mirroring of the self" (Daiya 274). Concepts concerning motifs of reflection also concern what Billigheimer writes as "myths of the basic urge of self-destruction" (21). Billigheimer continues, "In order to create [poetry], the poet must first experience self-destruction and must break away from [their] solipsistic state of narcissism and, like Herodiade, seek self-unity with the world of experience" (21). The poet repeatedly cycles through abstraction, transcendence, and immanence, which makes the modern world possible for the conception and formation of Yeats as a poet. In other words, this path suggests "that loss is a prerequisite of artistic creation," specifically a loss experienced via continual self-destruction (Pietrzak 75). As my analysis will further explore and support, early ideas of the Mask offer Yeats "fairly serviceable self-image[s] that emphasized a *continual* change of the poet's identity" (Pietrzak 110; emphasis added). Yeats's poems speak in a split, divided tongue that both encourages and impedes his "poetic self-theorizing," ultimately "juxtapos[ing] incongruous self-conceptions" of the self and reality (Ramazani 59).

The Double Face and the Sidhe's Glamouring

Along with a reverence for ideas, Yeats's symbols also show a love for the form. Wielding both polar approaches to art yields works that contain the best of both content and form, often contesting one against the other and broadcasting an attitude of ambivalence on each. As an Anglo-Irish poet, Yeats hopes to draw from an "English tradition (form, or the concern for form) and from the Celtic tradition (subject matter, the moving legends, the mythology)" in his poetry to inspire English and Irish contemporaries to "seize some of the vitality from the Irish, as he wished the Irish could learn about the form" from English traditions (Flannery 62). During the mid-to-late 1800s, Ireland experienced emerging interests in mythologies (Daiya 274). Around this time, Yeats's "deep rooted love and enchantment for Homer" developed from reading retellings of the Iliad as well as William Morris's *The Odyssey of Homer* and T.E. Lawrence's translation—texts which led him to later think of Irish literature, like P.B. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, and folk tales as "'stories that Homer might have told'" (qtd. in Daiya 273). Driven by the reassessment of Irish culture and literature, Yeats eventually associates Irish and Greek traditions. Greek mythology values the superficial and performative, evident in myths with a fascination for the surface of things—a fascination ranging from "the fold, the skin, to ador[ation] [of] appearance, to belie[f] in forms, tones, words, [and] in the whole Olympus of appearance" (Daiya 273). Comparatively, the Irish peasantry's fairytales and folklore of experiment with the surface of things but with a fascination focused on beauty and its material, performative, and uncanny aspects. Along with Greek mythologies, Yeats's extensive readings of source materials on Irish folklore "are like a beam of light" in his early poems, "with [his] imagination a prism through which the beam filters" (Kinahan 74).[48] His imagination filters Irish folklore's information on the Sidhe, specifically how it conveys a wary attitude towards their nature and overall appearance.

In Irish folklore, stories tell of a mythical and supernatural Otherworld, or *Tir Na Nog*, inhabited by fairies who go by many names among the Irish peasantry, like *daoine sidhe*, or "people of the mounds," "The Good People," "The Fair Folk," descendants of the *Tuatha De Denaan*, or simply the Danaan and Sidhe (Serra, "When 'She' Is," 140). In *Fairy and Folk Tales*, Yeats informs readers that the Sidhe are "'fallen angels who were not good enough to be saved, nor bad enough to be lost, say the peasantry. The gods of the earth, says the Book of Armagh. The gods of pagan Ireland, say the Irish antiquarians, the Tuatha De Danan, who, when no longer worshipped and fed with offerings, dwindled away in the popular imagination'" (qtd. in Serra, "When 'She' Is," 144; qtd. in Kinahan 47). Their origins are ambiguous for the Sidhe "might be the spirits of the dead, or the ancient gods in a degraded form, or a folk memory of a very ancient race of mortals" (Heininge 102).[49] In other words, Irish folklorists are "uncertain about whether the [S]idhe [are] agents of good or evil or both" (Kinahan 46). In "Unappeasable," Yeats writes that "the unappeasable host / Is complier than candles at Mother Mary's feet" (12-3). In one sense, Yeats seemingly upholds the Sidhe's contradictory and inconsistent nature of being both good and evil, effectively countering the Christian solution of binary classification and suggesting Christianity's harsh interpretations of the Celtic spirit in nature.[50] Uncertainty about whether the Sidhe are agents of good and/or bad also comes from their appearance, which is comprised of contradictory faces and behaviours.

Yeats's poems represent the Sidhe based on nineteenth-century Irish fairy tales that "more often spoke of but a single face," saying "that it could smile or frown at will" (Kinahan 46). In other words, the Sidhe's double expression is due to wearing a mask. Their "face smiling welcome" masks their "grin of malice" (Kinahan 62-3). In "The Withering of the Boughs," the speaker recalls the "secret smile" of the Danaan (Yeats 13). When not explicitly alluded to, the

Sidhe's mask becomes evident in its alluring and seducing effect on many of Yeats's poet-speakers. In "The Stolen Child," the Sidhe tell the child about the griefs of mortal life in his world, which is "more full of weeping than [he] can / understand" and "full of troubles" (Yeats 12-3, 23). From their smiling faces and radiant welcome, they delightfully tempt him with images of evanescence—the glossy "wave of moonlight," "dim grey sands with light," dancers flying and leaping, and "frothy bubbles" of a lake (Yeats 14-22). The Sidhe's immortal life in the waters and wild is seemingly without weeping or troubles, but the information gleaned from the images is oblique and vague.

The images and their oblique information about the Sidhe and their fairyland provide a deeper understanding of the Yeatsian symbol. The symbol is "neither stable nor permanent" (Schwall 26). Although it evokes visions of "the fundamental, most archaic of objects" and subjects in an ethereal world (Louvel 225), Yeats's poems problematize the symbol as "an eternal act" by emphasizing how "our understandings [of it] are temporal and [we] understand but little at a time" (Yeats qtd. in Sidnell 54). Coming from and returning to a void, the symbol repeatedly denies Yeats's desires for creative and spiritual awakening and union through death and in an afterlife;[51] the image leaves him perpetually exhausted "on a constant and unconstrained search" (Pietrzak 114)—a search "inevitably doomed to failure" until death (Louvel 18). The symbol's immediacy is a false trick since sharing an image requires mediation of language, which renders the image as neither faithful, for it is a transformation, nor transparent, for it is opaque in its information.

The Sidhe lead the child away, persuading him that he cannot comprehend the mourning and suffering of a mortal life because he is too young; however, he cannot understand because he does not recognize the Sidhe's claims about the mortal world (Kinahan 60-1). Remembering his

life by the hearthside in the country, he hears "the lowing / Of the calves on the warm hillside / [And] the kettle on the hob / Sing[ing] peace into his breast, / [And] see[s] the brown mice bob / Round and round the oatmeal-chest" (Yeats, "Stolen," 46-52). The child recognizes this image by the hearthside, which is the opposite of what the Sidhe led him to expect. The poem reveals the Sidhe's process of seduction, which is likened to when they "seek for slumbering trout / And whispering in their ears / Give them unquiet dreams" (Yeats, "Stolen," 33-5). The Sidhe's smiling face and radiant welcome mask a threat to humans. The Sidhe's dual countenance and seducing effect is Yeats's representation of their malicious practice known as glamouring.

Alienated in a pocket dimension immanent to the mortal world, the Sidhe supposedly lack souls and thus are immortal. The perverse delight they have from their mischievous behaviour is rooted in their jealous vengeance against mortal experiences of happiness, love, marriage, and death.[52] Kinahan claims that "no action of the Sidhe's devising [is] more finely wrought with malice than the practice of glamouring, since in glamouring they [find] a means of destroying [a human's] soul" and body (51). The Sidhe's glamouring is at work in "The Host of the Air" when "the dancers crowded about" the narrator, to whom "many a sweet thing [is] said / And a young man br[ings] him red wine / And a young girl white bread" (Yeats 17-20). According to Lady Wilde's accounts of traditional Irish fairy tales in *Ancient Legends* (1887), "the fairies have no objection to offer to mortals the subtle red wine at fairy banquets, which lulls the soul to sleep and makes the reason powerless" against seeing illusions (Wilde qtd in Kinahan 45). With the narrator's soul and mind glamoured, the Sidhe abduct his bride, effectively preventing their union in marriage and happiness in love. However, the narrator does not become as other mortal men beguiled into the fairyland.[53] The lines about the piper's piping—"A piper piping away, / And never was piping so sad, / And never was piping so gay" (Yeats, "Host," 10-

2, 42-4)—repeat twice, both as points of transition in and out of the mortal world and fairyland. Arguably, these lines situate the narrator at a threshold, indicating that his consciousness is between a waking and dreaming state throughout the poem. He recognizes the piper's piping as paradoxically sad and gay, showing the duality of his understanding of the Sidhe, much like the child's understanding in "Host."

Symbolism in such poems as "Child" and "Host" "oppose the apparent happiness of the fairy world to the apparent sorrow of the mortal realm" (Kinahan 59). In other words, Yeats's symbolism adapts the spirit of contradiction in what eludes definition, like the Sidhe's nature, face, actions, and world. His poems mirror the wary and ambivalent attitudes that Irish fairy tales and folklorists hold towards the Sidhe. As the Sidhe demonstrate, what is beautiful, or good, is also destructive, or bad.[54] According to Pietrzak, what is beautiful "may be read [also] as a figure impersonating the deadly influence that stifles [poetic] expression," and Yeats's poetry exemplifies the poet as the glamoured, wandering heir of such stifling uncertainty (128, 130). Yeats's symbolism maintains the oppositional dualities of the Sidhe and questions whether it is through distinguishing or merging that poets produce reality and truth. Overall, concepts of the Sidhe inspire Yeats's critical thoughts about the Mask and how it compares to appearances. Consequently, Yeats's symbolism of the Sidhe further develops his idea of the Mask, adding that it is the split, doubled self with a face of truth and lies.

Figures of the Mask: The Celtic Poet and Their Personae

Anticipating the codification and systematization of the Mask in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *A Vision*, Yeats's springs his theory of the Mask between 1908 to 1910. For example, poems like "The Mask" show Yeats's early theories, which likely "derived their impetus from [Oscar] Wilde's 'The Decay of Lying'" (Pietrzak 109). In "The Mask," Yeats speculates that the truth of a work of art "lays in its effect on the audience" (Ramazani 66). In "The Mask," the

feminine figure joyfully experiments with true and false appearances, which inspires in readers a dazzled fascination yet wary skepticism towards signifiers used, like the materialistic qualities of the "emerald eyes" and "mask of burning gold" or performative aspect of "the mask engag[ing] your mind / And after set your heart to beat, / [and] Not what's behind" the mask (Yeats 1-2, 8-10). The poem muses over the duality of people having and presenting an internal and external self.

The poem's impression of speech appears less natural and rhythmic and "more oratorical," "more intensely an effect depending on vocal self-dramatization" (Sidnell 27). With a voice for performance rather than storytelling, the poem has an ideal personality that projects a time-bound self-presence or Mask. By the early 1900s, Yeats's poetics focused on language and retrospection, writing in a letter that "he has 'tried for more self-portraiture'" (qtd. in Ramazani 55). Yeats's musings over the Mask arrived at a realization of its vicariousness. Through the Mask, one stages a performance of the figures of life, like a lover, soldier, sage, beggar, and more. In short, the Mask is an ideal image of a desired other that is lacking in the self—"a rebirth of self as someone not of oneself" (Pietrzak 111). This theory of the Mask is a means of expression and something to look and speak through, a dramatized self that Yeats fashions into his persona, Red Hanrahan.

Yeats depicts a Hanrahan as a persona in early poems, like "Red Hanrahan's Song about Ireland" (*c*. 1894), and several story collections, like *The Secret Rose* (1897) and *Stories of Red Hanrahan* (*c*. 1897-1904).[55] Yeats portrays Hanrahan as someone out of time and place, split in conflict with the world he lives in, and always living beyond being content.[56] The unconsciousness of the Hanrahan persona is full of passion and rage, incited into illusions and poetry by wretched experiences and tragedy. Despite that Ireland's "courage breaks like an old

tree in a black wind and dies," or "angers that are like noisy clouds have set [Ireland's] hearts abeat," Hanrahan's song spurs the flame "hidden in [Ireland's] hearts" (Yeats, "Red Hanrahan's Song about Ireland," 4-5, 10). According to Michael Sidnell, "Hanrahan being not merely dead, but in death as in life, a fictitious character, is 'shade no more than man, more image than a shade', but momentarily he is endowed with more vigorous life than his author" (123). In other words, Hanrahan is all that Yeats discovers is not in the law of his being, thus a Mask of his anti-self. For instance, Hanrahan embodies a rugged, aged man, yet he retains his 'excited, passionate, fantastical imagination' for he is an "old lecher with a love on every wind" (Sidnell 105). Through Hanrahan, Yeats can convey the thinking and feeling of a person with a different personality. Sidnell continues, "Hanrahan has, axiomatically, enacted what his author could only imagine" as possible in other worlds and "has been 'there' and may remember…the realm of perpetual possibility which he entered" (123). In essence, Hanrahan is all Yeats desires in a life lived by an ideal of his future self—an aging man who can still bewitch the cards of chance and rise in frenzied cheer from music, love, or justice.

In several poetic works, including "Phases of the Moon," "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes," and "Michael Robartes and the Dancer," Yeats depicts the personae Owen Aherne and Michael Robartes.[57] Aherne and Robartes are personae that quarrel within Yeats, who attributes them to a turbulent life or death (Yeats, "Appendix A," 459).[58] In "The Tables of the Law" (1897), the narrator "question[s] Owen Aherne, a Catholic …in the grip of extreme orthodox mysticism" (Flannery 85-6). In "Rosa Alchemica" (1897), Robartes is "the head of an Order of the Alchemical Rose to which he wishes to initiate the narrator" (Flannery 85). Aherne and Robartes can depict several quarrels in Yeats, including folk and pagan religions and Christianity, his Anglo-Irish heritage, Celtic and English literary traditions, and the occultist and Irish poet.

Notably, Richard Ellmann argues that the personae are "evidence of the split he finds in Yeats's personality from 1885 to 1903, the split between the active man (Robartes) and the contemplative (Aherne)" (qtd. in Flannery 86). Generally, they symbolize Yeats's anti-self (Robartes) and self (Aherne). As indicated by the personae Hanrahan, Robartes, and Aherne, the Mask compensates for a lack Yeats perceives in his personality, and it provides him visions of another life he could live.

The circular pattern of Hanrahan's stories, a cycle of life-death-rebirth, reveals the pain and tragic joy in the styling of the Mask. When invoking concepts around the Mask, Yeats's poetry conveys a "resistance to [the burden] [which] is made into a distinct but simultaneous motive for poetry" (Sidnell 70). In "Red Hanrahan's Song," the assertion of Hanrahan's persona forces a revelation that transforms the natural heart into a symbolic one "hiding the flame out of the eyes / Of Cathleen" (Yeats 5-6), symbolizing eternal, timeless passion and vigour. On the one hand, the Mask offers Yeats renewal of his identity as a poet so he may "shape himself in defiance of what life brings," like the inevitable loss of an impassioned heart and radiant spirit due to aging and mortality. While the Mask motivates the poet to create poetry, the burden is in what Yeats sees as "'a general surrender of the [artist's] will' to the arts" (qtd. in Sidnell 92). By asserting the persona of the Mask, Yeats's self-image and personality "disappear behind the function through a classic synecdochal operation" for he becomes both the Mask's persona and his interpretation of it (Louvel 20). The personae are part of what Yeats calls a *phantasmagoria*, or a drama played by dramatized personalities within the psychic system, which is also understandable as "a psychological approach to the 'transforming power' of the poet, who, in Yeats's own words, 'never speaks directly as to someone at the breakfast table, there is always a phantasmagoria'" (qtd. in Schwall 221).[59] Through the personae of Red Hanrahan, Michael

Robartes, and Owen Aheren, Yeats's musings over the Mask lead to the "realization that it is not the achievement of one final [M]ask that is the key to an intellectual and artistic pursuit, but the ongoing quest for always new [M]asks" (Pietrzak 110). The real pain and tragic joy in the styling of the Mask is that it makes the poet's personality always in the making, fractured and never whole. Overall, Yeats's earlier poems that utilize the Mask symbol reveal his poetic practice of "self-theorizing" and his "polymorphousness," which paradoxically encourage and impede a resolution for what poetry is, thus what the role of the poet is (Ramazani 57).

The symbol, like the Mask, offers Yeats the capacity for eternal poetic renewal because it enables the revisiting, revising, and reinventing of himself and his poetry. Arguably, poetry is self-referential and self-reflexive, shifting between its appearances and disappearances as if reanalyzing the writer's mind deferred in the past and readers' minds arriving in the future. Especially true for Yeats's poetics, poetry is self-theorizing, meaning that it "speculates and generalizes from itself" as well as "dismantles its own theories" (Ramazani 53). In poetry, the symbol can aid as "a tool to outline visible and/or discursive patterns so as to conceptualize repetition" as representation "of its own signifying process" (Louvel 16). In a sense, these repetitions represent the perpetual event of signifying to a potential writer and reader—the symbol always cycling outside itself towards a viewer, catching them in what they see, and affronting them with contemplations of themselves. I suggest that the symbol in poetry opens what Louvel calls the "aesthetic and dreamlike dimension of the text which plays with the reader's subjectivity" during and after viewing and reading (59).[60]

Possibly, Yeats aims for his poetry's symbolism to inspire in readers an experience of intense emotions rooted in reflections of the readers, the text, Yeats, Irish people, and Ireland—to "be as close as possible to the acting creator[s], to 'render' what [they] felt, what is at the source

of [their] inspiration" (Louvel 46). Such a phenomenon indicates the importance of the pictorial alongside the textual "since the textual image is what remains in the reader's eye [and mind] once he/she has put down the book" (Louvel 44). Interestingly, Yeats explains a similar phenomenon regarding the symbol's timeless effect on the text and viewer. In his "The Symbolism of Poetry" essay, Yeats argues that "every time the poem proffers a symbol for the people to ponder, the symbol is read slightly differently. As a result, each reading, which is necessarily always a misreading, adds to the plethora of meanings that have accrued to the symbol through the ages" (qtd. in Sidnell 68). Via the symbol in poetry, Yeats and his poems potentially reoccur and develop "in the realm of the reader's intuition, interpretation, and culture," affecting how they make sense of him, the poem, and contemporaneous contexts all mediated in the symbol (Louvel 58). Through his work, Yeats sought to elevate himself to a symbolic status so he may eternally and repeatedly transform like the symbol, essentially to immortalize himself.[61]

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[41] The winds are also likely a personification of the Sidhe in Gaelic legends and Herodias in the Middle Ages. In *The Collected Poems* (1933), Yeats's notes for "The Hosting of the Sidhe" explains, "Sidhe is also Gaelic for wind, and certainly the Sidhe have much to do with the wind." Although, Sidhe means less so wind and more so a gust, blast, or puff. Yeats continues, the Sidhe "journey in whirling wind, the winds that were called the dance of the daughters of Herodias." (Yeats, "Appendix A," 454).
[42] Kinahan notes that "The Host of the Air" comes from an "old woman from Sligo, Ballysadare's little old woman in a white cap, who first told Yeats the local legend" (53).
[43] Billigheimer writes that Mallarmé's Herodiade is "the virgin goddess who could separate herself from the physical world through the inner contemplation of her own image" (21). Billigheimer continues, "As she contemplated her beauty in her mirror, she reaches a oneness with her narcissism" (Billigheimer 21). I add that the "three major aspects of poetry" Herodiade embodies are also interpretable as projections of a poet's character types (Billigheimer 21).
[44] Several of Yeats's pre-1900 poems contain poetic language that "turns inward, a circuit originating from and returning to itself through the detour of the speech act" (Ramanzani 54).
[45] Historizing the long-standing analogy between painting and poetry, Louvel cites terms and concepts like *eidos* (supersensible realities), *eidolon* (sensible impressions of eidos), *eikon* (image), *phantasma* (appearance), *Un pictura poesis, un poesis pictura* [poetry should be like painting, painting should be like poetry], *enargeia* [described before one's eye] (25, 31-32, 34-5, 46).
[46] Still quoting Krieger, Louvel writes, "The first type of *enargeia* consists in giving a vivid equivalent of the object. In the second type of *enargeia*, the idea is to penetrate the very process of representation, to be as close as possible to the acting creator, to 'render' what he felt, what is at the source of his inspiration" (qtd. in Louvel 46).
[47] The second type of *enargeia*, arguably, gestures to an idealism in the reading of a symbol, or the visual and written, an idealism Louvel explains as "to paint all that can be seen under the sun but also to interpret what one sees; to structure the image in the model of language, and also to choose one's subject matter, and finally, to strive towards an ideal form and not a mere imitation of nature" (36).

[48] The folklorists and writers who inspired Yeats's experiences with fairy and folk tales include many predecessors and contemporaries, like Charles Dickens, William Blake, Oscar Wilde, Lady Wilde, Lady Gregory, and George Hyde.

[49] In the entire patrimony of Celtic stories, tales classified under the Mythological Cycle tell of a pantheon of terrestrial, mythical, and immortal people who are "of decidedly superhuman character" that invade and occupy a "unitary Ireland" in which "they are two sides—obscure and infernal and luminous and divine" (Carrassi 70). After later Christian miscalling and interpretation, the Irish dominantly identified these terrestrial beings with fallen angels. After emerging concepts of the Christian afterlife, the Sidhe's origin derives from "a battle in heaven between rebel angels and those faithful to God," which is a rereading affirmed in Irish folklore "but should flank, rather than substitute, the idea inherited from a pagan past" (Carrassi 32). Christians renamed the Irish pagan gods as *Tuatha De Danann* to reduce the gods' status by including them alongside early settlers of Ireland.

[50] A Christian solution presents that "forces of absolute good and forces of absolute evil were both at work" and that "there must be two kinds of fairies," thus simplifying and perverting representations of the Sidhe's contradictory and inconsistent nature (Kinahan 46). Such a binary categorization classifies the good as angelic figures ascended to a transcendent and celestial dimension, like heaven; meanwhile, the bad are diabolical figures descended from immanent dimensions situated elsewhere in nature, like in islands, lakes, inside mountains, mounds, and the overall Celtic spirit of Ireland.

[51] While commenting on how Yeats challenges the image as an eternal act, Daniel Albright acknowledges Yeats's doubt by writing, "'Every image arises out of a void; and every image will sick back into a void. An image is not immortal: it has given life-span, and will inevitably recede into imagelessness, as the stuff of art disintegrates into the stuff of criticism and science'" (qtd. in Pietrzak 124). In other words, images gradually lose the essence of their visions as people's thinking, speaking, and writing repeatedly transform the images, like by adapting them into symbols in art and literature.

[52] Supposedly, the Sidhe take delight in abducting children because leading them away is easy due to their innocence. The Sidhe also find it easy to abduct engaged or newlywed couples. The Irish fairy traditions Yeats would be familiar with tell that "lovers [are] more susceptible to the influence of the [S]idhe," likely due to claims that the Sidhe "take a perverse delight in preventing mortals from finding happiness in love" (Kinahan 71).

[53] Quoting Lady Wilde, Kinahan explains that traditionally in Irish fairytales, "the young men that [the Sidhe] beguile into their fairy palaces become their bon-slaves and are set to hard tasks," essentially experiencing transcendence through death and rebirth (Wilde qtd. in Kinahan 45).

[54] Besides his extensive readings in Irish folklore and fairy tales, Yeats also hears stories from Irish locals. An old Irish peasant once told Yeats that "'beauty was thought to have come from the Sidhe, and to bring misfortune with it ... beauty had never brought happiness to anybody'" (Cullingford, "Yeats and Women," 228).

[55] In the first versions of Yeats's stories, Red Hanrahan is the eighteenth-century Gaelic poet O'Sullivan. In the stories, "Hanrahan is the last poet in the line of descent from Oisin," essentially likening Hanrahan to the mighty knight who, along with his father Finn and the Fianna Fail, fought for the Fenians and "the Sovereign of Leinster in an epoch following the birth of Christ" and the emergence of St. Patrick's Ireland (Carrassi 31). Much like the circular journey of the perpetually tragic nationalist and poetic figure Oisin, Hanrahan "proceeds from enchantment to realization of the sorrows of the world … to the realization of old age, to vision, death, and revelation" (Sidnell 52).

[56] Appearing in the early- and mid-nineties, "the versions of the [Red] Hanrahan story now called 'The Twisting of the Rope'…referred in like wise to 'mightier Oisin" whose heart was unappeased for three hundred years (Yeats qtd. in Kinahan 126).

[57] Also, see *AV* A (1925) for Owen Aherne, who is the persona in the "Introduction," which depicts the 'Great Wheel' of Giraldus, and *The Dance of the Four Royal Persons*, which describes the design identical to Giraldus's 'Great Wheel'.

[58] In *The Collected Poems* (1933), Yeats's notes explain that Michael Robartes and Owen Aherne "take their place in a phantasmagoria in which [he] endeavour[s] to explain [his] philosophy of life and death" (Yeats, "Appendix A," 459). He continues to explain that he "wrote these poems," "The Phases of the Moon," "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes," and "Michael Robartes and the Dancer," "as a text for exposition" (Yeats, "Appendix A," 459).

[59] The term "phantasmagoria" alludes to Lacan's philosophical influence on Yeats, for Lacan "and Yeats shared a fascination for the phenomenon of courtly love and its effects on the psyche" and "both men shared a (critical) interest in the poetics of Surrealism and their exploration of the unconscious" (Schwall 222).

[60] Louvel adds that this dimension of the text "bring[s] to mind Derrida's 'third book', that of the reader, which 'substitutes' and 'adds on'" to the text indefinitely (59).

[61] When explaining the symbol as it relates to Yeats's poetic practices, Sidnell explains that "Yeats not only searched Irish and mystical traditions for symbols but strained to elevate all the images of his poetry to symbolic status, on the understanding that 'an image that has transcended particular time and place becomes a symbol, passes beyond death, as it were, and becomes a living soul'" (Yeats qtd. in Sidnell 7). I want to push this claim further and include it as a reason behind the doubling, reoccurring, and conflicting patterns throughout Yeats's symbolism, poetry, and his role as a poet.

Chapter 3

Yeats as Poet, Nationalist, and Sage: Symbols of a Historical Past and Present

Yeats adopts an understanding of poetry as disorder, order, and revelation. He envisions order as a poet's control, or authority, over reciting and regulating verse and speech so it has form and beauty that faithfully evokes the apprehended image and its vision of divine and [super]natural truth. From the formless void of the image comes disorder in an unregulated language, so the symbol and symbolic writing recuperate order, thus creating a sense of poetry for Yeats. Yeats's poetics treats the symbol as a revelation, for it functions in restoring a different language with an imaginative intensity for poetry, thus creating a new poetic culture from and for Ireland. Throughout the 1890s, Yeats's symbols represent supernatural and "naturalistic conception[s] of poetic experience" (Schwall 231), following the Symbolist poet's path of abstraction out of life. Between the 1890s and the early 1900s, however, Yeats's poetics become incongruous in juxtaposing and contrasting a desire to get out of form, upward toward a disembodied beauty in an ideal paradise, and the desire to create form, downward towards a non-unpleasant life in modern Ireland.

Yeats calls the incongruity "the art of Transfiguration and the art of Incarnation," the former an "idea of the artist as the creator of the beauty that never was" and the latter an idea of the artist as a "visionary who sees eternal beauty" in everyday life (qtd. in Sidnell 56). Eventually, Yeats's later symbols represent metacultural conceptions of poetic knowledge, following the modern poet's path of immanence in social and personal life.[62] According to Yeats, "the choice of choices" for any writer comes down to the "two ways before literature," which is "the way of the bird until the common eyes have lost us, or to the market carts" (qtd. in Sidnell 86). Although Yeats's poetry dwells on the discrepancies between the two ways, he does not

make a final choice, for "it was the opposition of these contraries that he found, ultimately, so productive" (Sidnell 86). In essence, Yeats understands poetry is a development process, not just a mirror representation. Sidnell writes that Yeats "battles, at various cris[es] in his career, for poetic survival and, indeed, supremacy" (74), and I will explore how the cyclicality of the symbols and their functions provide insight into Yeats's battle and result.

Eternal Recurrence and Conflict in the Great Wheel

In "Easter, 1916," the Great Wheel provides a mythological and cosmological lens for Yeats to observe the emergence of unruly modernity, observations accompanied by inner strife between Yeats's excitement for change and his apprehension of violent transformation. Functioning like the Great Wheel,[63] "Easter, 1916" itself cycles through transformed perceptions of its subjects. Ironically, the poem remains powerfully fixed on its subjects—maintaining consistency despite change. In stanza one, Yeats recounts daily exchanges "at counter or desk" (3) with real, mundane figures—figures that pass by like the setting sun "at the close of day" (1). He presents himself as a detached passerby, disengaged with the "vivid faces" in conversation as he either nods his head in acknowledgment or speaks "polite meaningless words" (6). Consumed in thought, he can offer only a "mocking tale" or witty gibe (10) that fails to please his companions at aristocratic clubs. Inwardly, he is certain that he and these figures both live "where motley is worn" (14)—in a clownish world where social engagement is pointless. As indicated by the "motley," Yeats and the figures play various roles, all resigned to their "part / In the causal comedy" (14, 36-7) directed by mysterious workings of the Great Wheel. Before the Easter Rising,[64] the "vivid faces" fail to hide the spiritless, disunited state of the nation: everyone appears as an embodiment of the Fool on the Great Wheel (6). On the Great Wheel, the Fool characterizes Phase 28.[65] The Fool cannot create, for it cannot act with intelligence but only with

hostility, spite, and jealousy; thus, it is aimless and finds joy in nothingness. Like Yeats, his subjects speak "polite meaningless words," an index of Yeats's perception of their incapacity for meaningful action (6). Now, however, he perceives that the once "vivid faces…among grey / Eighteenth-century houses" (1-3) are "all changed, changed utterly" into malignant faces (15). After the Rising, Yeats claims that "a terrible beauty is born" (16), unleashing history-making anger and violence.

In the second and third stanzas, the terrible beauty is the bloody modernity (the terror) born from bold, splendorous actions (the beauty). The mundane figures here first seem perpetually glamoured by their impulses and desires, committing acts of foolish, passionate violence. For example, the woman's days "spent / In ignorant good-will" change to "night[s] in argument / Until her voice [grows] shrill" (17-20); educated men miss their opportunities to master poetry's "winged horse" (25); and a "drunken, vainglorious lout" does "most bitter wrong / To some who are near" to Yeats (32, 33-4). In other words, the light of the (subjective) moon eclipses the light of the (objective) sun to a negative effect. Like the Fool, the figures desire their Mask, their opposite at Phase 14, for they are "jealous of those that can still feel, but through terror and out of jealousy of those that can act with intelligence and effect" (Yeats, *AV* A, 93). In other words, these yet unidentified figures are perpetually blinded by their desire to act with effect in the Easter Rising, so they grow malignant. The poem suggests that after the violence of the Rising, Ireland's modern era descends into violence and chaos. By applying the Great Wheel as a symbol, the poem unites the individual and societal experience. The mundane figures and their neighbourhoods are all "transformed utterly" (39), reincarnated as "supernatural incarnations" at Phase 1 on the Great Wheel and shaped for a purpose by masters like the poet.[66]

To contemplate the mystery of the terrible beauty born, Yeats first transcends from this

modern world into an ethereal one of symbol. This escape significantly transforms the real players of recent history into ideal images, essentially monumentalizing them. Through the cycle of seasons, the figures open their hearts and are fixed as stony monuments, effectively surrendering their subjective selfhood. They unite "with one purpose alone" (41), which is like a protuberant stone, to "trouble the living stream" (44). Here, Yeats turns to images that change as their movements become chaotic:

> The horse that comes from the road,
> The rider, the birds that range
> From cloud to tumbling cloud.
> Minute by minute they change;
> A shadow of cloud on the stream
> Changes minute by minute;
> A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
> And a horse plashes within it;
> The long-legged moor-hens dive,
> And hens to moor-cocks call;
> Minute by minute they live. (45-55)

The images span outward, tumbling along a path, until they slip on an edge, which sends them spiralling off course. The images trace a course that echoes the design of the Great Wheel; their winding and unwinding movements model the wheel's spiral shape. As if cycling through the twenty-eight phases, the living stream continuously reshapes the images, "chang[ing] minute by minute" (50); yet, the stone never fades away, remaining "in the midst of it all" (56). The imagined scene contrasts images of the living and animated world alongside the dead and rigid stone—a stone representing the figures' united hearts, "their dream" of Ireland, for which they died (70-1). Amidst the wheeling images, the stone monuments provide a fixed center—a sense of oneness and unity that withstands violent change in the modern world. Through this depiction, the poem clarifies that the Great Wheel mythicizes mundane figures into ideal images, ultimately enabling poets to transform a distorted and divided world into an aesthetic and united one. Yeats

struggles to face the implications of this new insight. Instead, he uses rhetorical questions to imply a potential resolve for his uncertainty.

Through violent opposition, the Great Wheel unites the individual with society—the purpose of the real, mundane figures with the distorted views of the modern era—to create a wholly united nation. After realizing the Great Wheel's overall function, Yeats immerses himself in the world as an active thinker in stanza four. He contemplates what enchants the unremarkable makers of history, creating in them a single-minded desire for their purpose and a belief that their purpose requires the sacrifice of their lives and identities. He recognizes that to become the permanent oneness, the new center, these figures must sacrifice their individuality, a sacrifice that makes "a stone of [their] heart[s]" (58). As stone monuments, however, these real, historical people never disappear from thought—from the abundant flowing life of poets or nations—because they transform into idealized images. Yeats's question, "O when may it suffice?" (60), implies some blame cast on the Spiritus Mundi, the cosmic oneness, for the sacrifice; but rather than settle with this conclusion, his poetic voice stays conflicted. Instead, he reflects on the poet's role when he writes, "our part / To murmur name upon name" (60-1). The poet's part is to redeem real, mundane figures so their sacrifice is not a needless death. Again, Yeats's renewed immanence engages with self and the world in the interest of redemption.

Following his theory of poetic culture, Yeats and his symbols align his identity with a strong and great poet like Blake and a disciplined mythic like Aengus. Like the god of love and poetry, Yeats seemingly makes magical words obey his call while disembodied powers, whether figured as the Muse or Masters, express themselves through him. Especially in the early 1890s, Yeats transformed metaphorical or symbolic writing into his lyrical ballads and romantic poetry "to stress that only by following a distinctly Celtic note will poets, as [John] Todhunter has,

create images of passions shared by all [human]kind" (Pietrzak 13). When applied in poetry, the magical symbol transforms into a rhetorical device used as a unifier. From his theories of the symbol and poetry, Yeats aligns the role and responsibilities of Irish poets with an idea of bards as the legislators of the nation, meaning that the poet is "no longer only being audible as a mouthpiece of political dogman … but exercise[es] his mastery to shape [the] intellect of the entire nation" (Pietrzak 25). In other words, a poet's poetry shapes the imagination of individuals and society forward through time. Pietrzak continues that Yeats strives for his poetry to situate the poet "as the founder and organizer of [culture's] social economy" (229-30), which translates into his earlier theory of poetic culture, specifically a unity of culture via the arts. In short, Yeats theorizes "poetry as a social[ly] symbolic intervention" that revitalizes a modern nation's culture through poetry's unifying intensity drawn from "the forces of magic" (Flannery 53-54, 77). Interestingly, Yeats's attitude towards poetry is two-fold irony, indicating the duality of his thoughts. While his theory of poetic culture seemingly dislikes poetry emphatic of cultural fragmentation, thus preferring unification, he likes poetry emphatic of unique expression, like the Irish nation for whom everything is a symbol.[67] Yeats labours to mediate heritages and adapt arts, languages, and narratives so he may unveil a foundational unity of civilization; however, the heritages are simultaneously a record of its own, unique traditions—a phenomenon of mediating between nation and culture.

In the final stanza of "Easter, 1916," Yeats removes the ideal images from myth and positions them back in the world. But rather than transform the images back into common, everyday figures, he re-fashions them into national heroes, into individual names and character types. Yeats asks, "And what if excess of love / Bewildered them till they died" (72-3), for, as Yeats sees the role, the poet redeems them by writing them as national heroes: "I write it out in

verse – / MacDonagh and MacBride / And Connolly and Pearse” (74-6).[68] “Now and in time to be” (77), these national heroes “are changed, change utterly” (79) into character types. As embodiments of Phase 1 on the Great Wheel, these characters “take whatever shape, accept whatever image is imposed upon them” by Yeats and other poets (Yeats, *AV* A, 94). In a sense, they are adapted, not reborn. Yeats asserts his creative power as a poet and sets them up as powerful emblems for the nation—as emblems that generate powerful meaning and interconnection for the nation (Sidnell 9; Holdeman 74). Ultimately, their transformation produces another beauty and terror in the whole nation.

Arguably, the poet is responsible for enchanting the figures’ impulses, for making their intellect dominated by desires. He is responsible because his poetry, ultimately, shapes the imagination of individuals and society forward through time. Bethany Smith explains that the poem conveys “Yeats’s uncertainty about the poet’s power to shape national imagination” (236). For him, the poem “represents not a deliberate act of dreaming, but a deliberate admission of complicity in disguising real violence through narrative redemption,” which simultaneously “draw[s] the act of writing, and thereby the act of reading, into responsibility for mystifying public violence” (Smith 236). By applying the Great Wheel, in a sense, the poem subtly admits its complicity in what Smith claims. Yeats’s writing involves him in the poet’s work of “mystifying public violence” (Smith 236). The poem insists on the unheroic terror involved in uniting a nation and bewildering the imagination of readers—inserting into their minds the thought that sacrifice of one’s individuality and selfhood is required to create unity, wholeness, and oneness. This thought critically comments on Yeats’s theory of poetic culture and its erasure of the individual and their subjectivity.

Yeats’s theory of poetic culture romanticizes historical eras when a nation’s people

sought out "unity as deliberately as it had been sought out by the theologian, poet, sculptor, and architect" (Flannery 58), which is what Yeats wants modern Ireland to become. For example, Yeats's poetry sees Byzantium as a time and place for the "unity of the arts and religion with daily life" for its "verbal art is made to pay tribute to the non-verbal ones in many allusions to painting and sculpture" (Sidnell 3). Byzantine artistic principles include advocating for poetry to be like painting, which suggests that both arts draw inspiration from texts, whether mythological, legendary, biblical, and/or historical, "and select the elements in the composition[s] which will make possible" faithful representations of nature or daily life throughout civilizations (Louvel 34-5). Essentially, the artist adapts from repositories of traditional symbols across poetry, painting, and literature (Pietrzak 191)—symbols that are "symbolical or evocative of the state of mind which is, of all states of the mind not impossible, the most difficult to" nations, races, and individuals (Flannery 58). Such a phenomenon translates into Yeats's esoteric system of belief in which the Great Memory functions like a record of memories.

In the "Magic" and "The Philosophy" essays, Yeats writes that "since many 'minds can flow into one another' and, moreover, they're linked to the great memory, the symbol, when it is evoked by the poet, can bring all minds together to share in the poet's vision" (Yeats qtd. in Pietrzak 69). For the poet to evoke the symbol and for it to inspire them, their poetry must use lively, vivid, and dynamic language that captures the "enchanted words" and "subtle music" forming the symbol (Pietrzak 70). According to Pietrzak, symbols, formed from words "purified of their earthly context, instantiate supernatural truth" because of their "capacity as embodiments of the Divine Essences" of the Great Memory (65).[69] Arguably, Yeats likely read Edmund Spenser and Blake as examples of artists whose work is close to the Divine Essences in how it demonstrates intense imaginative insight.[70] In Yeats's poetry, the privileging and elevating of the

image above the individual, "as well as his preoccupation with images generally," coincide with "predilection[s] for visual expressions and perceptions" of life—for symbolic representations that transcend temporal limitations of verbal or written arts, effectively passing beyond death and becoming like a "living soul" (Sidnell 3, 7). Ultimately, Yeats's theories claim that artists create a unity of culture in how they craft "without the consciousness of individual design, absorbed in their subject matter and that [of] the vision of a whole people'" (Pietrzak 157). However, such artists craft art following Symbolist, Romantic, and Decadent traditions that often convey ideals of impersonality, aesthetic detachment, and autonomy, which compounds the difficulty of striving for a unity of culture. The symbolism in Yeats's poetry allows him to escape from his contemporary world into an ideal one where ancient and archetypal visions empower him to return to his world reimagined as an ideal. Specifically, this seemingly magical event empowers Yeats to adapt and recreate symbols that freshly perceive his reimagined Ireland as uniting legendary stories, present history, and distorted modernity.

By erecting its own monuments, "Easter, 1916" influences the nation's imagination to accept that the terrible, violent acts can transform the emerging modern era from a thing unruly to one united: the nation that previously wore "motley" now wears green (Yeats 14). Now, the terrible beauty is a united modern era born from violent acts of terror. Through creating national heroes, Yeats immerses himself in a transformed self and world. Although he perceives the new world as uniting present history, the unity comes at a cost to the nation's imagination. Overall, "Easter, 1916" does not sustain the necessary subjective and objective opposition but, rather, reconciles it. In the poem, Yeats's immanence "implies the resolution of oppositions of life and work, poet and natural self" (Sidnell 101). Creating these opposing images—mundane figures versus monumentalized ideals and heroic characters—frustrates and transforms the natural self,

behaving almost like a mode of transcendence (Sidnell 101). Ultimately, however, the poem concludes with a mockery of ultimate, cosmic objectivity and temporary reassurance of unity and wholeness.

In "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," the poet-speaker more explicitly resolves that creating art through poetry is the redeeming purpose of this eternal opposition, this process of abstraction, split dualities, and immanence that constitutes the System's oscillation. As indicated by its title, the poem responds to the aftermath of World War I and the emergence of Ireland's War of Independence. In section one, the poet-speaker perceives that, in the wake of the violence, "many ingenious things are gone / That seemed sheer miracle to the multitude" (1-2). By the "many ingenious things," he means the loss of spirited and civilized art—once a sign of a society united in work and vision (Yeats 1). The same reality that "pitches common things about" (4) does not protect art from the "circle of the moon" (3)—meaning that the same cosmic process that violently handles a being's individuality also fails to protect art from the moon's effects of subjective blindness, single-minded desire, and bold, violent action. "Phidias' famous ivories / And all the golden grasshoppers and bees" are gone, victims of this same "circle of the moon" (3, 7-8). Here, he realizes that art cannot go beyond the subjective, absolute individual and tie itself to a higher aesthetic of ultimate and timeless objectivity. In Holdeman's words, "he lacks confidence in art's ability to tie itself to a reality higher than" the one he is in (88). Although his subjectivity allows him to create art, it also limits his ability to infuse his art with the Celtic spirit in nature and the cosmic spirit in the universe.

The poet-speaker's struggle aligns with the unruly modern era because it is at Phase 22, or The Breaking of Strength, on the Great Wheel.[71] At Phase 22, the self-will "has become abstract, and the more it has sought the whole of natural fact, the more abstract it has become,"

and the self-awareness has "a desire for the death of the intellect" (Yeats, *AV* A, 76). In short, people in society are weary and confused by the culture of striving to secure knowledge about reality, truth, and God (76). Consequently, they lash out in a final attempt to impose their individuality onto the world. Meanwhile, the mysterious workings of the Great Wheel gradually enforce on the self and world an objective character rather than personality.

In search of hints about the fate of the spiritless, disunited modern era, the poet-speaker looks to a mythic past rooted in classic Greek civilization. But, "Phidias' famous ivories" are gone (Yeats, "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," 7). In subsequent stanzas, he blames the loss of art on the shallow intellect of the materialistic era preceding World War I, an era of people whose rising self-awareness courts the death of the intellect (Yeats, *AV* A, 76). As if cycling through embodiments on the Great Wheel, society wheels away from days of confident "public opinion," when everyone thinks "that the worst rogues and rascals had died out" (13, 16). In 1919, "days are dragon-ridden" and the "night can sweat in terror" (25, 29). Characteristic of Phase 22, opposite forces begin to control portions of the mind: "One thinks of the gusts of sentimentality that overtake violent men, the gusts of cruelty that overtake the sentimental" (*AV* A 76). This interchange is evident in the current "nightmare [that] rides upon sleep" (Yeats, "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," 25-6). The triumph of drunken soldiery blackens the art of antiquity—the ivory statues with "golden grasshoppers and bees" (8)—with the blood of a murdered mother.

The poet-speaker "can read the signs" (33) of the violent times. The signs tell him that "no work can stand" (35) in this era and that any remaining glory will only "break upon [his master's] ghostly solitude" (40). Thus, the poet-speaker hesitantly argues for the necessity of renouncing physical attachments and abolishing bodily experiences, like "the great / That had

such burdens on the mind / And toiled so hard and late / To leave some monument behind" (93-6). Before he is comfortable with this conclusion, the poet-speaker suddenly resigns himself to the fact that he is "in love and loves what vanishes," like the artwork from antiquity (42). Actually, the evanescence of the great works and monuments that humans love makes us love that much more (Holdeman 88), as seen in the admiration for the four national heroes who "are changed, changed utterly" in "Easter, 1916." If a countryman had "such a thought" that made the "stump on the Acropolis" or "the famous ivories," he would admit no "incendiary or bigot" to burn or break what he made (Yeats, "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," 44-7). Simply because we "love what vanishes" does not mean detachment from what we love is easy (42). After the poet-speaker comments critically on his insight, his poetic voice is skeptical. He wonders, "Is there no comfort to be found" (41). He is reluctant to permanently renounce the subjective world—fearful of losing the memories of what he loves.

The poet-speaker escapes into the symbol of the Great Wheel to pursue a revealed truth,. In section two, he associates modernity's discord with its oscillations. He envisions dancers who triumphantly "enwound / A shining web, a floating ribbon of cloth" and who suddenly vanish like a "dragon of air" (50-1). Again, this dance traces out the design of the Great Wheel, modelling shuttle spiral and funnel. The cyclical patterns of the "Platonic Year"[72] resemble a continuous dance of contest and embrace, ebb and flow, as it "whirls out new right and wrong, / [and] Whirls in the old" (54-6). The poet-speaker experiences discomfort in the face of this dance, realizing that "all men are dancers and their tread / Goes to the barbarous clangor of a gong" (57-8). In other words, all beings march along the Great Wheel's cyclical patterns; the cosmos "hurrie[s] them off on its own furious path" (52).

In section three of "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," the poet-speaker reintroduces his previous argument for separating from material, earthly reality. He "compares the solitary soul to a swan" with its "wings half spread for flight, / The breast thrust out in pride" as if it will soar and vanish into an afterlife with the Spiritus Mundi (60, 65-6). However, the violent triumph of drunken soldiery from before is the same triumph that "mar[s] our solitude" (78); thus, the swan, the solitary soul, "leap[s] into the desolate heaven" (79)—once the heaven the poet-speaker's "laborious life imagined" (82). Thus, the poet-speaker considers abstracting from self and world—from his "secret meditation" and "the labyrinth that he has made / In art and politics" (69-70)—for his closing lines imply that abstraction possibly frees the solitary soul to begin an afterlife in the Spiritus Mundi. Although this afterlife offers wholeness and unity with other spirits, the speaker must surrender everything personal, like feeling, intellect, love, and art.

But abstraction is neither simple nor fulfilling for the poet. Across sections three and four, the poet-speaker suddenly shifts towards mocking that which mocks the works he admires. After escaping into the Great Wheel's symbolism, he finds no comfort in its insight—no comfort in an afterlife gained from abstraction. He loves and loves what vanishes, resisting detachment from his and others' great works (Yeats, "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," 42). Empowered by this, he reaches an immanence with himself and the world, now fully engaged, as indicated by the inclusive plural pronoun "We" in section four. He returns to redeem the emerging modern world. He critically comments on how the same pre-war society that "talked of honor and of truth" now "shriek[s] with [cynical] pleasure if [it] show[s]" imperfections, like boldness, blind splendour, unruliness and disunity (90-1). The poet-speaker tells his readers to "mock mockers after that / That would not lift a hand maybe to help good, wise or great / To bar that foul storm" (108-11). He contradicts his mocking in earlier sections, including himself as a mocker to be

mocked. Essentially, mocking is pointless because “the winds of winter” (87) “that clamor of approaching night” (68) are the same winds that level the great and shriek at the good. Everything is caught up in the flow of the cosmos’s cyclical patterns, meaning every historical era encompasses societies that continuously rise and flourish and descend into chaos.

To illustrate this continuous oscillation, the poet-speaker concludes by uniting present history with mythic pasts. From the mythic past, he draws “handsome riders” who, tired from coursing along their path, “all break and vanish” (114, 117).[73] The riders return as embodiments of lust and hatred, making anyone who touches them “turn with amorous cries, or angry cries” like the “love-lorn Lady Kyteler” and “that insolent fiend Robert Artisson” (123, 128-29).[74] The wheeling of mythical characters like the Chinese dancers mirrors the cycling of historical societies—physical potency degenerating into terrible beauty, unity into disunity. Thus, individual beings and societies unite in a common, shared experience through the Great Wheel—all building “their purpose in the labyrinth of the wind” (121). For the poet and his poetry, the redeeming purpose makes it possible to conceive and create art in the world. His poetry arms society with knowledge about individual suffering and the power to respond to worldly violence through art. Although the tones of both poems are bleak, the poet overcomes his convictions in favour of total objectivity and affirms subjectivity—essentially realizing that the oscillating opposition of *both* is essential for the making of history and art.

A Dance of Opposites in the Round Tower

Part of *AV*’s symbolism, the symbol of the Round Tower (the Tower) provides the poet with not just an escape but also a return, meaning abstraction and immanence.[75] Richard Ellmann argues that the Tower’s spiral staircase is a conduit for an ascent to spiritual or descent to earthly experience. He writes, “The winding stair which leads up the tower became an emblem of the

spiritual ascent, with some side reference to the visionary gyres, which could be conceived of as the antinomy of spirit and matter or heaven and earth" (Ellmann 242). Although Ellmann correctly identifies the vertical, spiral ascent to an ethereal, aesthetic symbolism, he fails to clarify that the Tower is not *strictly* an escape into mental isolation and solitude, "where [real] life is condensed and controlled by the machinery of symbolism" (Ellmann 242). Holdeman agrees with Ellmann that the Tower symbolizes "the poet's artistic and spiritual quest;" however, he adds that it is also "the 'ancestral stair' trod before [Yeats] by such Anglo-Irish luminaries as Jonathan Swift" (96). Both commentators analyze the Tower as mediating the oscillating tensions between objective and subjective poles, but Holdeman rightly acknowledges connectivity between individual and societal bodies—the Tower as a communication system rather than simply a portal to an infinite, ultimate harmony.

"Under the Round Tower" springs directly from Yeats's Automatic Scripts and Vision Papers, which directly links the poem to *AV*. In the manuscripts, Yeats records the Round Tower as the "abundant flowing life" (Yeats qtd. in Paul, *AV* A, 294).[76] More specifically, during Georgie Hyde-Lees's session on March 20, 1918, Yeats notes that "the tower is for the medium alone—not for you—it is a symbol of the human arm & the human heart—arm and human heart" (294).[77] The metaphor of the human heart fused to a human hand puts into Yeats's mind abstract ideas of creation: first, that the abundant flow of life is a result of this union; second, that emotion courses through powerful acts of creation; third, that artistic thought is to be understood as "abundant flowing life" (294). Mediating on the symbol of the Round Tower generates artistic thought, transcribed as words on a page, that later influences the collective imagination of nations over time. Thus, this imagery of a human arm and heart in unison emphasizes continual oscillation between the objective and subjective. In *AV*, Yeats explicitly alludes to the Tower

when he writes, “There is that continual oscillation which I have symbolized elsewhere as a King and Queen, who are Sun and Moon also, and whirl round and round as they mount up through a Round Tower” (152). *AV*’s treatment of the Tower hints at its symbolic function as a channel of all artistic thoughts of all artists throughout time and history.

“Under the Round Tower” reveals Yeats’s understanding of the Tower symbol as an incarnation of the transcendent universe—of the system of double gyres itself. Thus, the Tower is rooted in utter objectivity. Such an early understanding of *AV* and the application of its symbolic language intensifies the poem’s sense of abstraction. The poem situates the speaker as an ignorant observer outside the tower, viewing it as a “grey old battered tombstone / In Glendalough beside the stream” (7-8). In the first stanza, the speaker reflects on life, death, and the afterlife through the persona of Billy Byrne. Billy Byrne suggests that if he “should live as live the neighbors,” he will strive with little reward (3), for his soul will not be free to begin an afterlife in the infinite—in ultimate harmony with the cosmic oneness.[78] Instead, his “stretch[ed] bones” will “lie lapped up in linen” (5, 1) until the ruins are under the sun’s light—the sun signalling embodiments of the objective man occupying the solar phases on the Great Wheel. Essentially, the speaker associates being consumed in imaginative thoughts with mummification, meaning transcendence via death. His thoughts, like linen, will lap him up, trapping him in his mind like a battered tomb. He associates a life lived, dominantly, in human subjectivity with a soul without an afterlife—doomed to pass multiple times through the cosmic phases and cycles of embodiments.

In stanzas two and three, the poem projects the speaker’s view onto fictive images “of sun and moon” that spiral “in the round tower” (11-12). This shift effectively transports the speaker inside the Tower. Once inside, the speaker is empowered to escape into symbols, like

images of the sun and moon or figures of the king and queen. In a dream, the speaker envisions the figures as they spiral and funnel:

> Of golden king and silver lady,
> Bellowing up and bellowing round,
> till toes mastered a sweet measure,
> Mouth mastered a sweet sound,
> Prancing round and prancing up
> Until they pranced upon the top. (13-8)

The golden king (sun) and silver lady (moon) represent the primary and antithetical "bound together in a mutually supportive dance" (DeForrest 150). Both masters of song and dance, the king and queen balance each other, singing "till stars began to fade" (Yeats, "Under the Round Tower," 20). By stanza four, their "mutually supportive tension" abolishes signs of stars, or points of embodiments, which results in total absorption into the System and the creation of what DeForrest refers to as "a phaseless sphere" representative of "ultimate reality" (151). Essentially, the dance traces out the design of the Great Wheel and, possibly, a greater sphere where primary and antithetical are in complete unity, existing as one unit.[79] These visions enchant the speaker with a possible escape from the System's cycles and into the infinite, where he might dissolve into a supersensual objectivity at one with the cosmic spirit.

The speaker observes more than the physical tower in Glendalough; rather, the symbol of the Round Tower enables him to envision the creation of the System's geometrical foundation. When the speaker dreams, his imagination sustains the king and queen figures. The symbol of the Tower is a model of his mental activity. On this reading, the whole text transforms into an "expression of literal experience," of consciousness itself (Adams 433). According to Serra, Yeats's symbolic language performs a portion of his work through symbols that, when used correctly, will "take on lives of their own in the minds of readers" and, thus, provide poetic, not definitive, statements in response to his rhetorical questioning and conflicted, poetic voice ("To

Never See Death" 2). Thus, the speaker is both a character in and the creator of the poem, but he is also an ignorant, off-stage presence that beholds the symbols that communicate.

In the end, the speaker misreads the Round Tower's symbolism of oscillating forces and, thus, misunderstands its poetic statement about literal experiences: that opposition is fundamental in acts of creation. The persona of Billy Byrne mocks the speaker's ignorance about life. For, as mentioned, the speaker believes that as a solitary person isolated in thought, he is caught in "a deal [he'd] sweat and little earn" (Yeats, "Under the Round Tower," 2). By this, he means that his powerful imagination distracts him from letting his soul transcend to an ultimate infinity away from human subjectivity. In the last stanza, the speaker continues to reflect on the persona of Billy Byrne when he rambles, "'It's certain that my luck is broken…I cannot find the peace of home'" (25, 29). Because the speaker insinuates that he lives madly distracted—attached to the physical self and material world, as exemplified through Billy's dependency on stealing money—he will not experience an afterlife.

In his dream, the speaker perceives that the Tower transforms mundane, material figures into spiritual, ideal images, from the O'Byrnes and the Byrnes to the sun and moon. The speaker's dream, in fact the poem, mistakenly transforms the Tower from a building to a symbol to something supersensual; it seems, instead, like an incarnation of the transcendent. Glamoured by his desire for spiritual ascension, the speaker sidesteps how the Tower symbolizes the necessity of opposition. The "mutually supportive dance" of the king and queen in the Round Tower conveys the necessity to continue the oscillation of objective and subjective forces (DeForrest 150). If the king and queen let go of their embrace, then they separate from their union, effectively ending the thing observed: the dance stops, signifying the destruction of the Round Tower and, simultaneously, the whole System (DeForrest 150). Essentially, all creative

thought, expression, and creation cease without opposition.

"Under the Round Tower" and "The Tower" illuminate and comment on each other—the latter countering the former's intense movement toward abstraction. Similarly, Yeats's "The Tower" recalls *AV*'s system of double gyres through its application of the Round Tower. The later poem oscillates between abstraction and immanence through three superimposed planes of time occupied by the poet-speaker: the present self, the past self, and an ideal future self-image. In the first numbered section, the poet-speaker addresses his "troubled heart" about the dilemma, the "absurdity," of mortality he faces: "this caricature" of "decrepit age that has been tied to [him]" (1-3). In this emotional appeal, he appears deeply uncertain about his embodiment and questions how to handle his "decrepit age" (1). His conflicted voice reveals his indecisiveness towards either keeping his poetic imagination and remaining a victim of mortality or renouncing the world and opening his heart to consumption by an ultimate infinity. He is reluctant to embrace the cosmos's enforced abstraction from the subjective world and himself—fearful of losing his mind full of boyhood memories and imagination once "excited, passionate, fantastical" (5).

Still, rather than be a fool chained to a "battered kettle" of a body, he considers settling for "argument" and "abstract things" in a timeless realm of unchanging, objectively-true ideas—meaning he is content to be intellectually minded, rather than emotionally engaged (14-5). Characteristic of a being exiting the subjective phases, between Phase 15 and 22, the poet-speaker "makes [his] last attempt to impose [his] personality upon the world" before divine objectivity transcends human subjectivity (*AV* A 19). "[D]edicated to meditations of unknown thought," like the idealisms of Plato and Plotinus, the poet-speaker struggles to renounce physical attachments and abolish bodily experiences (Finneran 43-5). For this reason, he "must

bid the Muse go pack" (Yeats, "The Tower," 11), meaning he must tame his subjective imagination by giving up poetry. He believes that the cosmos mandates abstraction from material, earthly reality. Subsequently, he perceives this enforced abstraction does violence to his individuality through the potential loss of his image-making capacity, but most importantly of his visionary gleam—referred to as his "excited, passionate, fantastical imagination" in "The Tower" (5-6). Still unknown to him, abstraction into absolute objectivity need not permanently threaten his subjectivity; instead, the Round Tower will renew him and refresh his perspective, enabling him to create art for a world reimagined.

By the second section, the poet-speaker redirects from internal and present to external and past dialogue as he casts his imagination forth under a beam of dying (objective) sunlight replaced by (subjective) moonlight, which "send[s] imagination forth / Under the day's declining beam" (20-1). He sets himself atop the tower's roof and scans the surrounding landscape's battlements, foundations, and trees, indicating that the setting is Thoor Ballylee. Like a transmitter and receiver, his imagination calls to "images and memories / From ruin or from ancient trees" of the past (21-3); here, the Round Tower begins its function as a channel that connects artistic thoughts throughout time—like a web connected to past poets' experiences. The subsequent images and themes emerge from a collective imagination belonging to real figures who experienced violent crimes—historical and mundane figures like Mrs. French, the maddened-men, and a peasant girl (41-8).[80]

To introduce other Yeatsian idioms, the poet-speaker here intensifies the timelessness of the Round Tower by thus marking how it associates the symbol with the Anima Mundi rather than *Anima Homini* or *Spiritus Mundi*. In *AV* A, Anima Mundi means the "soul of nature,"[81] or world; Anima Homini[82] is the "soul of man" (104-05); and Spiritus Mundi[83] is the spirit of the

world. In other words, Anima Mundi is the storehouse "of all images that exist, represent[ing] the poetic tradition of all ages" that the poet-speaker "can draw [from] in order to overcome" adversaries like the Daimon (Pietrzak 128, 130). Moreover, the storehouse of collective, poetic imagination is a record, not memory; thus, it constitutes an objective reality.[84] In this way, the poet-speaker of "The Tower" uses the Round Tower in two ways: to transmit to this objective and eternal collective imagination; and to receive from it past experiences of the real, material world, not the spiritually infinite, or Spiritus Mundi.

Through its functioning as such a nexus, the Tower maintains the opposition between subjective and objective, which allows for the formation of the figures and images that follow in the poem. Here, the poet-speaker effectively abstracts themself from self and world and escapes, not into a timeless world of forms and ideas, but into symbol and myth. The men, "maddened by those rhymes" in songs of glory, who seem to perceive the moon and sun as if in "one inextricable beam" are mistaken by the moon blocking the sun—signalling an era of bold, splendorous actions born from subjective blindness (Yeats, "The Tower," 41, 55). Under the lethal influence of human subjectivity, images of ordinary, mortal men appear, "doomed to spend their old age caught between regrets for the earthly life they might otherwise have lived and undiminished desires to 'sail up there / Amid the cloudy wrack' of the moon" (Holdeman 92). Repelled and attracted, the poet-speaker draws close to the "horrible splendor of desire" that veils the men's destinies (Yeats, "The Tower," 63). For the poet to triumph, his poetry, too, "must make men mad" (56), with their intellects dominated by instincts, impulses, and passions. Filled with images that stir desires, his poetry madly distracts the men from potentially living earthly, ordinary lives—their souls caught in a difficult and incomplete journey without an afterlife. Ultimately, he aligns with the men's doom through his youthful creation, Hanrahan.[85]

The poet-speaker imagines a discussion with Hanrahan, which effectively envisions an exchange between subjective and objective egos. In the poem's final plane of time, the poet-speaker looks to his ideal future self-image—an objective self looking at a mirror of his subjective alter ego.

Like the maddened men, the "cosmos's mysterious workings" roused the poet-speaker "to disastrous but strongly stirring exuberance" (Holdeman 84). But in old age, he is bankrupt; he misses the earthly life he could once have lived: "admit you turned aside / From a great labyrinth out of pride" (Yeats, "The Tower," 115-16). Now, he realizes that the "bitter soul" of the universal, cosmic oneness tempts him to embrace an ultimate, permanent objectivity and requires him to renounce all subjectivity; if not, then his soul will not be free to begin an afterlife with the Spiritus Mundi. However, from the memories of "all old men and women" (97), he realizes they are not delivered from the despair of old age. He questions, "Did all old men and women…rage / As I do now against old age" (97, 99-100). He is answered by "those eyes / That are impatient to be gone" (101-02). Here, he subtly wonders if he embraces eternal objectivity, will he be delivered from old age? The end of section two provides a pseudo-answer: "The sun's / Under eclipse and the day blotted out" (119-20). Ultimately, objectivity (the sun) will not transcend subjectivity (the moon).

Yet in the poem's final stanza, the poet-speaker immerses back into the self and world. As demonstrated, he can handle the objective and subjective self all in one thought, seemingly internalizing the oscillation like the Round Tower. His art does not make him unable to "find the peace of home" (Yeats, "Under the Round Tower," 29) because he has "prepared [his] peace / With learned Italian things / And the proud stones of Greece, / Poet's imaginings / And memories of love" (Yeats, "The Tower," 157-61). In the end, he realizes that life balances out the "sun and moon and star," all the points of tension, so artists may die and live yet still "dream

and so create / Translunar Paradise" through their art (152, 155-56). He settles to "study / In a learned school" but declares his new belief that "death and life were not / Till man made up the whole, / Mad lock, stock and barrel / Out of his bitter soul" (182-83, 148-51).

No longer morose, he rages against the supposed spiritual and material realities presented by the universal, cosmic spirit. He "mock[s] Plotinus' thought / And cr[ies] in Plato's teeth" for they believe reality transcends subjectivity and materiality (146-47). Instead, he claims allegiance with the maddened men, declaring that they "shall inherit my pride" (127). No longer figures from a mythic past, these men are now recognizable as Anglo-Irish gentry, whom Yeats sees as a threatened minority during the Irish War of Independence. By identifying himself with these figures, the poet-speaker styles a sort of heritage for himself, hinted at with the will, which introduces what Claire Nally calls "a sublimated discourse about identity, of anxieties over ethnic belonging" (50). In the end, "The Tower" departs from the purely mythical to become a text that leans towards modelling nationalist mythology, like Yeats's historical mode of poetry. While switching from a mythical to historical mode, the poems also reveal a gradual intensification of subjective along with objective—a growing emphasis on the necessity of oscillating between oppositional states of immanence and abstraction.

An Infinite Dialogue Between the Mask and Daimon

Approaching his later years, Yeats's poetry emphasizes earthly experiences, and his poetic voice betrays more of his personality and biography, thus indicating a growing immanence in himself and his world. In "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," the poet engages in a dramatized dialogue with himself, split into its natural and dreamt forms (Sidnell 11). In this dramatized dialogue, the subjective self, being as man, argues with the objective soul, representing the Daimon in the reversed-phase of the self. As Sidnell argues, the poem "produce[s] a dialectic of

self-possession and alienation. The natural selves…contradict a mental image constituted by passion" (11). In the poem, the Self is the natural self that contradicts the Soul, which is a mental image that expresses the poet's desire to experience joy and wholeness through union with the Spiritus Mundi.[86] In Yeats's "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," the poet overcomes his daimonic adversary by using poetic images drawn from the historical and mythical past. By drawing from the record of objective memories (i.e., the Anima Mundi), the poet embraces the anti-self and embodies the oscillation between subjective and objective, rendering them equally vital and necessarily interconnected in creating true beauty in art.

In the poem's first section, the Soul summons up the symbol of the Round Tower, the "broken, crumbling battlement" (3) and summons the poet's self to the "winding ancient stair" that leads to the record of imaginative thoughts from all past and future poets (Yeats, "A Dialogue," 1). The Soul seems to locate the heavens, the "breathless starlit air" (4), atop the Tower, but "the star that marks the hidden pole" clearly suggests the "starlit air" (4) is a path that escapes towards the infinite—wherever the Spiritus Mundi is. On the Great Wheel, the star is the sun that marks the northern point, which signifies complete objectivity and a being's unity with spirits. The Soul urges the Self to "set all [its] mind upon the steep ascent…Fix every wandering thought upon / That quarter where all thought is done" (2, 6-7). By "that quarter" (7), the Soul refers to the Wheel's final quarter, Phases 23 to 28, when a mentally powerful (subjective) being metamorphoses into a physically potent (objective) being. After Phase 22, or the "Breaking of Strength," "the being makes its last attempt to impose its personality upon the world" before the masking, blinding mask dominates again (Yeats, *AV* A, 19). For a being in his primary (objective) phases, the primary Mask is enforced, and the enforced Mask is character—meaning the once antithetical (subjective) being has no choice because the Mask is no longer free, and the

free Mask is no longer personality (18). The poet's self must accept a fated anti-self given by chance rather than a destined anti-self given by choice. In other words, for "A Dialogue," the Soul is a Mask enforced from without; put differently, it becomes the Daimon as an illusion of the anti-self. The Soul as Daimon, enforced Mask as inappropriate anti-self, thus initially presents itself as an antidote for loss and replacement of the appropriate anti-self.

The Soul "recommends that the poetic 'Self' give up all imaginary production, indeed that it becomes inactive and surrender" all wandering thought (Pietrzak 162). Here, the Daimon, as anti-self, pushes the self to accept Unity with God, which is possible in "that quarter where all thought is done" (Yeats, "A Dialogue," 7). Through Unity with God, the being in his objective phases "would sink into a mechanical objectivity, become wholly automatic" (Yeats, *AV* A, 27). Seemingly, the Soul urges the negation of the subjective so that the Self may reign in the intellect that "wander[s] / To this and that and t'other thing" (22-23). In short, the Soul reasons that an aged man whose thoughts dwell on emblems of love and war properly, in the end, teaches his imagination to "scorn the earth" (21). To digress, this line of argument recalls similar views in earlier poems like "The Tower" and "Easter, 1916". Like the Soul here, these poems look critically upon human subjectivity by depicting common, mundane figures distracted by their desires—whether it is the ordinary, mortal men maddened by folk rhymes of a young girl or the vivid' faces of everyday people stonily determined in their purpose to unify society. Once impulse dominates their intellect, such figures boldly attempt to create a lasting worldly effect. The Soul presents the same argument in these earlier poems: subjective blindness leads to foolish and violent acts. But by explicitly addressing "a man / Long past his prime" (17-8), the Soul suggests the aged poet, too, is blinded by subjectivity. As revealed in previous poems, Yeats's poetry transforms common figures from history into heroic images from folk and myth. In a

sense, the Soul advises the poet again to admire ideal and mythic experiences and scorn everyday and earthly experiences.

Masquerading as an enforced Mask, the Soul tempts the Self to embrace an ultimate, final reality with the Spiritus Mundi and become an eternal primary being—to become like objective thought in the mind. Thus, the Soul offers the poet's Self the Daimon as anti-self and a desired, ideal experience: "Think of ancestral night that can…Deliver from the crime and death of birth" (20-4). The Soul suggests freeing the conscious, subjective self leads to sudden joy, a liberation from the despair and remorse of personal, mortal experience. The Soul further explains that in the "ancestral night" (20), "man is stricken deaf and dumb and blind, / For intellect no longer knows / *Is* from the *Ought*, or *Knows* from the *Known* – / That is to say, ascend to Heaven" (32, 34-7). Here, the Soul pushes the Self to accept it as an anti-self—to disregard the self in its subjective phase and embrace the soul in its final and ultimate objective phase. By doing so, the poet may attain his desire for wholeness by uniting with other spirits. Essentially, the Soul enforces an illusion, real but misguided, of an ideal and mythical experience: an experience of the Self immersed in a heavenly aesthetic of a "breathless starlit air" (4) free from remorse and suffering. As we have seen, the poet has, in earlier work, contemplated similar resolutions offered from spiritual insight. But now, the poet's Self firmly defies this fate by raising its voice in argument.

By the poem's end, the Self finds an appropriate Mask, a more properly ideal anti-self, in images from historical and mythical pasts, eventually creating a new sense of objectivity that does not require the sacrifice of subjectivity. As noted in earlier poems, the poet struggles to renounce all subjective experiences so that his soul can freely live in an afterlife with the Spiritus Mundi. But rather than only embracing complete objectivity, the poet shifts towards a new

appreciation for complete subjectivity. In section one, the Self prefers the image of "Sato's ancient blade" with its "wooden scabbard wound and bound" by a "flowering, silken, old embroidery" (10, 13, 15). From this preference, the Self affirms the beauty in the world despite the terror from violence and loss. The poet infuses memories into emblems of love and war—the embroidery "torn / From some court-lady's dress" and the "blade upon his knee" (9, 13-4). These emblematic objects that remain "still razor-keen" and "unspotted by the centuries" (11-2) "compensate for his old age and the hardship of life" (Pietrzak 152). Essentially, the Self perceives the emblematic objects as poetic images that compensate for the displaced, original object of desire, which is his poetry filled with the visionary gleam he once had as a young poet. Here, the Self chooses the role of a soldier, like Sato, as his aesthetically generative Mask or anti-self. Just as Montashigi fashions "Sato's ancient blade" (Yeats, "A Dialogue," 10) for use in war, the poet here creates his poetry so that he may face his own day's violence. The Self sets these emblems "of the day against the tower / Emblematical of the night" (27-9), meaning it denies the Soul as a viable anti-self, perceiving it as an improper Mask or Image. The Self "claim[s] as by a soldier's right / A charter to commit the crime once more" (30-1). The crime is to be subjectively blind, like the "living man" in material, earthly reality, again and not embrace final rest in objectivity with the Spiritus Mundi.

In section two, the Self has the last words in the argument with the Soul, meaning that the poet musters the imaginative strength to perpetually stand up to the Daimon that counsels resolution of the conflicted self by simply absorption into the primary or objective realm. The Self asks, "What matter if the ditches are impure? / What matter if I live it all once more" (42-3). By "ditches," the Self means that a being who strives on the path of life can feel like he is trudging through a ditch—the experience turns bleak and traumatic (42). Through this rhetorical

questioning, the Self challenges the Soul's offered experience of "ascend[ing] to Heaven" (37) and "deliver[y] from the crime of death and birth" (24). In response, the Self affirms incarnation in the most personal and subjective terms:

> Endure that toil of growing up;
> The ignominy of boyhood; the distress
> Of boyhood changing into man;
> The unfinished man and his pain
> Brought face to face with his own clumsiness;
>
> The finished man among his enemies? –
> How in the name of Heaven can he escape
> That defiling and disfigured shape
> The mirror of malicious eyes
> Casts upon his eyes until at last
> He thinks that shape must be his shape?
> And what's the good of an escape
> If honour find him in the wintry blast? (44-56)

Arguably, the Self questions how the Soul can deliver it from incarnation, specifically "that defiling and disfigured shape" (51). That shape recalls the caricature of decrepit age from "The Tower." As if surrounded by enemies, shapes of old men surround the grown man. Throughout life, images of the aging self fill the man's vision until he mirrors what he sees, believing he, too, is an embodiment of old age. Yet the Self finds no comfort in and thus denies the Soul's offer since it provides no guaranteed antidote for the aging self—an image the Self dreads. He will still find "him[self] in the wintry blast" (56). Before he can escape the cycles, a being must still pass through the final objective phases—embodiments exhausted in mind and deformed in body.

In a final gesture of dominant strength against the Soul, the Self shifts to the poet's voice through the personal, attached pronoun "I." The poet declares he is "content to live it all again / and yet again" (57-8). He settles for passing through the multiple phases of embodiments on the cosmic cycle, whether life pitches him "into the frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch…or into the

most fecund ditch of all…if he woos / A proud woman" (59, 61, 63-4). He sees and foresees the aging self, the "defiling and disfigured shape" (51), as the image he dreads the most. Yet, he is content to live again and again—to persevere in searching for his appropriate mask and the definition of his anti-self. In the end, the poet is content to follow "every event in action or in thought" to its source (66). He is content to seek poetic images, like the soldier Sato, that express unruly and worldly experience as his anti-self. Thus, to reengage with self and world, the poet channels images from poetic traditions of historical and mythical pasts—in other words, he communicates with the Anima Mundi to overcome the Daimon. As discussed earlier, the Anima Mundi is a storehouse of collective, poetic imagination; it is a record of shared, universal memories constituted of sight and fragrance. Thus, Anima Mundi is an objective reality, and the images that come from it are objective. Not only does his struggle with opposite selves sustain necessary opposition, but the poet internalizes objective images of the anti-self that respond to the world and production of art; thus, he comes here to embody the oscillation of subjective and objective forces.

According to Pietrzak, the older Yeats thinks that artistic expression depends on the contest for dominance between the daily, natural self and the anti-self; thus, the poet's intellect and genius emerge from just this opposition (146). To Yeats, a poet will not create true art until he discerns the existence and the equality of both the self and anti-self. Pietrzak continues, "True beauty that captures 'Divine Essence' in a passionate image is only credible if a poet has embraced his anti-self and suffered through the greatest of tragedies" (123). In essence, loss is a prerequisite of, and opposition is required for, artistic creation. Even though the compensation is partial and never entirely satisfactory, poetic images redress the poet's essential poverty: the progressive loss of the excited, passionate, and fantastical imagination he once had as a young

poet. The poet can cast out remorse by embracing images of the sword and embroidered scabbard as images of his anti-self. He can "forgive [himself] the lot," meaning he can forgive every bold, splendorous action guided by subjective blindness ("A Dialogue" 67).

From this act of casting out remorse, the poet is rewarded by a sudden joy, "so great a sweetness" (69), that refreshes his perspective of the self and world. He perceives that "we are blest by everything, / Everything we look upon is blest" (71-2). The poet perceives true beauty in his surroundings: true beauty "that captures Divine Essence in passionate images" (Pietrzak 123). By accepting images of worldly violence and artistic beauty as his anti-self (e.g., Sato's sword), the poet internalizes the subjective and objective forces, effectively sustaining oscillation between the two. Finally, this embrace of the subjective alongside the objective allows him to create artistic works, like this poem, so viewers may also contemplate statements about the world and art expressed in his poetic symbolism.

Central to Yeats's *A Vision* are concepts of eternal conflict and oscillation, and its System of symbolic language suggests poetry's proximity to these concepts. For Yeats, *AV*'s purpose "is the progression of its own writer towards a new understanding and power" (Hennessey 8). Generally, *AV*'s System of symbolic language provides a lens for Yeats to perceive changes in mythic pasts, himself, and present history, opening a window for him to respond to such changes through his art. Through *AV*'s System, Yeats understands how life and art are rooted in and work through recurring oppositions. Such oppositional symbols as the Mask, the Round Tower, the Sun and Moon, and the Great Wheel are stylistic arrangements of experience—a language expressing that struggles between opposites are central to individual identity, national imagination, social relations, and historical events. The symbolic language gives him the power to embody its symbols of opposition and create art that makes poetic statements about life: that

Platonic idealism does not transcend human subjectivity, that terrible beauty is redeemable, and that personal loss is a pre-cursor to, and inner conflict is fundamental for, acts of (re)creation. Overall, *AV* makes sense of Yeats's poetic works as his aesthetic attempts to realize a new understanding and power of the poet and their poetry in shaping individual and collective imagination and identity.

As my research demonstrates, Yeats's poetic symbolism requires careful and insightful reading as his magical symbolism in philosophical and spiritual works like *AV*. When the symbols "are gathered and propelled into motion as they clash, meanings begin to unravel" (Pietrzak 121). The symbols are puzzles that provide structures of meaning, ironically interwoven with contradictory meanings, that build evolving foundations of belief. Throughout his poetic oeuvre, Yeats applies the symbols to his poetry to figure out how to synthesize and recontextualize "parallel forms of belief," like between occult symbolism, Irish folklore, mythologies, and Irish nationalism (Serra, "When 'She' Is," 146). In the early poems, for instance, his mind's eye is split between revisiting myths of an ancient past while also gazing at literature emerging in Ireland's present history. Via such symbols and notions of reflection, his poetry gestures to a more significant back-and-forth phenomenon—the world as a representation of a super-natural image; human knowledge as a duplication of the world; poetry as a figuration of knowledge—which occurs between works of myths and legends, oral storytellers and folklorists, and writers and poets. I aim to explore such a phenomenon by expanding my future research to include a deeper analysis of texts and contexts behind the Yeatsian symbol and a broader survey of Yeats's poems. Future research can explore how the symbol inserted into text teaches and questions people about the relays of information: what people think, say, and write about experiences of and between the self and world, and how people's languages, texts, and

minds throughout time possess and transmit that information. Overall, such a literary and theoretical interpretation of the symbol situates it in the sensible and secular world. By this, I mean that the symbol applies to work that studies image-text relations in the context of cultural studies. Possibly, Yeats's work uses the symbol to understand modern Ireland's literary contexts, particularly changes in writing and reading due to, for example, the emergence of multimedia forms, like spoken and written fairy tales, and intermedia forms, like textual-pictorial texts.

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[62] Around the 1910s onward, Yeats shifted from the term "image" to "emblem," meaning a figure of an assured meaning (Sidnell 101). By the 1930s, the emblem dictated Yeats and his poetry by steering it to "a more surrealist logic that aims at sublimation and discrepancy" (Kinahan 221)—a conception of art and poetic knowledge that "fits the Surrealist atmosphere of the 1930s which encouraged artists to explore and expose the workings of the unconscious" (Schwall 231).

[63] On the Great Wheel diagram, the entire era is half a millennium of a greater era. Yeats further explains that war or trouble marks each millennium—suggesting the greater era will also be one of violence and chaos (150); moreover, the Wheel also "represents the individual soul, and that soul's history…sometimes general life" (*AV* A, 104). Overall, the Great Wheel is the cyclical experience of life, death, and rebirth on an individual and societal level. It functions on micro and macro levels—seemingly uniting a being's life and mind with that of a whole society or civilization.

[64] See "The 1916 Rising" in Richard Killeen's *A Short History of Modern Ireland*. Attempting to forcefully establish an independent Irish republic, the military council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Irish Citizen Army disguised a rebellion behind the public reading of a proclamation of the republic scheduled for Easter Monday. After establishing six rebel garrisons around Dublin's centre, the British retaliated by relocating troops, barricading the rebel garrisons in the city's centre, using a gunboat to demolish Liberty Hall, and entering Trinity College and the Shelbourne Hotel to establish a clear line of fire at the rebels (88).

[65] See Phase 28, The Fool, in Yeats's *A Vision* A (1925). Yeats explains that the Fool "is but a straw blown by the wind, with no mind but the wind and no act but a nameless drifting and turning, and is sometimes called 'The Child of God'" for its foolishness, innocence and goodness (93).

[66] See Phase 1 in Yeats's *A Vision* A (1925). Yeats writes, "Mind and body take whatever image is imprinted upon them, transact whatever purpose is imposed upon them, and are indeed the instruments of supernatural manifestation" (94).

[67] Yeats's stance on poetry as a unique expression comes from influences like Shelley's Enlightened ideas and Wilde's high aesthetics around the re-representation of reality in art and literature.

[68] All of the names belong to leaders who were executed after their involvement in the 1916 Easter Rising: John MacBride, Irishman and UK citizen, military leader, Irish republican, and participant in the 1916 Easter Rising; Thomas MacDonagh, poet, playwright, teacher, and Irish political activist for the 1916 Easter Rising; James Connolly, socialist, Irish nationalist and leader of the Citizen Army and the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union; Patrick Pearse, teacher, poet, journalist, founder of the Irish Volunteers and public voice of the 1916 Easter Rising (Killeen 82-88).

[69] Chapman explains that in the Ellis-Yeats edition of Blake's *Works,* Yeats "and [Edwin] Ellis would have been shadowing Blake's own interests as indicated by the marginalia in part 1, on God and the Divine Essence (the essence of love and wisdom); in part 2, on the Lord as the Sun, with heat emanating; in part 3, on Swedenborg's cosmography; and in part 5, on 'All the things which can be known of the will and the understanding, or of the love and the wisdom' … Knowledge of 'human form' in Blake's sense was obtained from 'will itself', Yeats wrote in 1919" (*Yeats's Poetry*, 175).

[70] Yeats's readings include Spenser, whose work occupies a transition period from poetic culture and imagination to poetic Puritanism and individualism (Pietrzak 102).

[71] See Yeats's *A Vision* A (1925), Book 2, Chapter 2, Section 4 for examples of how the Great Wheel relates to history. For years between 1875-1927, Yeats writes that Phase 22 is a period of abstraction and "will be followed by social movements and applied science" (173). He continues, "At Phase 22 always war, and as this war is always a defeat for those who have conquered, we have repeated the wars of Alexander" (Yeats 174).
[72] The Platonic Year, as called by classic philosophers from antiquity, is one Great Year according to Western Astrology. According to editors Paul and Harper, the Great Year is a cycle of about 26,800 years, which is how long it takes the 'wobble' in the earth's axis to complete its motion (*AV* A 273).
[73] According to Holdeman, the handsome riders are the Sidhe, which Yeats associates with the Germanic goddesses referred to in the poem as Herodias' daughters (89)
[74] Lady Kyteler is a famous fourteenth-century Kilkenny witch, and Robert Artisson is her fiendish incubus (Holdeman 89).
[75] Biographically, the Round Tower refers to Thoor Ballylee in Gort, Ireland—the ruins of an Anglo-Norman fortress Yeats purchased in 1916. From 1918 to 1922, Ballylee has a greater significance as being the site for the poet's early composition of *AV* as Yeats likely drafted parts of *AV* A, at least Book 1, at Thoor Ballylee. Beyond his initial feelings of enchantment by the aesthetic and historical beauty of Thoor Ballylee, Yeats eventually experiences the tower specifically as a physical embodiment of *AV*'s system of double gyres; its structure of combined and intersected lines, planes, and funnels resembles for him the geometrical foundation and spiralling of the gyres.
[76] The Round Tower (the Tower) is artistic thought continuously streaming through to the collective record of poetic imagination. In other words, the symbol of the Tower is a physical, materialist container embodying all poetic thought in time. Overall, the Tower upholds the continual and necessary oscillation between the two poles, meaning the subjective embraced alongside the objective. The Tower functions as a channel to past and future images and themes in poetry, thus making it a timeless symbol.
[77] Editors Paul and Harper provide context around the session detailed in the Automatic Scripts, writing that the event occurs at Glendalough, "the site of ruined monastic center containing one of Ireland's famous round towers" (*A Vision* 293). Thus, "Under the Round Tower" is the resulting product from a visit to Thoor Ballylee.
[78] From *A Vision* A (1925), Yeats's sense of an afterlife and what the infinite means to him is glimpsed in his explanation of Phase 27, or of 'The Saint'. He writes that the being's "joy is to be nothing, to do nothing, to think nothing; but to permit the total life, expressed in its humanity, to flow in upon him and to express itself through his acts and thoughts […] At Phases 26, 27 and 28 he permits those [bodily] senses and those faculties to sink in upon their environment" (92-3). According to Holdeman, "the potential Saint incarnated at Phase 27 may 'escape' the cycle for good by renouncing both subjective selfhood and the objective world, thus opening the way to permanent harmony with the cosmic oneness" (69).
[79] See *AV* A (1925) for persona Owen Aherne's "Introduction," which depicts the 'Great Wheel' of Giraldus, and *The Dance of the Four Royal Persons*, which describes the design identical to Giraldus's 'Great Wheel'.
[80] These figures are of local myths when Yeats resided at Thoor Ballylee. Mrs. French is one of Yeats's neighbours who supposedly complained about a local farmer, threatening to have his ears chopped off. According to myth, her serving man executed her threat, presenting the chopped-off ears to her on a silver platter. The 'maddened men' are listeners of the Irish poet Anthony Raftery, or Antoine O'Raifteiri, a blind, wandering bard who created a poem in reverent praise of Mary Hynes—the peasant girl whose beauty allegedly drove local men mad with desire (Sidnell 71; Chapman, "'Metaphors for Poetry'," 231).
[81] Anima Mundi is a generalized term Yeats uses in a section from *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* where he writes, "If all our mental images no less than apparitions (and I see no reason to distinguish) are forms existing in the general vehicle of Anima Mundi, and mirrored in our particular vehicle, many crooked things are made straight. I am persuaded that a logical process, or a series of related images, has a body and period, and I think of *Anima Mundi* as a great pool or garden where it spreads through allotted growth like a great water plant or branches more fragrantly in the air" (22). See Yeats's *A Vision* A (1925), Book 2, Chapter 2, Section 1 for how Anima Mundi and Anima Hominis relate to the geometrical foundation of the System's double gyres.
[82] Anima Hominis is another term Yeats uses in a section from *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* where he writes:

> We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry. Unlike the rhetoricians, who get a confident voice from remembering the crowd they have won or may win, we sing amid our uncertainty; and, smitten even in the presence of the most high beauty by the knowledge of our solitude, our rhythm shudders. I think, too, that no fine poet, no matter how disordered his life, has ever, even in his mere life, had pleasure for his end […] Neither must we create, by hiding ugliness, a false beauty as our offering to the world. 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. We could not find him if he were not in some sense of our being and yet of our being but as water with fire, a noise with silence. He is of all things not impossible the most difficult, for that only which comes easily can never be a portion of our being, 'Soon got, soon gone,' as the proverb says. I shall find the dark grow luminous, the void fruitful when I understand I have nothing, that the ringers in the tower have appointed for the hymen of the soul a passing bell. (7-8)

[83] Unlike Anima Mundi, Spiritus Mundi is not personal but universal. Based on *A Vision* A (1925), this term may refer to the cosmic oneness, or total life, that is the central, supersensual space of the world—a unity of spirit. Holdeman refers to the term as "God's holy fire" (83-4). See Yeats's "The Second Coming" in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* for a direct use of the term in his poetic works.

[84] In their endnotes for *AV* A (1925), Book 4, Chapter 2, Section 14, editors Paul and Harper note that "'Record' virtually replaces 'Anima Mundi'" (336). They continue: "A long discussion on 28 March 1920, near the end of AS, distinguishes the record from memory by a hair-splitting distinction: 'nothing but sight of natural objects & fragrance pass into record'—not thought or sound, which is 'intellectual perception', like thought" (336).

[85] Red Hanrahan is a persona from Yeats's earlier poetic works, such as *Stories of Red Hanrahan* and *The Secret Rose* (1927). Hanrahan is a persona that embodies lust and rage, sharing a similar rage against old age as Yeats.

[86] Yeats interestingly notes that the Daimon influences what a being perceives as the object of desire. Yeats writes, "the things we dream, or that come suddenly into our heads, are therefore her *Creative Mind* [intellect or genius]…through which her energy, or bias, finds expression; one can therefore, if one will, think of man as *Will* [conscious choice] and *Creative Mind*, perpetually face to face with another being who is also but *Will* and *Creative Mind*, though these appear to man as the object of desire, or beauty, and as fate in all its forms" (*AV* A 25).

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