

**THE QUESTION OF IRISH IDENTITY IN THE WRITING
OF W. B. YEATS AND JAMES JOYCE**

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BY

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To Áine, Eoin, Dara and Sinéad

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Foreword

The purpose of this study is to foreground the ethical consequences of the attitudes to Irishness, and to Irish identity, that are to be found in the writings of William Butler Yeats and James Joyce. It is my contention that their work enunciates an ethical definition of Irishness which has overt and covert political and societal implications for Ireland today.

While there are many justified *caveats* entered in the field of academic study about the dangers of any imbrication of the literary, the aesthetic, and the political, nevertheless, I intend to argue that there are concomitant positive and emancipatory results of such an imbrication, and that these results have ethical implications for notions of Irishness and of community. Hence, I propose to theorize the different aspects of Irishness that are to be found in both writers, by contrasting them with others that were hegemonic at that time through an articulation of the theoretical writings of Theodore Adorno, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida.

Given that this study has been written during the ongoing peace talks in Northern Ireland, talks wherein definitions and categorizations of 'Irishness' have been crucial, I feel that this book is a timely exploration of issues dealing with the literary, political and ethical dimensions of Irish culture and identity.

Preface

A turning point in deconstructive critique is signalled in Jacques Derrida's 1994 book, *Specters of Marx*. The voicing is in a confessional idiom, the historical site clearly acknowledged, the reader treated as an honoured guest.

Derrida's much-deliberated rapprochement with Marx forms part of a larger project that seeks out affinities and disturbances between the philosophical requirements of deconstruction and ethical notions of the subject, civic and political responsibilities, the function of Otherness and the dark necessities of an epistemological rationality.

Simon Critchley, in *The Ethics of Deconstruction*, refers to the legacy of Kant in this discussion of the issues involved:

Ethics, properly speaking, is restricted to imperatives that are categorical; and for Derrida, the ethical moment is the interruption of the general context of conditioned hypothetical imperatives by an unconditional hypothetical imperative. Ethics arises in and as the undecidable yet determinate articulation of these two orders (page 40)

Eugene O'Brien, in this sensitive and inspiring inquiry into Irish identity, links Derrida's aporetic commitment to the ethical work of Emmanuel Levinas. And in so doing, is able to use the tools of a negative theology; the Kantian imperative, reconstituted by the "unconditional" is here read with the concentrated pessimism of post-Holocaust thought initiated by Adorno, and rendered as an ethics of deconstruction in the concepts 'alterity' and 'difference' developed by Levinas.

This line of thought is sharply differentiated from modish notions of the Irish as ‘post-national’, ‘post-subjects’. And O’Brien is clear about the dangers of this approach. The Irish people, representative of the Other for so much of their history, have been read as a paradigm of the post-modern, as possessing a plurality of identity - located variously in myth, saga and fiefdom, in the ‘British’ Empire, in diasporic communities, in fractured territories, religions and languages. Indeed, as perfect candidates for the ‘new internationalism’, globalized subjects whose cultural manifestations are far more fascinating to Lyotard or Baudrillard than the micro-processor plants of Limerick and Tipperary.

This text, by placing its discussion firmly within the framework of an ethics of Irish identity, avoids the pitfalls of a deconstruction that would do no more than set text against itself. The writer takes his task to be that of an active intervention: the disentangling of concealed textual hegemonies, of received readings, is conducted through a scrupulous attention to historical context and to the conflictual politics that have been generated by abstract polarities.

The line of argument pursued here and the form of the text is designed to elicit questioning, creative, and thoughtful responses and in this respect, it is perhaps best read as a philosophic performative. In working in this genre, O’Brien pays homage to that densely sourced deconstructive tradition from which the book takes its values.

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INTRODUCTION

Negative Identity: Adorno, Levinas, Derrida

There is hardly a more quoted line from Shakespeare in the overall context of Irish Studies than the famous question from *Henry V*: ‘what ish my nation?’ (Shakespeare: 1965; II, ii, 124). Given the agonies of identity that have plagued Irish social and cultural history, it assumes the status of what Prufrock might term an ‘overwhelming question’ (Eliot: 1963; 13). It is certainly of overwhelming importance in the context of the ongoing violence and tension between the two communities in Northern Ireland, as well as in the context of the often vexed relationship between Ireland and Britain. Therefore, this question must be studied in some detail if one is to come to any reasonable *modus operandi* regarding the search for some form of answer.

The context of this question is a fictive one, the final part of Shakespeare’s second tetralogy, *Henry V*, where the four captains, English (Gower), Scottish (Jamy), Welsh (Fluellen), and Irish (MacMorris) meet in Harfleur. It comes from the Irish captain, MacMorris, in the midst of a discussion wherein the nature of Irishness, expressed in a dialect form of English that seems to point to the creation of the first ‘stage Irishman’, is predicated on violence:

It is no time to discourse, so Chrish save me! The day is hot, and the weather, and the wars, and the King, and the Dukes; it is no time to discourse; the town is beseeched, and the trumpet call us to the breach, and we talk, and, be Chrish, do nothing; ’tis shame for us all, so God sa’ me, ’tis shame to stand still, it is shame, by my hand! And there is throats to be cut, and works to be done, and there ish nothing done, so Chrish sa’ me, law.

(Shakespeare: 1965: III, ii, 107-115)

MacMorris wishes to eschew speech ‘it is no time for discourse’ because there ‘is [*sic*] throats to be cut and work to be done’. This is quite ironic as it is through speech that his ‘nation’ becomes recognizable, and indeed the same can be said of his fellow Celts. The Welsh Fluellen substitutes ‘b’ for ‘p’ and uses ‘look you’ as a phatic utterance throughout his speeches, while the Scottish Jamy uses ‘gud’ repeatedly, and frequently mispronounces ‘marry’. As we have seen, MacMorris combines mispronunciation, repetition, and incoherence as he makes his point. His famous question, then, is framed in terms of proleptic violence, in a discourse that is clearly not standard English, a fact foregrounded by the sonorous blank verse in which it is embedded, as well as by the graphematic and pronounciational idiosyncrasies in which it is uttered.

Contextually, MacMorris is responding to what he sees as an insult by the Welsh captain. Earlier in the scene, Fluellen has criticized MacMorris’s mining techniques, noting that ‘the mines is not according to the disciplines of war’ (III, ii, 61-62) as the trenches are not sufficiently deep, and the adversary is ‘digt himself four yard under the countermines’ (64-65). He has noted that MacMorris knows nothing of the ‘disciplines of the wars’ and has gone on to say ‘By Cheshu, he is an ass, as in the world! I will verify as much in his beard’ (72-73). In their meeting, however, Fluellen is far more circumspect. Qualifying his anticipated questioning of MacMorris’s mining techniques with ‘I think, look you, under your correction’, he only gets as far as saying that ‘there is not many of your nation –’ (122-123). However, he is interrupted by the violent *non sequitur* wherein is uttered the famous question of identity:

Of my nation? What ish my nation? Ish a villain, and a basterd, and a knave,
and a rascal. What ish my nation? Who talks of my nation?
(Shakespeare: 1965; III, ii, 124-126)

Here, this question seems less a probing of the essence of Irishness than a rhetorical trick to delay Fluellen's questions as to the depth of his mining trenches, and the lack of depth of his knowledge of war. One must wonder at the second sentence where he attempts to provide an answer to the defining categories of Irish identity, noting that his nationality is comprised of the following qualities: a villain, a bastard, a knave and a rascal. Out of his own mouth, it seems, we are getting an offensive definition of Irishness, even though Fluellen has made no attempt to impugn either MacMorris or his nation. MacMorris is on the defensive before any sense of his Irishness is even mentioned. Why this should be so can, however, be ascertained through a further process of contextualization.

In 1599, Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton, had gone with the Earl of Essex's expedition against Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, to attempt to put down the Tyrone rebellion. *Henry V* was probably written after the expedition set out in April 1599 and before its 'ignominious return' in the autumn of that year (Cairns and Richards: 1988; 9).¹ Hence, the attitudes to Irishness in this text would have been coloured by the feelings of national pride engendered by the martial expedition, allied to feelings of personal loyalty and gratitude on Shakespeare's part, to the Earl of Southampton. This attitude to Ireland, in the reality of the time, is fused with the fictive time of *Henry V* in the play's prologue, where history and fiction are joined in a symmetrical equation, an equation which provides answers to MacMorris's question, and to the matter of his answer to that question. Thus, there is a binary temporal perspective at work in this definition of Ireland, as the imaginary time of *King Henry V* and the French wars is seen through the perspective of Queen Elizabeth's time and the Irish wars.

In the prologue to Act V, a direct comparison is made between the welcome given by the citizens of London to 'this Harry', the victorious Henry V, and that

which they would give were they now (in the real present of the authorship of the play) to see:

...the general of our gracious Empress
(As in good time he may) from Ireland coming,
Bringing rebellion broachèd on his sword.

(Shakespeare: 1965; V, prologue, 30-33)

Given Shakespeare's stake in this expedition to Ireland, it is hardly surprising that he feels such little sympathy with Irishness in general, and with an Irish captain, possibly an analogue of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, in particular.² Hence, the seeming question of national identity enunciated and answered by MacMorris, turns out to be an example of the voice of the colonized other as seen from the perspective of the colonizing English imperial centre. Declan Kiberd has made the point that Irish identity can be seen as the creation of English rulers at a specific moment in English history (Kiberd: 1985; 5), and the categorization of Irishness as 'a villain, and a basterd, and a knave, and a rascal' is a *locus classicus* of seeing the other in pejorative terms, and as such, providing a differentiated place upon which the edifice of colonial identity can be constructed.³ The effect of this process on the identity of colonizer and colonized is significant.

Shakespeare voices these criteria of identity through the *persona* of MacMorris, and the epistemological thrust of these categories needs to be analyzed, as it provides an interesting example of what one might term 'essentialist' identity. For Shakespeare, Irish identity is based on four central categories, which radiate through the Irish character in the play. These characteristics enunciate a position of fixity, an element which Homi Bhabha sees as a central feature of colonial discourse (Bhabha: 1994; 66).⁴ This fixity is one aspect of a common epistemological constitution of issues of identity, with the essential national, ethnic or racial characteristics seen as fixed, trans-historical, and generally

applicable. In the case of MacMorris, the Irish defining characteristics are pejorative, given that they are expressed from an imperial standpoint. Explicitly, in his own discourse, MacMorris espouses the defining characteristics of villainy, knavery, bastardy, and rascality; implicitly, through his discourse, he embodies repetition, stupidity, aggression, cholera, and an ability to take insult without any provocation. In other words we, as audience, are encouraged to see in his character the microcosmic embodiment of the macrocosmic national characteristics which he himself outlines.

This fixed identity is located around an invariant core, or centre, and the resultant discussions about the nature and value of this identity are centripetal in nature, in that the movement of the discourse is directed towards this fixed central core. Every individual is measured, or valued, in terms of how well they illustrate the core values of national identity. Hence MacMorris is seen as an ‘ass’ by Fluellen (III, ii, 72) with no more knowledge of the ‘true disciplines of wars’ than a puppy-dog (III, ii, 74-75), and his response to Fluellen’s overtures of peace and reconciliation is to exclaim ‘so Chrish save me, I will cut off your head’ (III, ii, 135). In this fixed categorization of Irishness, there is no room for any development or growth; either in terms of Irishness, or in terms of the English attitude to Irishness. Indeed, the latter is also predicated on an essentialist view of self and other, with little chance of interconnection between them. MacMorris is seen as incapable of fitting into Henry’s grand plan for underscoring ‘the ideal of intra-British co-operation under a beloved monarch’ (Leerson: 1996; 84).

As well as creating the Irish as imperial other, an other which needs to be incorporated and possibly civilized, or eradicated: ‘from Ireland coming,/Bringing rebellion broachèd on his sword’ (V, prologue, 32-33), this picture of MacMorris revolves around the central characteristics that define Irishness in this play. Such fixed definitions are commonplace in literary and cultural criticism, and Shakespeare’s have been much commented on, though

interpreted differently. J. O. Bartley sees MacMorris as modelled on some Irish officers in the Elizabethan army, with MacMorris as the Gaelic form of the name Fitzmorris (Bartley: 1954; 16-17), and G. C. Duggan also sees him as a realistic character, given the Irish stereotypes he embodies (Duggan: 1937; 191), while Anneliese Truninger sees him in typological terms as a ‘merciless Irish cut-throat’ (Truninger: 1976; 26).⁵ Apart from the postcolonial aspect of such identificatory characteristics, there is, at a deeper level, a need for a critique of the epistemological assumptions underlying this attitude to identity.

MacMorris poses a central question for contemporary literary and cultural studies once his original question is analyzed. Is it possible to clearly define a nation? What are the categories that create a nation, or a bond of nationality? What characteristics are to be found in common among the denizens of a nation? Who decides where one nation begins and where another ends? What are the reciprocal effects of belonging to a nation on the individual and the community in question? Are these defining traits fixed in time and quantity? What is the relationship between language and nationality? How does identity come to be defined? What are the constituting criteria of identity? Does national identity have to be binding across the population of a nation? Do narrative, myth, and literature have a constitutive function in the shaping of notions of identity?

That these questions arise from a piece of dramatic fiction would seem to answer the last question, and a major focus of this study will be on the power of fictions to shape notions of national identity, and conversely, on the fact that notions of national identity are, almost by definition, fictions themselves. By a process of theoretical critique, I hope to show that there are two vectoral imperatives at work in the process of defining national identity, namely centripetal and centrifugal,⁶ and the writings of Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, Theodore Adorno, and Mikhail Bakhtin will be adduced to reinforce this argument. It is the thesis of this study that the writings of W. B. Yeats and James Joyce create an

oscillation between these two vectoral motions, and set up a dynamic, or economy, wherein the whole notion of identity is redefined. Given the importance of 'place' in definitions of culture and identity, this study will suggest that the ultimate site of their probing of Irish identity becomes, in the words of Derrida, a 'non-site' (*non-lieu*) (Derrida: 1981c; 159) which is both beyond the influences of essentialist identity and at the same time close enough to them to engage with, and redefine the parameters of, their assumptions. In this context, I also hope to demonstrate that there is an ethic of identity at work in the writings of Yeats and Joyce, and this ethical facet of their writing can be seen as a protreptic discourse wherein different aspects of identity engage in a dialogue, or *Auseinandersetzung* (confrontation) which can offer a negative definition of identity as an answer to essentialist formulations. The inclusion of alterity as part of a dialogue which is constitutive of a new form of that identity is a seminal part of such a project, and this, I would suggest in an Irish context, is brought about through the writings of Yeats and Joyce. The corollary of this argument is that literature is seen as undergoing the epistemological transformation from a genre that is creative of myth, to one that offers a critique of myth.

I would suggest that this process is akin to Theodore Adorno's negative dialectics in the following way. Adorno's use of negative dialectics entailed the critique of reason by reason; of instrumental reason by a more generous type of reason. The negative aspect of his theory meant that what is being done is a process of immanent, self-reflexive critique of the genre within which the critique itself is situated, or as Adorno himself put it, a process using 'the strength of the subject to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity' (Adorno: 1973; xx). For Adorno, a critique of the Enlightenment does not mean a wholesale renunciation of the secular and emancipatory thrust of the project, rather does it entail what Christopher Norris terms a 'scrupulous care to conserve

the critical resources of enlightened reason even while denouncing its perversion into forms of inhuman (unreflective) means-end rationality' (Norris: 1994; 101).

In an analogous sense, literature-as-critique can offer possibly the best critique of a literature-as-mythopoeia by prizing open the contradictions inherent in the totalizing drive of that myth-making project, and by unravelling the constructs that pass for axioms and essences in such mythic discourse. As Adorno and Horkheimer point out, 'myths signify self-repetitive nature, which is the core of the symbolic' and these myths are created through a language which, according to the 'doctrine of the priests' was symbolic in the sense that 'sign and image were one'. Such a trope of sameness and repetition can be seen as persuasive of essentialism; indeed, 'unending renewal and the permanence of the signified are not mere attributes of all symbols, but their essential content' (Adorno and Horkheimer: 1979; 17). Perhaps literature, in its form as negative critique, is the best generic form through which to criticize such a discourse, as it has both the immanence to comprehend the style and substance of the mythopoeic writing, and at the same time, the distance, or transcendence (used here as a purely regulative notion), from which to offer that critique. In this sense, the writings of Yeats and Joyce are seen as examples of what Adorno will term 'dialectical criticism', a concept which will be more fully explored in terms of Emmanuel Levinas's notion of poetry as critique.⁷

Epistemologically, the knowledge that literature conveys or professes is necessarily negative. The *Lebenswelt* of a literary work has no real positive referent in the 'real' world, and hence, only exists negatively, in that it offers a 'lifeworld' that does not as yet exist, but that could, or should, in a more enlightened world. As Norris has summarized, a negative knowledge, as epitomized in immanent critique, functions in terms of attempting to redeem those moments of authentic truth in art which correspond to 'nothing real in our present, distorted, and indigent condition, but which nonetheless possess a power

of revealing what truth might be if things were otherwise' (Norris: 1988; 149). This point has been further underlined in the writings of Paul de Man, as he observes that it is not '*a priori* certain that literature is a reliable source of information about anything but its own language' (de Man: 1986; 11). Hence, literature, as negative epistemology, is ideally placed to proffer a critique of other aspects of literature, and of literary uses of language. It can be both creative of, and critical of, the use or misuse of myth and language as offering transcendental significations of identity as sameness and presence. As part of the process of suggesting myths and legends which stress the purity of the tribe and race, literature is perfectly placed to offer a cultural critique of such notions, in terms of what Adorno has termed a dialectical criticism.

This contradictory position, of being part of a culture while at the same time attempting to offer a critique of the ideology of that culture, is discussed by Adorno, in his essay 'Cultural Criticism and Society'.⁸ For Adorno, cultural criticism was by definition a problematic enterprise: the cultural critic 'is not happy with civilization, to which alone he owes his discontent' (Adorno: 1981; 19). The two subject positions from which criticism may be offered are seen by Adorno as immanent and transcendent, and both positions are fraught with difficulty. The immanent critic participates in the culture: he or she is shot-through with the ideologies and attitudes of that culture and hence has little chance of making any real objective statements about this position of 'total immanence' (Adorno: 1981; 26) and therefore is doomed to repeat the errors of the culture. The transcendent critic, on the other hand, 'aims at a totality' and assumes an 'Archimedean position above culture and the blindness of society'. However, such a position, 'outside the sway of existing society' is 'fictitious' (Adorno: 1981; 31), and ultimately as monological as that of a position within ideology. Adorno's answer to this dilemma is the notion of 'dialectical criticism', which takes up a position in culture and not in culture at the same time. It is a position which takes full account of the resistances and difficulties

that theory, politics, literature, and other constituents of society cause in seemingly monadic systems and structurations. As Adorno puts it: the dialectical method must relate the knowledge of society as a totality and ‘the mind’s involvement in it to the claim inherent in the specific content of the object that it be apprehended as such’ (Adorno: 1981; 33). In this sense, the position of transcendence is achieved dialectically by looking at a microcosmic part of a totality, and by then relating that to the macrocosm. The knowledge achieved is negative, and parallels Paul de Man’s comments on the materiality of the letter which stubbornly resists aesthetic totalizations; he notes that in Kant as well as in Hegel, it is the ‘prosaic materiality of the letter’ that ensures that ‘no degree of obfuscation or ideology can transform this materiality into the phenomenal cognition of aesthetic judgement’ (de Man: 1996; 90). Hence, the blurring of distinctions between word and world, a blurring which is constitutive of ideology, is both constructed and deconstructed by literature.

The hypostasization of language and thing, of word and world, is one of the untruths that literary language is capable of promulgating, and therefore it is one of the areas which literature-as-critique must interrogate most rigorously. As Adorno and Horkheimer have put it, the separation of ‘sign and image is irremediable’ and should they ever become ‘hypostasized’ then ‘each of the two isolated principles tends toward the destruction of truth’ (Adorno and Horkheimer: 1979; 18). Perhaps the most telling political use of this trope of hypostasization is that of the myth of identity, and Adorno begins his *Negative Dialectics* with this very subject. He makes the point that the notion of identity is central to all previous philosophical projects: as he puts it to ‘think is to identify’; however, the difficulty here is that heterogeneity can be the loser in such an epistemology. This means that our view of contradiction can often be defined by the difference of the other from our own perspective on identity, with contradiction becoming ‘nonidentity under the aspect of identity’, and the thought of unity becoming the measure of heterogeneity (Adorno: 1973; 5).

Adorno goes on to make the point that his dialectical philosophy is ‘the consistent sense of nonidentity’ (Adorno: 1973; 5), meaning that the place of the other, of heterogeneity, will be structured differently. His point is that the other, what is different, will always appear divergent or dissonant as long as our structures of consciousness strive for unity: ‘as long as its demand for totality will be its measure for whatever is not identical with it’ (Adorno: 1973; 5-6). Hence, the necessity for a negative definition, a sort of non-identity as a position from which all essentialist creeds can be adjudicated. Just as literature, in terms of language, literary symbols, and metaphors, helps to create the endless recurrences of mythic discourse, so it can reflect on this process and open up new possibilities within them. As Adorno notes, negative dialectics is a critical reflection upon its own context (Adorno; 1973; 141), and I would argue that the discourse of the two Irish writers in question attempts the same dynamic process in terms of their own identificatory contexts.

What is being suggested here is that the writings of Yeats and Joyce undertake a process which is analogous to that outlined in *Negative Dialectics*. Just as philosophy demands a rational critique of reason, and not its banishment or abolition (Adorno: 1973; 85), so the literature of both of these writers can be seen to produce a critique of the essentialist and mythopoeic aspects of Irish identity, a critique which will see a position of heterogeneity and alterity as achievable if only as a negative, regulative notion from which an ethnicity of Irish identity can be fashioned and debated in a dynamic manner which ‘reflects its own motion’ (Adorno: 1973; 141). I would put forward the term *protreptic discourse* as a name for this mode of writing. This notion of protreptic discourse is mentioned by Gabe Eisenstein in a commentary on the encounter in 1981 between hermeneutics and deconstruction in the persons of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jacques Derrida.⁹

Eisenstein focuses on Heidegger's concern with dialogue and the phenomenon of answering which, as Gadamer would have it, is central to the epistemology, and by implication the ethicity, of language. For Gadamer, speaking about the tower of Babel and its aftermath, language is both the 'strangeness' or 'confusion' that arises between one human being and another when different languages or discourses are juxtaposed, and also the possibility of overcoming that 'confusion'. As he tellingly puts it 'language is conversation. One must look for the word that can reach an other person....One can cross over into the language of the other in order to reach the other' (Gadamer: 1985; 106). Gadamer cites the theory of Jacques Lacan that a word not directed at another person, at an 'other' is empty, and goes on to define language as grounded in this notion of answerability, stating that it is only the answer, 'actual or potential, that transforms a word into a word' (Gadamer: 1985; 106). This notion of language as a dialogue with the other, as protreptic discourse, is seminal to Yeats and Joyce, as all of their work predicates an Irishness that is thoroughly open to different forms of alterity.

For Yeats, imagery of Europe and of the Renaissance, allied to a critique of some of the mythopoeic writings of the literary revival, presage a desire to accept a responsibility for an address to 'otherness' in what he calls this 'blind and bitter land'. Joyce, too, by framing his work in terms of some of the most abiding narratives in the western tradition, sets up a dynamic between the fixed certainties of an identity of sameness, and notions of alterity. Both writers share a language which, in Bakhtinian terms, is heteroglossic in that different voices and different languages are allowed to confront each other and achieve some kind of dynamic interaction, or dialogization (Bakhtin: 1981; 263).¹⁰

Eisenstein uses the term protreptic language to designate a view of language as involved in 'calling and answering while yet remaining preliminary to the circumstances of its fulfilment' (Eisenstein: 1989; 275), and it seems to me that

such a language is crucial to the achievement of Yeats and Joyce, and of writing as a form of negative critique. Both seek a protreptic discourse in which some form of dialogue is opened up with an other, be that other political, cultural, spatial or temporal, inasmuch as there is an openness to reaching some form of accommodation with that other. Here, autonomy is introduced into an ongoing relationship with alterity and the result is a dynamic in which both positions are imbricated, and in which they both participate and redefine each other. That such a language will always remain 'preliminary' to any *rapprochement*, politically or culturally, is almost axiomatic. Such *rapprochements* are within the realm of the socio-political, and while I maintain that the aesthetic *does* play a constitutive role in socio-political epistemological positions and ideological standpoints, it is only one element in this overall construct. Hence, this *protrepsis* must be negative in epistemology in that the other is a position which is regulative and which has to be spoken to as if it were fully present and in a position to shape and influence the discourse of the writer in question; there will always be a *différance* (in a Derridean sense) between such discourse and its fulfilment.

Here, language (already seen as constitutive of our notions of identity) is viewed as being epistemologically grounded in the whole activity of dialogue and conversation, and this is a central tenet of my argument: the writers in question in this study are attempting a genuine dialogue with an otherness that is part, and yet not part, of what is seen, broadly, as Irishness. This dialogue takes on the form of interrogating the essentialist notions of identity as set out in the language, literary, and cultural revivals that took place in Ireland around the turn of the century. By so doing, this protreptic discourse *ipso facto* must change the nature of that Irishness just as individual subjectivities become altered through the linguistic interchanges that constitute their development. That such a critique involves an aesthetic ethnicity is a point made explicitly by Emmanuel Levinas who posits a mode of critical interpretation which can see art as a 'relation with the other' (Levinas: 1989; 143). Levinas goes on to specify the necessity for

such a poetics of alterity to function as an interrogative probing of culture, and indeed, sees an ethical progression from the aesthetic in such a poetics: from the ‘need to enter into a relation with someone, in spite of or over and above the peace and harmony derived from the successful creation of beauty’, to what one might call the ‘necessity of critique’ (Levinas: 1989; 147). In order to underline this critique, Levinas takes up the terminology of Maurice Leiris, who speaks of a literature of bifurcations (*bifurs*), as words turn a train of thought from one direction into totally unexpected ones, and of erasures (*biffures*), since ‘the univocal meaning of each element is continually corrected and altered’ (Levinas: 1989; 145-146). In terms of our use of protreptic discourse, the notion of otherness is likewise central, for as Eisenstein puts it, such utterance is ‘a shock, a blow, a transforming gesture rooted in the radical incommensurability of differing standpoints. This alterity is essential to protreptic discourse’ (Eisenstein: 1989; 276). A similar stress on the importance of the ‘other’ is to be found in the following remark, that an attempt must be made to discover the ‘non-place or *non-lieu* which would be the “other” of philosophy’ (Derrida: 1981c; 162). The interview, ‘*Deconstruction and the other*’, foregrounds the important place of alterity, and by extension ethicity, in Derrida’s writing.

In this study, the term ‘ethics’ will be used in a sense that derives from the work of Emmanuel Levinas. Such an ethics has been defined by Simon Critchley, in *The Ethics of Deconstruction*, as the ‘putting into question’ of the ego, the subject, self-consciousness or ‘what Levinas, following Plato, calls the Same (*le même, to auton*)’ (Critchley: 1992; 4).¹¹ It is this ongoing interrogation of sameness by alterity that will be the focus of my readings of Yeats and Joyce. Both writers set up a questioning dialogue of homologia by heterologia (Caputo: 1993; 113), and such a protreptic dialogue is ethical in its epistemology. This is especially so in terms of the seminal imperative of Levinas’s work, wherein the ethical ‘is the location of a point of alterity...that cannot be reduced to the Same’ (Critchley: 1992; 5). My readings of Yeats and Joyce will trace their attempts to

give a voice to this alterity, as they are wary of the tyranny of sameness that became part of the Irish *Weltanschauung* at the time of the Gaelic and Celtic revivals.

Richard Kearney notes Derrida's increasing preoccupation with ethical issues (Kearney: 1995b; 148). Derrida's assertion that deconstruction 'is not an enclosure in nothingness, but an openness towards the other' (Derrida: 1981c; 173), bears out this point, and as Derek Attridge has put it, in his introduction to *Acts of Literature*, there is a strong ethico-political summons in Derrida's constant attention to the uniqueness of the other, the function of alterity in any movement or consciousness of the self, and the call to and dependence upon the other in any signature and signed text. Interestingly, and correctly in my view, Attridge draws attention to the protreptic nature of Derrida's relation to alterity inasmuch as his responsibility to the other is also a 'responsibility toward the future, since it involves the struggle to create openings within which the other can appear' and can hence 'come to transform what we know or think we know' (Derrida: 1992a; 5). This orientation towards the future is also to be found in the writings of Yeats and Joyce. Hence, for Derrida, deconstruction is a 'response to a call' (Derrida: 1981c; 168), a call that has echoes of Levinas's discourse of alterity, but as is typical of Derrida, he engages with the *minutiae* of Levinas's thought in order to further probe the underpinning axioms.

In '*Violence and Metaphysics; An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas*', Derrida pursues the ethics of Levinas with a deconstructive ethics of his own. Posing an ethics of the question, Derrida makes the point that the 'liberty of the question' must be 'stated and protected', and he goes on to say that if this 'commandment' has an ethical meaning, it is not 'that it belongs to the domain of the ethical, but in that it ultimately authorizes every ethical law in general' (Derrida: 1978a; 80). It is with this *caveat* in mind that he offers what Norris reminds us is 'a *critique* of Levinasian ethics' which combines faithful

attentiveness to the text in hand with an interrogation of the conditions of possibility of that thought process (Norris: 1994; 48). Derrida questions the absoluteness of the alterity of Levinas's writing. He poses the issue of Levinas's disagreement with Husserl in terms of the latter's notion of making the other, by 'analogical appresentation' part of the 'ego's own sphere', thus implying that Husserl misses 'the infinite alterity of the other'. For, as Levinas would have it, making the other an alter ego is to 'neutralize its absolute alterity' (Derrida: 1978a; 123). However, Derrida, in a typical reading, goes on to make the valid point that if there is not some mode of contact between the ego and the other, then there can be no dialogue in any real sense, let alone any sense of the other as part of the self. Derrida puts this question, and it is ultimately an ethical question, directly in the following quotation:

For it is impossible to encounter the alter ego (in the very form of the encounter described by Levinas), impossible to respect it in experience and in language, if this other, in its alterity, does not appear for an ego (in general). One could neither speak, nor have any sense of the totally other, if there was not a phenomenon of the totally other, or evidence of the totally other as such....If I did not approach the other by way of analogical appresentation, if I attained to the other immediately and originally, silently, in communion with the other's own experience, the other would cease to be the other.

(Derrida: 1978a; 123-4)

As Norris puts it, we must have some knowledge of the other 'understand him or her by analogy with our own experience' if 'otherness' is not to become 'just a form of inverted autism' (Norris: 1994; 48): hence the negative idea of otherness, as suggested by Adorno, as a means of escaping from the aporetic conclusion of the Derrida-Levinas debate. By redefining the notion of identity itself, as Adorno has demonstrated, the complicated issue of otherness can be acknowledged through a protreptic discourse which, while always remaining preliminary to any fulfilment, and hence oriented towards the future, will allow a place for the other as part of a non-identity that is central to all notions of identity. In other words,

issues of diachronic sameness are seen as less relevant than those of synchronic difference, and this is also true in terms of an ethical perspective. Temporally, this negative notion of the other is predicated on the future as opposed to the past.

Levinas sees such *différance* as ethically motivated. Critchley provides a thorough conspectus of his argument. *Différance*, says Levinas, provides a spacing, both temporal and spatial, between the same and the other. The indicative relation is seen as analogous to the ethical one of pure exteriority, and Levinas finds in such a relation ‘a relation of non-identity’, in which the other is never assimilable to the self, and in which ‘difference is maintained’. Hence, through the epistemology of deconstruction, ‘interhuman relations are not governed by the *parousia* of presence’, and Critchley notes the comparison between such notions of *différance*, and an ‘ethical *durée*’ (Critchley: 1992; 174-175)¹²

Hence, I would suggest a connection here between the ethics of alterity as espoused by Levinas, Eisenstein’s notion of protreptic discourse, the negative dialectical mode of Adorno, and Derrida’s notion of deconstruction as the call of the other. What unites these thinkers is an emphasis on the ethical interrogation of issues pertaining to identity and language, and the development of methodological tools wherewith the mythological essentialisms of fixed identity can be demystified.

For Derrida, deconstruction, as defined in his 1981 interview with Richard Kearney, is characterized by his foregrounding of alterity. Indeed, as Kearney has noted elsewhere, since 1972 Derrida’s work has been characterized by an increasing emphasis on the difficult question of ethical responsibility. That the other should be so important an aspect of Derrida’s project is significant for the context of this discussion of Irish identity. In terms of the constituent factors of

identity, it is all too easy to lapse into a paratactic series of binarisms: essential and manufactured; centripetal and centrifugal; Irish and English (nationalities); Irish and English (languages); Catholic and Protestant; republican/loyalist; nationalist and unionist; colonizer and colonized *et al.* It is precisely my point that such a polar opposition is doomed to repeat the ideological difficulties caused by issues of identity throughout Irish history. Derrida's work, I would maintain, provides a theoretical discourse which will allow us to bypass and subsume these static categories and to place them in a dynamic framework, a protreptic discourse, wherein alterity and self are imbricated, juxtaposed, and continually exposed to each other in a transactional dialogue which is predicated on the future and change, as opposed to the conflicts of the past.

Derrida's teasing out of the difficulties of the philosophy of identity provides a paradigm of the thrust of this study.¹³ Discussing the nature of his philosophical critique of philosophy, Derrida remarks that he is not sure whether the 'site' of his work is 'philosophical' in the strictest sense, and goes on to say that he has attempted to find a 'non-site, or a non-philosophical site, from which to question philosophy' (Derrida: 1981c; 159). Derrida discusses this question further, but it is in terms of his search for a position from which to launch his critique of philosophy that his argument has pertinence here. I would contend that the ethical protreptic discourse in the work of these writers with respect to identity, is analogous to Derrida's position with respect to philosophy. So, one could paraphrase their position as attempting to find a site, or non-site (*non-lieu*), from where Irish identity can appear to itself as other than itself.

This projected dialogue with alterity is grounded in deconstructive critique. Given Levinas's view that the imperative to enter into some form of relation with alterity can turn poetry from an aesthetic discourse into an ethical one, which brings forth the necessity of critique (Levinas: 1989; 147), then literature as genre can serve as a penetrating critique of the ethicity of socio-political

discourses. This view of literature is one which will figure largely in this discussion. The works of Yeats and Joyce stimulate readings which critique the narrow essentialisms of a centripetal notion of identity which looks to the past or to pre-existing categories as sacrosanct, almost quasi-religious *doxa* in which one must believe. Instead, their work protreptically invokes the other in a dialogue which explicitly opens a place, or a site, for the voice of alterity. That their discourse is still preliminary to any full *Aufhebung*, in a Hegelian sense, is entirely in keeping with the negative aspects of the Levinasian discourse of bifurcations (*bifurs*) and erasures (*biffures*), a negativity that has resonances of the negative dialectics of Theodore Adorno and the Frankfurt School.

In this context, the identity that is being put forward in the writings of Yeats and Joyce, has little enough to do with the socio-political present, the ‘real’ Ireland of their respective times. Instead, their texts refuse to ‘reply for one’s thought or writing to constituted powers’ and hence, according to Derrida, they participate in one of literature’s primary responsibilities, namely that their ‘concept is linked to the to-come [*à-venir*, cf. *avenir*, future], to the experience of a promise engaged, that is always an endless promise’ (Derrida: 1992a; 38). In this sense, the other is seen as *hauntologically* present in the self through the trace and dissemination of language, which is both our mark of separation from the other, as well as our point of tangential contact with the other, indeed, it is our mode of recognition of the other.¹⁴ This *hauntological* presence/absence has resonances of Adorno’s notion of a negative dialectic which refuses the positivity of Hegelian identity, and its epistemological structure can be traced back to his early neologism, *différance*, which puns on the double meaning of ‘differ’ and ‘defer’, as well as on the fact that in French, the difference between ‘*différence*’ and ‘*différance*’ is only obvious in writing.¹⁵ Derrida, speaking of this term, calls it, in terminology that has traces of Adorno’s thinking, a ‘non-concept’ in that it ‘cannot be defined in terms of oppositional predicates’. Hence, for Derrida, it is ‘neither *this* nor *that*; but rather *this and that* (e.g. the act of differing and of

deferring) without being reducible to a dialectical logic either' (Derrida: 1981c; 161).¹⁶ By seeing the signification of identity as such a non-concept, or a concept placed '*sous rature*' – 'under erasure' – (Derrida: 1976; xiv), Yeats and Joyce are able to create a protreptic poetics of identity which allows them to address a future notion of Ireland that is 'linked to the to-come [*à-venir*]' while at the same time foregrounding a negative aspect of identity, as a regulative notion which acts as a form of transcendent critique of the immanent, 'real world' manifestations of monological identity. Their concept of identity is similar, I would suggest, to that of community put forward by Derrida, when he speaks of the irrepressible desire 'for a "community" to form but also for it to know its limit—and for its limit to be its *opening*' (Derrida: 1995; 355). This 'opening' towards the future is the negative dialectical teleology of the writers who are the subject of this study. As Critchley argues, there is a 'duty' in deconstruction to produce a reading 'that commands respect insofar as it opens an irreducible dimension of alterity' (Critchley: 1992; 41), and I would contend that this is what will be seen in the writings of Yeats and Joyce.

Just as literature can foreground and reinforce fixed notions of identity, based on adherence to the essentialist criteria of race, language, ideology or place, so also can it espouse an emancipatory notion of identity which is open to ongoing redefinition and change. This ethical definition of Irish identity is a strand which will be traced through the writings of Yeats and Joyce, as well as more generally through Irish social, cultural, and political history. It will become clear that neither definition can exist independently: they intersect, interact, and define each other in an economy that needs to be carefully analyzed with reference to notions of fixity and fluidity in terms of identity.¹⁷

This study will move from the general to the particular. The opening chapter will explore the interstices of the literary and political in order to demonstrate that any attempt to separate the literary from the political is doomed to failure.

Indeed, both vectors of identity are ultimately seen as two different readings of broadly similar sets of information, and the creation of narrative structures which are ultimately suasive as opposed to constative. In terms of seeing literary theory and literature itself as central to any emancipatory politics of identity, the value of the transactional dialectic of these two forces will become clear, especially at the conclusion of the chapter which examines a *locus classicus* of the interaction of this centripetal and centrifugal economy in Irish history, namely the 1798 rebellion.

The second chapter will ask a parallel question which extrapolates almost automatically from that of MacMorris, namely, what is[h] my language? The posited connection between language and identity is explored in terms of the Irish literary, Gaelic, and Celtic revivals. The political role of the Irish language in terms of essentialist conceptions of Irishness, and in terms of its being a signifier of difference from the English language, will be discussed, as will the imbrication of the Irish language and Catholicism, another factor which is at the very core of foundationalist notions of Irish identity. The ongoing debate between different perspectives on language and identity, and language and culture, will be discussed both generally and in terms of the writings and philosophies of the two writers who are the focus of this study.

The third chapter will deal with the writing of W. B. Yeats. Yeats is often claimed as a cultural nationalist whose writings are central to the development of certain aspects of Irish identity. This chapter looks at some of his work in which he espoused essentialist notions of identity by combining place, race, and a particular ethnic accent to mythologize ‘old Eire and the ancient ways’ (Yeats: 1979a; 35). However, at a certain stage in his writing, Yeats saw the dangers inherent in such an essentializing view of identity. The linearity of the cultural nationalistic narrative of which he was a constituent part, left little room for either himself or his social class. Hence, he went on to write poetry which would

subject such essentialism, including his own early work, to a searching critique, before espousing an ethical and negative *Vorurteil* on Irish identity that would be far in advance of the politics of his time. His treatment of the Cuchulain myth, a pivotal trope in the literature of the revival, indexes his change of attitude, as he goes on to espouse a pluralistic and dialogic vision of what it means to be Irish.

The fourth chapter will deal with the work of James Joyce, who eschewed the essentialisms of Irishness from an early stage in his career, seeing the issues of 'nationality, language, religion' as nets which are set to trap the soul in flight (Joyce: 1993; 177). His themes of the lower-middle class life in Dublin, and its similarities with other European cities, are examples of a movement outwards from narrow definitions of Irishness. *Ulysses*, for example occupies a paradoxical position as an 'Irish' novel whose central characters, Leopold and Molly Bloom, are Jewish and British. The hybridity of identity that is Leopold and Molly underlines his critique of elemental aspects of identity. This hybridization of identity is expanded to the n^{th} degree in *Finnegans Wake*, a work which will be studied in the context of its *hauntological* decentralization of the ontological certainties of language, and under the rubric of 'Patrick W. Shakespeare', a troped name which is an eloquent restating of the premise involved in MacMorris's question. The circular structure of *Finnegans Wake* undermines the centripetal pull of essentialist identity. In terms of the epistemology of identity, notions of centrality, of an invariant core that *a priori* guarantees the essence of a particular race, are paramount, and it is to such notions of centrality that our discussion now turns.

Notes

- 1 For a discussion of the *Henriad* as a Tudor wish-fulfilment, positing an equally successful conclusion of the Irish problem to that of the French one, see Philip Edwards, *Threshold of a Nation*, pages 74-86.
- 2 There is possibly an element of wishful thinking on Shakespeare's part here, with MacMorris's lack of knowledge of the disciplines of war being optatively compared to that of Hugh O'Neill, the Earl of Tyrone, who rebelled against English rule. The use of an empire as the defining norm in the aspects of warfare 'of the Roman disciplines' (III, ii, 75) is a further factor in the alienation of MacMorris and the denigration of Irish knowledge of the disciplines of war.
- 3 While use is made here of Kiberd's terminology from *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, I would have to enter a serious caveat about the conclusions he draws about the nature of Irish socio-cultural experience, and postcolonial theory. It seems to me that many of the arguments are reductive, and I would agree broadly with Bruce Stewart's critique of this book, <http://www2.ulst.ac.uk/iasil/publishr/index.html>, and that of David Krause in *The Irish University Review*, Autumn/Winter 1997, pages 236-244.
- 4 Bhabha's essay 'The Other Question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism' in *The Location of Culture*, provides a seminal account of the fixity of identificatory categories in colonial discourse.
- 5 I am indebted to Joep Leerson for providing this summary of the criticism in *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael*.
- 6 This is in no way to say that these two vectors are in any way exhaustive of the signifying strategies of identity. Rather do they stand, as a metaphoric synecdoche, for two directions that are to be found in terms of national self-definitions of identity. The centripetal is inward-looking, seeing national characteristics as foundational and unchanging, and incapable of any development without some sense of depurification of the essence of Irishness. The centrifugal moves outward from such fixed criteria, espousing difference and alterity, and attempting to appropriate aspects of otherness into the cultural central area.
- 7 For a full discussion on Levinas's debt to Michel Leiris, see his essay *The Transcendence of Words* in *The Levinas Reader*, pages 144-149, originally published in *Les Temps Modernes*, (1949), pages 1090-1095.
- 8 My discussion of Adorno has been influenced by Robert Young's *Torn Halves: Political conflict in literary and cultural theory*. This is an excellent and wide-ranging study of the contemporary theoretical *milieu*, and is comprehensive in scope.

- 9 Eisenstein refers to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, where autonomy is symbolized by the self-thinking of God. However, this self-thinking is grounded in the protreptic force 'exercised by the Greek philosophers on their contemporaries, through channels long since developed by storytellers and orators' *Dialogue and Deconstruction*, page 275.
- 10 For Bakhtin, according to Emerson and Holquist, a language or culture undergoes 'dialogization' when it becomes relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things, *The Dialogic Imagination*, page 427. Here, I would enter a caveat about Bakhtin's epistemological and ethical positions in that relativism seems to be the other side of monological authoritarianism. In this study, while eschewing any form of monological essentialism, and indeed offering such notions to critique, I will also interrogate relativist notions of identity, which see identity in terms of what is currently good in the way of belief.
- 11 Critchley's book is a seminal study of the interaction of the thought of Derrida and Levinas as well as a ground-breaking study of what has since become widely seen as the ethical turn of deconstruction (I would disagree that such an ethical turn is a recent phenomenon, as some of Derrida's early writings, notably the essay in *Margins of Philosophy* entitled 'The Ends of Man' are clear in their ethical direction).
- 12 Critchley provides a closely argued account of Levinas's point with reference to Husserl's notion of indication as opposed to expression in *The Ethics of Deconstruction*, pages 169-182.
- 13 In this section of the interview, Derrida is not speaking specifically about the philosophy of identity, or indeed about issues of identity at all. However, I think that the adequation between his comments on the site (or non-site) of philosophical interrogation in general, and my own more specific concerns about the non-site of a critique into issues of Irish identity, is still valid.
- 14 For a thorough account of the development and usage of the term 'dissemination' in Jacques Derrida's work, see his *Dissemination*. The introduction by Barbara Johnston is helpful.
- 15 For what is probably Derrida's most accessible and comprehensive discussion of the signification of this term, see *Positions*, pages 26 ff., and *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, pages 129-160.
- 16 For a more thorough definition of this term, which is seminal in terms of Derridean deconstruction, see *Margins of Philosophy*, pages 3-27; *Positions*, pages 8-9; 26-29, and 39-41.
- 17 The term 'economy' here has a specific meaning in terms of literary theory. In her introduction to *Of Grammatology*, Spivak defines the term as 'a metaphor of energy—where two opposed forces playing against each other constitute the so-called identity of a phenomenon'. She goes on to add that an economy is: 'not a reconciliation of opposites, but rather a maintaining of disjunction. Identity constituted by difference is economy', *Of Grammatology*, page xlii.

CHAPTER 1

SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL NOTIONS OF IRISH IDENTITY

(i) The backward look: the centripetal past

Ernst Renan made the telling point that in the creation of a nation ‘historical error’ plays an essential part (Renan in Woolf: 1996; 50). John Wilson Foster, citing Renan, develops this point by saying that getting one’s ‘history wrong’ is a core aspect of the process of the defining of ‘the nature and identity of Ireland’, a process which he sees as central to the ideology of the Irish revival (Wilson Foster: 1993; xvii). That the Irish literary revival was a watershed in the creation of elemental notions of Irish identity is an accepted fact.¹ This is not to say, however, that the reification of aspects of Irish history and tradition as a foundation upon which to build a view of Irish identity began at this point in time. Kevin Whelan makes the point that Daniel O’Connell’s Catholic nationalism also appealed to selective notions of history, ‘using an idealized past to destroy the decadent present’ (Whelan: 1996; 55). Whelan’s point about O’Connell’s ideological position is proleptic of what will become a defining trope of the literary revival, namely the utilization or invention of a tradition for the specific purpose of creating a binding image of identity.² This perspective,

which involves constantly reinforcing given identificatory criteria, can be termed ‘centripetal’, as the vectoral direction is always focused towards this centre.

The connection between this ideological position of O’Connell’s and the Irish literary revival is clarified by Seamus Deane, who enumerates two Celtic revivals, one beginning in the late eighteenth century, and one in the late nineteenth century (Deane: 1985; 13). Although it is the later revival which will be the subject of this section, both were formative in the focusing on core criteria which would form part of the idealized, hypostasized past, namely land, language, and religion.³ The use of a Celtic notion of tradition as a reification of the past became a foundation upon which notions of Irish identity could be constructed. John Wilson Foster develops this idea in his *Fictions of the Irish Revival*, wherein the title of the book itself makes the point that national identity is very often constituted through fictional criteria. His study, then, analyzes both the fictions of the revival and the fictionality of the revival (Wilson Foster: 1993; xv).

This focus on land and language presaged thematic aspects of the writings of Yeats and Synge. The difficulties of contemporary history, the binarisms of Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and republican, unionist and nationalist, English-speaking and Irish-speaking,⁴ colonizer and colonized, could be annealed in the enculturation of Irish-sounding names of the land, and in an appeal to a pre-historical notion of Celtism, which ante-dated the political, ideological, and linguistic bifurcations which proved to be problematic. A number of books helped to promote this pre-Christian, pre-historical version of the past: Charlotte Brook’s *Reliques of Irish poetry: consisting of heroic poems, odes, elegies and songs, translated into English verse*; Charles O’Connor’s *Dissertations on the antient history of Ireland*; Sylvester O’Halloran’s *A general history of Ireland, from the earliest accounts to the close of the twelfth century*; J. C. Walker’s *Historical memoirs of the Irish bards* and James Macpherson’s *An*

introduction to the history of Great Britain and Ireland, and The poems of Ossian.

These works provided a bibliography of the Celtic tradition of Ireland, upon which much of the literature of the second Celtic revival was built. This latter revival, spurred on by Yeats and Synge, was an attempt to provide a paradigm of Irish identity which included religion as a potent signifier along with land, language, and Celtism. Building on the earlier revival, Celtic heroism became a *topos* of identity that allowed for the unified admiration of Catholic and Protestant alike. Heroism, warrior honour, bravery, loyalty to one's *patria*, all served to characterize the incipient identity of the Irish revival, as did the image of Ireland before the invasion by England as a prelapsarian Eden. Standish James O'Grady wrote a number of books in which the Celtic identity of Ireland was foregrounded. His *History of Ireland: The Heroic Period; Early Bardic Literature, Ireland; Cuculain: An Epic*;⁵ *The Triumph of Cuculain or In the Gates of the North* and *The Triumph and Passing of Cuculain* secured for him the status of 'cultural ethnarch' in the revivalist pantheon (Wilson Foster: 1993; 32). The heroic topics of these works, the military necessity of defending one's country, and one's province, in the case of Cuchulain, from alien invasion, contained a subtext that would not be lost on the revolutionary leaders of the physical force movement in Irish politics.⁶ Nor can the importance of Matthew Arnold's study of Celtic races and culture for the second revival be overstated, as Deane rightly observes (Deane: 1985; 25).

Arnold's views on Celtic Ireland are important insofar as he was one of the first to bring the category of religion into the equation, a category that would become a 'given' in Irish politics. In an analysis that has not really received due consideration, Seamus Deane teases out the concerns of Arnold's Oxford Lectures, *The Study of Celtic Literature*, published in 1867. Deane notes that the values of the Celt were in stark contrast to the vices of the 'British bourgeois',

according to Arnold. Deane goes on to discuss the ‘vitality’ that was central to Arnold’s picture of the Celt, a vitality wherein the peasant is preferred to the ‘anaemic city dweller’ (Deane: 1985; 25). This valorization of the peasant brings to mind Daniel Corkery’s *The Hidden Ireland*, a book wherein Gaelic attitudes to Irishness are equated very much with the peasantry. Corkery, following the Arnoldian theme of the peasant as national archetype, saw Irishness as a narrow, insular concept, best found beyond the walls of both cities and towns (Corkery: 1989; 23). Here, Corkery binds Irish identity to rural areas, isolated from influences outside of the ‘sterile tracts’ that were its stronghold, and notes that Ireland had become ‘purely a peasant nation’. He goes on to point towards a touchstone, in an Arnoldian sense, of Irish identity that is to be found in this confluence of Gael and peasant in what he significantly terms ‘Irish-Ireland’:

But of Irish-Ireland it is, perhaps, better to realize the cabin as a thing in itself, than any hamlet, however small; for being then a peasant nation, the cabins, as might have been expected, were the custodians of its mind.

(Corkery: 1989; 26)

The irony of the appearance of a translation of the Kantian *Ding-an-sich* in this passage is reinforced by the smallness and univocality of the vision of Ireland which it espouses. Also, another central custodian of the minds of these cabin dwellers was the Catholic church, as the majority of the people described by Corkery were Catholic in ideology as well as belief. Here, by implication, the nexus of Irishness and Catholicism was introduced into the equation of identity and this connection would have far-reaching consequences.

Deane, then, sees the conjunction of Irishness with Catholicism as central to Arnold’s project in terms of his study of Ireland as Celtic. He sees the ultimate validation of the Celt as racial, and makes the telling point that, as in Corkery, the mutation from the ‘Celtic to the Gaelic revival is quick, subtle and, in the end, sectarian’ (Deane: 1985; 25). Given the attempts to define the mass of Irish

people as Celtic, and given that the majority of these people were Catholic, the homology *Celtic–Catholic* was bound to arise, and this impregnation of the racial with the religious was also to be found in the terminology used by Arnold in defining the strength of French civilization in the attraction of the Protestant, Germanic Alsace to Celtic, Catholic France. He contrasted this with the failure of the British, Protestant Germanic civilization to attract the Celtic, Catholic Irish.⁷ As Deane observes, the use of racial and religious distinctions predicates that the romanticizing of the Celt becomes the romanticizing of the Irish Catholic, and that ‘[r]ace, politics and literature’ become the foundations upon which the Irish revival was constructed (Deane: 1985; 27). They became the centre of Irishness, a centre upon which much of the revivalist ideology was grounded. One is back with Corkery again, as he notes the importance of ‘Nationality, Religion, Rebellion’ in the psyche of Irish-Ireland (Corkery: 1989; 8).

The literature produced by such a vision of identity is a literature which is focused inwardly on received traditions and essential ideas of Irishness; this literary creation of identity will have obvious implications for the political notions of identity that would come with the Gaelic revival. The attempt is made to circumlocute the actualities of history and instead create a monological view of Irishness as Celtic, Gaelic, and Catholic. These elements, along with the mythologizing of the land, combine to form a centre towards which all writings must be directed. Political imagery is also predicated on these central cores, and the apotheosis of this aestheticizing of political matters is to be found in the writings of P. H. Pearse, one of the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rebellion. In the writings of Pearse, the coalescence of Celtism, heroism, Catholicism, and Irish language issues, coheres in a vision of Irishness that, despite the inflated rhetoric, still pertains today.

In 1913, in an article prophetically entitled *The Coming Revolution*, Pearse embodies the fusion of race, politics, and literature through his use of the

religious image of the Messiah as manifested in those who ascribe to the Irish language and culture. Having attempted to fuse politics and religion, he goes on to synthesize the language question, seeing it in aesthetic terms as part of his Messianic synthesis of Irish identity:

The people itself will perhaps be its own Messiah, the people labouring, scourged, crowned with thorns, agonizing and dying, to rise again immortal and impassable. For peoples are divine and are the only thing that can properly be spoken of under figures drawn from the divine epos. If we do not believe in the divinity of our people we have had no business, or very little, all these years in the Gaelic League.

(Pearse: 1917-22; 2; 91-92)

Here, we see the vatic voice of Pearse, especially keeping in mind the title of this piece, as he suavely reconciles politics, religion, and language in the people of Ireland, the chosen people. Here religious influences cohere, as the ‘chosen people’ trope of the Old Testament combines with the ‘Messianic’ trope of the New Testament. This combination of different faculties is, I would argue, one of the most important influences of essentialist Irish identity. All is predestined, there is little chance of change; like Corkery’s cabins, the gaze is directed inwards and backwards.⁸ The narrative structure of this passage seeks closure in terms of the passion of Christ. It is by reanimating this passion and death in Ireland that Pearse will proceed politically and culturally. It is by locating and, if necessary, altering, the past that Pearse can point the way towards his redemptive aesthetic; his thought is centripetal in that he is constantly facing inwards towards a predefined core of identity.

Pearse anthropomorphoses Ireland through the literary device of *prosopopeia* (giving face), and presents Ireland as an amalgamation of Christ, Catholicism, and Celtism. His commitment to Irish language issues was reinforced by his founding of an all-Irish school, Scoil Éanna, where a generation of boys were taught the Irish language and culture with Pearse as headmaster. The final item in

his redemptive synthesis was the great Irish mythical figure, Cuchulain, the central figure in many of Standish O'Grady's books.⁹ For Pearse, Cuchulain would be the personification of all things Irish, and thus would be seen as an exemplar of an idealized Gaelic heroic type of Irishness, towards which all might aspire.

In the entrance hall of Scoil Éanna, one of the first things to be seen was a large mural of the young Cuchulain taking his weapons; in the same hall, there was also Beatrice Elvery's painting of Christ as a boy, naked to the waist, with arms outstretched in the cruciform position (O'Leary: 1994; 262). This iconic fusion of these two sacred figures in Pearse's personal pantheon is completed by their location in an all-Irish school. So here we see the essential core of Irish identity being created through imagery. The visual juxtaposition of these two figures in the entrance to the school made the ideology of Scoil Éanna very clear. In 1913, Pearse put this threefold identification into explicit terms:

The story of Cuchulain symbolizes the redemption of man by a sinless God. The curse of primal sin lies upon a people; new and personal sin brings doom to their doors; they are powerless to save themselves; a youth free from the curse, akin with them through his mother but through his father divine, redeems them by his valour; and his own death comes from it. I do not mean that the Táin is a conscious allegory: but there is the story in its essence, and it is like a retelling (or is it a foretelling) of the story of Calvary.

(Pearse: 1917-22; 2; 156)

This fusion of Cuchulain and Christ is created by the similarity of their narrative, in other words, through aesthetic criteria. Theirs is a narrative of suffering, death but ultimate redemption both for their people and for their own posterity. The same scriptural narrative has been extended, by Pearse, to the lives of Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmett, both of whom were seen in this sacrificial light. The final character in this narrative of sacrifice and redemption is, of course, Pearse himself. Given his continued use of aesthetic criteria to create his own 'New

Testament' of mystical nationalism, it is fitting that this climactic identification, which is also a prophecy of the act of sacrificial rebellion which Pearse himself will lead, should be voiced in a fictional work. In itself, such an identification points up the dangers of the intersection of the aesthetic and the ideological. In *The Singer*, the hero, MacDara,¹⁰ sets out to face the foreign enemy with these emblematic words:

One man can free a people as one man redeemed the world. I will take no pike, I will go into battle with bare hands. I will stand up before the Gall as Christ hung naked before men on the tree.

(Pearse; 1917-22; 1; 44)

From the already cited view of the Messiah as the Irish people redeeming themselves, he moves to a personal identification with Christ, in terms of following his path of sacrifice and redemption. The association of the English with those who crucified Christ is also clear.

In Pearse's writing, the essence (as he would see it) of Irish identity is given voice. There are certain inalienable aspects at this centre and these are to be kept in view at all times by his centripetal ideology. The aestheticization of political ideas and objectives is typical of the revivalist trend, begun by Arnold's valorization of Celtism wherein 'folk-tales are preferred to the "English diet of parliamentary speeches and the gutter press"' (Deane: 1985; 25). While one might readily agree with the encomium on the gutter press, the preference for folk mythology over parliamentary debate is hardly a sound recipe for socio-cultural or political development. The journalist D. P. Moran coined the term 'Irish-Irelander' to describe this view of Irishness,¹¹ and Conor Cruise O'Brien cites the following categories in terms of a definition of Irishness, primarily 'people of native Irish stock, descended from Gaelic speakers, professing the Catholic religion, and holding some form of the general political opinions held by most people of this origin and religion' (Cruise O'Brien: 1972; 51). Having

used the significant adverb ‘primarily’, he goes on to say that ‘secondarily’ the term ‘Irish race’ applies to ‘people of settler stock in Ireland, and Protestant religion: to the extent that these cast in their lot with people in the first category, culturally or politically, or preferably both’ (Cruise O’Brien: 1972; 51).

The essentialist and centripetal imperative underlining this definition is enacted by the adverbs.¹² There is a primary sense of Irishness, as defined above, and all other claims to be Irish are valid only insofar as they conform to this criterion. The category of literature *per se*, or the use of literary images, symbols, tropes or rhetorical devices, is likewise pressed into service as an ideological pointer towards this hypostasized centre. Pearse’s use of literary typology to connect Christ, Cuchulain, Irishness, and Ireland is a prime example. In section four of this chapter, further examples of Pearse’s suasive use of literary devices in the services of ideological ends will be offered.

To summarize, the centripetal axis is diachronic in formulation and inward-looking in direction, it seeks to ground itself vertically in terms of historical development along a single ethnic and identificatory wavelength; the past has defined Irishness, and the contemporary function of literature is to conserve and preserve this handed-down heritage; its spatial dimension is narrow in the extreme, encompassing the verities of the transcendental signifiers of Irishness, Catholicism, Celtism, republicanism, nationalism, and language. This section would seem to valorize the notion that literature and politics are mutually destructive. However, just as one can move towards a static centre, so also can one redefine that centre through changes in the circumference, and in the forces that shape it, as the next section will point out.

(ii) Vectors of national definition

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

(Yeats: 1979; 211)

In these famous lines from *The Second Coming*, the concept of centrality is used as a signifier of order, structure, and coherence. Because the ‘centre’ is unable to hold, the world must brace itself for the loosing of anarchy and chaos. The centre is seen as the locus of control; it is that point from which all else proceeds; it is that point from which all circles and arcs initiate. In terms of the definition of identity, this view of centrality is clear from the comments of critics on the essential nature of MacMorris. It is assumed that at the core of this character there are seminal racial and national characteristics that apply to all Irish people, and which generically differentiate between Irish and other ‘nations’. This postulate of a centre that is inviolable and unchanging across temporal and spatial boundaries has major implications for the study of identity in general and of Irish identity in particular. However, as already noted in section one, this attitude does raise certain fundamental questions. In this section, the implications of centripetal and centrifugal identificatory epistemologies will be further discussed in terms of the theoretical interrogation of concepts, language, and ideology, and this interrogation will serve as a seminal theoretical grounding for the thesis of this study, and for my conclusions on the nature of Irishness.

The etymology of centrality is interesting, in that, like most words that are part of philosophical discourse, it derives from the Greek ‘*κέντρον*’, meaning ‘goad or spike’. John McCumber, in a fascinating discussion of heteronomous centrality in Habermas’s philosophy, makes the point that ‘one type of *κέντρον* was the leg of a compass, which could be jabbed down anywhere to begin the construction of a *κύκλος* a circle’. Eventually, the whole circle was viewed ‘as derived from its

centre: the point was no longer established by the jab of the compass, but was a midpoint which itself established the rest of the circle and whose own origin was arbitrary, unquestioned' (McCumber: 1988; 212).¹³ The centre does not rotate with the rest of the circle, and so, metaphorically, becomes an image of the unchanging, and hence the self-present and permanent. This image became a cognitive given in the many theorizations of originary points in systems of thought. The point of origin, the unmoved mover, would be translated into many different epistemological paradigms. As McCumber goes on to note, such a concept became translated into different fields of human endeavour:

Aristotle 'biologized' it, tracing the movements of animals to the leverage of their limbs against (relatively) unmoved movers at their centers. Plotinus 'ontologized' it: centrality in his universe is assigned to the One, the unchanging source of all things. And it was 'subjectivized' by Descartes, whose 'ego' was an Archimedean point of leverage capable of establishing itself anywhere by the self-reflection of the cogito, and then of generating from itself the totality of knowledge. Kant gave it practical significance: reason oriented the thinker as the midday sun, in the center of the sky, orients the sailor. It oriented the actor when his action originated...from reason itself, autonomously legislating the categorical imperative. And, finally, the 'mathematical' concept of a center as an unmoved, legislative source carried into Husserl's view of the ego as a 'well-defined central point of emanation' for meaning itself. For Plotinus, Kant, Descartes and Husserl, philosophy was the discipline which revealed the center – however it was understood – and thus was foundational for all human discourse.

(McCumber: 1988; 212-213)

In the process of interrogating this concept of centrality, the work of Jacques Derrida and of Jacques Lacan will be of value. Perhaps the major impact of literary theory in general, and the writings of Jacques Derrida in particular, is the postulate that a search for self-defining presence is a futile objective. The terms 'play', *différance*, *dissemination*, *sous rature*, all signify the impossibility of defining one term without reference to its other or others. Generally, these postulates are seldom seen outside the arcane world of literary and theoretical journals, but their relevance in the realms of the socio-political should not be

underestimated. Critical theory (as the combination of post-structuralist, deconstructive, Marxist, and psychoanalytic theories has come to be called), attempts to offer a critique of texts, both literary and non-literary, which will interrogate the underlying epistemology of the language of those texts, and of the relationship between this language and the 'real' world.

Derrida's critique of language is best encapsulated in his series of interviews in 1981, entitled *Positions*. He makes the point that in language, no single element embodies meaning in and of itself. We are constantly looking for signifiers – phonemes, words, sentences, pages, books, or prior cultural contexts – which will combine to 'produce' the meaning of the particular word in question. He calls this constant deferral and differentiation '*différance*', a term which implies that the play of language and signification does not allow that 'a simple element be *present* in and of itself, referring only to itself'. In other words, in language, be it spoken or written, no element can function as a sign 'without referring to another element which itself is not simply present' (Derrida: 1981a; 26).

Derrida has discussed the concept of centrality in 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' (Derrida: 1978a; 278-293). He makes the point, already discussed above, that the centre in terms of any structure functions by limiting the 'play' of the structure. He goes on to define typical conceptions of centrality based on the Cartesian view of the transcendental subject as positioned anterior to language. His point is that in any structure, the centre is the point which organizes and controls (one need only refer back to Yeats's lines to illustrate this) the system. Whatever level of play is in the system or structure is limited by virtue of the centre, as we saw in McCumber's formulation. The centre is the 'fundamental ground', a point of immobility which 'itself is beyond the reach of play' (Derrida: 1978a; 279), Aristotle's 'unmoved mover'. Derrida postulates that the history of any process of meaning or signification is always predicated on some 'centre', some validating point seen as a 'full presence which

is beyond play' (Derrida: 1978a; 279). One can again look at Yeats's lines to see this process in action. 'Things fall apart' in *The Second Coming* because 'the centre cannot hold'. The centre is conceived as a point of fixity which acts as a guarantor of order and stability in a mutable world, hence by definition, it is itself immutable.

For Derrida, the history of Western thought can be seen as the 'determination of Being as *presence*' (Derrida: 1978a; 279), and referring back to the views of Irish identity as evinced in the portrayal of MacMorris, such a conceptual scheme is evident. In his case, criteria of identity are signified as being presences, or essences, which, on looking beneath the individual example, are genetically imprinted on all Irish people. Here, in Derridean terms, identity is logocentric; it focuses inward on a predefined central *locus* which is itself beyond the play of factors such as time, place, social class, or historical situatedness. MacMorris, as Truninger has noted, is seen in typological terms as a 'merciless Irish cut-throat'. To interpret MacMorris as a synecdoche of larger issues of identity, one must look towards the immutable core of the character, to find the self-present criteria of identity. That such a viewpoint tends towards essentialism, Romantic reification of certain traits, and an organicism which can have profoundly negative political ramifications, is a thesis which will be rehearsed in succeeding chapters on the writings of Yeats and Joyce.¹⁴ At this juncture, however, it is important to note the theoretical and epistemological foundation of such essentialist enunciations of language and identity.

Derrida's critique of such standpoints stems from Saussure's theories of language and signification. Writing in *Margins of Philosophy*, he makes the point that a concept is never present in and of itself. By this he means that to interpret a concept, it is necessary to rely on a series of connections to other concepts, as well as a series of translations from language to conceptuality. In terms of the concept of the centre, as we have seen, it is necessary to relate this

to a circle, to drawing, to a radius, to a broader definition of centrality, as in the centre of a power structure, with the concomitant issues of power, control, play and movement. This concept is inscribed ‘in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences’ (Derrida: 1982; 11). These differences are expressed in language, which has ‘invaded the universal problematic’ (Derrida: 1978a; 280).

Language, as the signifying system of all concepts, indeed, of all knowledge, is likewise based on a structure of differences, the meaning of each word being related to a series of other words, both phonetically and semantically. Each word, like each concept, is related in a series of matrices to other words which are not present. To look for some initiating point of reference beyond language, for a ‘being that is somewhere present, thereby eluding the play of *différance*’ (Derrida: 1982; 11), is to look in vain. The absence of this transcendental signified, this immobile guarantor of meaning, the ‘unmoved mover’, brought about a rethinking of the very concept of centrality, which forced a similar transformation of thought in other disciplines which used the image of centrality:

Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play....that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences.

(Derrida: 1978a; 280)

The implications of the absence of centrality for the study of identity are clear. Instead of looking for some invariant core, some fixed essences that *a-priori* differentiate one race or nation from another, these criteria must be seen as having a differential existence as opposed to an originary one. In other words, they can, and do, change. To see MacMorris as embodying some of the same

national characteristics as, for example Yeats, is as futile as searching for points in common between a member of an Irish family in 432 AD and Seamus Heaney.

Derrida's theorization of centrality allows us to focus our gaze in a different direction, to look outward from the 'sort of non-locus', and allow the 'infinite number of sign-substitutions' to 'come into play', to take on new attitudes and philosophical standpoints, to change with time and circumstance. This critique of centrality can be related to Lacan's critique of the humanist translinguistic subject. In humanist ideology, the speaker produces anterior meaning in language; he or she is the *assumed* 'centre' who exists outside the structure of language, and beyond the limits of the linguistic play; he or she is the 'fundamental ground' from which meaning originates. Derrida implicitly makes this point in his list of substitutions of centrality which he sees as defining Western metaphysics: 'essence', 'subject', 'transcendentality, consciousness, God, man' (Derrida: 1978a; 280).¹⁵ Lacan, following on Freud, sees the individual as split in terms of his or her subject/object relations through being imbricated in the race, class, and gender functions of an ideologically inscribed series of discourses. Indeed, Lacan's oft-quoted maxim that 'what the psychoanalytic experience discovers in the unconscious is the whole structure of language' (Lacan: 1977a; 147), underlines his view that the individual functions within language, and does not occupy a position outside language, or one that is immune to language.

This notion of the individual as pre-existing language has its roots in the Cartesian postulate, the 'self-presence of the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity' (Derrida: 1976; 12), as the cornerstone of the transcendental subject. For Lacan, the speaking subject is constituted by the unconscious and language, and is imbricated unconsciously in the syntagmatic chain. He imagines this chain, the normal syntactic arrangements of words in sentences or longer units, in a

completely different manner to that of Saussure, who saw this chain as linear, in the same way that the sentences in this paragraph are linear. For Lacan, this linearity may be ‘necessary’ but it is ‘not sufficient’ (Lacan: 1977a; 154). In a thought process that is quite similar to that of Derrida, he points to the fact that each word in a sentence depends for its meaning on a ‘whole articulation of relevant contexts suspended “vertically”, as it were, from that point’ (Lacan: 1977a; 154). This implies that all of our meanings along the syntagmatic axis (the linear horizontal plane) are determined by a series of absent meanings suspended vertically along the paradigmatic axis. As he puts it, the signifiers in the syntagmatic chain are arranged like ‘rings of a necklace that is a ring in another necklace made of rings’ (Lacan: 1977a; 153). Hence, each signifier calls to mind numerous other connotations which are associated with it in terms of combination, contrast, homonym, synonym, semantic, or phonetic structure. For Lacan this plurality of contextual associations is infinite, and it discloses the possibility of using language ‘in order to signify *something quite other* than what it says’ [*italics original*] (Lacan: 1977a; 155).

In this context, the idea of language as a carrier of conscious intention, as a shell in which is concealed a central core of meaning that can be cracked like a nut, is clearly false. Thus, language in terms of the enunciation of presence, of originary essence, is destabilized. There is a strong homology here between this conception of language as difference, and Adorno’s notion of negative dialectic as ‘the consistent sense of nonidentity’ (Adorno: 1973; 5). In both formulations, there is a foregrounding of the negative and the different, and these can aid the process of protreptic discourse in opening a space for the ‘different’ and the ‘other’ in a manner which is an ethical imperative. Before one can take concepts at face value, as essences, one must first analyse their mode of enunciation, and the synchronic structures which give rise to them. Derrida sees essentialist thinking as full of ‘dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play’ (Derrida: 1978a; 292), and his thought is echoed by Lacan. The individual

subject becomes a subject by taking up a position within language; as Derrida puts it, subjectivity, like objectivity 'is an effect of *différance*, an effect inscribed in a system of *différance*' (Derrida: 1981a; 28). This notion of a meaning which cannot be reduced to a single origin, of a complex and multi-constituted meaning, is the legacy of what has come to be termed critical theory, and it provides a methodology wherewith the essentialisms of identity can be discussed and interrogated.

In terms of our opening questions, national identity, that recurring trope in Irish studies, has been generally theorized as a set of fixed characteristics which are presumed to be innate in all Irish people. The stereotyping of MacMorris's racial traits exemplifies this trend: violence, rashness, cholera, and an ethnic accent are the 'centres' of his identity. I have termed this perspective on identity 'centripetal' inasmuch as the vector is inward, fixed on what is already present, taking no account of the outside world. Spatially, this vector is focused on the centre of Irish identity, the land and the people, with the centre taken as an unmoved mover and as a still point which is the *locus* of all play within the system. As we saw in section one, such notions as Celtism, Catholicism, racial sameness, and linguistic purity can serve as aspects of such an unmoved mover.

The relationship between people, language, and land is seen as a motivated and quasi-organic one, which is a defining factor in the creation of notions of Irish identity. Indeed, this relationship, allied to similar notions of language and religion as signifiers of identity, functions as a centre in terms of a structure or system of ideas similar to that which Derrida terms logocentrism, the search for origins. In this vectoral direction, such centres are assumed to exist, they are like the 'givens' in the proof of a mathematical theorem, they pre-exist the individual who is shaped by them, as well as going on to define that individual in terms of a national identity.

This outlook sees no need to theorize or interrogate the centres of the different structures of identity that come within its ambit. They are, like the centre of Derrida's structures, beyond the play of thought – unmoved movers. In political terms, the vectoral focus is on the past; it can be imagined as a movement towards a centre, a centre which has been clearly defined by the past traditions of the *Volk* and their history; the movement is from the circumference inwards, a contraction with all the focus on the centre of the circle. Symbolically, the gaze of the writer in this mode is directed towards the centre and away from the circumference; there is no contact with anything outside. The centre here is part of an invariant core, it is hypostasized, reified, and seen as trans-historical and unchanging.

The writings of Derrida, Lacan, and Adorno have demonstrated that there is another direction which can be taken in terms of looking at issues involving identity, namely the centrifugal vector. Here, the centre is not seen as a given, rather is it a function of the chains of signification. In other words, it has to be thought through, and because different countries and historical periods give rise to different chains of signification, then such 'thinking through' of centrality can give rise to new centres, as different sign substitutions replace each other. In the case of issues concerning identity, such a perspective can give rise to a radically different political attitude. This vector is temporally focused on the present and future; it can be imagined in terms of a movement away from a centre, towards the circumference; this circumference gets wider as the centrifugal force intensifies, allowing the circle to become larger and more open to the outside; the movement is outwards as is the gaze of the writer; an expansion with all the focus on the circumference of the circle. I would go further and suggest that this centrifugal vector can have the effect of bringing about a transformation in the very concept of centrality. Given Derrida's account of language as invading the universal problematic, the notion of centrality as present-beings, with fixed *loci* outside of play was transformed into a sort of *non-locus*, in which 'an infinite

number of sign-substitutions came into play' (Derrida: 1978a; 280). This view of centrality as a type of negative, or series of sign-substitutions, has major implications for centrality in the discourse of identity as, if there are substitutions, then there must be factors which bring about these substitutions, and, consequently, there must be a dynamic relationship between circumference and centre, a relationship that is interdependent and transactional.

For this argument, there is etymological as well as philosophical warrant. In the Greece of the Bronze age, there is another dimension of centrality that needs to be taken into account, at the centre of another type of shield. At the centre of a Greek bronze or animal hide shield was a similar goad or spike, which in turn acted as a midpoint, or fulcrum, where the shield's weight was equally balanced. (McCumber: 1988; 214). Such a centre was the opposite of the unchanging point of no movement, as it was clearly dependent on the arm which held the shield, and it was also dependent on the circumference as regards its being a midpoint of weight and balance.¹⁶ This view of a centre that is defined by its circumference is diametrically opposed to the mathematical concept of centrality discussed earlier, but it does have a bearing on the interaction of the two vectors. Hegel, in his *Wissenschaft der Logik*, posits a notion of centrality which is analogous to the Greek shield, as it sees the *Zentrum* as constituted through the other parts of the object; its activity consists in mediating and keeping in some form of balance, these interacting forces (Hegel: 1934; 2; 371-4). The interesting aspect of this heteronomous concept of centrality is that there is an oscillation between centre and circumference, as well as a negating of the controlling force of centrality; in the Hegelian sense, it is almost as if 'the sun were nothing more than the intersection of the gravitational pulls of all the planets' (McCumber: 1988; 214).

Here, centrality is, in a Derridean sense, a *non-locus* in that it is dependent on the sign-substitutions that occur in all other parts of the object, or series of relationships, of which it is deemed to be central. Hence, the *Zentrum* will be

redefined constantly by the play and oscillation of the different parts of the system; it can never be seen as the unmoved mover, or still point of a turning world, to paraphrase Eliot.

Temporally, the centrifugal perspective is synchronic in that it looks at structures as they exist in the present. The historical centres of identity that are part of its baggage are neither reified nor hypostasized; rather are they subjected to critique and comparison with more recent intellectual developments. They are all part of the play of intelligence and thought, and inasmuch as is possible, can be jettisoned to be replaced by more modern ideas as a result of a protreptic dialogue or discourse. Here, the centre is ever-changing being subject to outside influences; it is the Hegelian *Zentrum* as opposed to the Aristotelian unchanging point, or unmoved mover. I would suggest that the differences and alterations outside the centre can bring about a change at the centre itself, and this thesis will be argued throughout this book, with respect to the writings of Yeats and Joyce and Irish identity.

In terms of the interaction of the literary with the political, each of these vectors has its own mode of action. The centripetal perspective is generally a linear one. It views history as a seamless narrative wherein the characters can be easily divided into essentialist aspects, and elides all other aspects of meaning as being peripheral to the main historical and identificatory narrative. Such conceptualizations of identity are positive and unchanging. The centrifugal perspective, on the other hand, takes the linearity of history as being important, but also tends to look at other areas, different interpretations, non-canonical texts, and brings all of these together in a form of critique. The former is reminiscent of Saussure's notion of a linear chain, while the latter evokes the Lacanian necklace of rings, where the meaning of items present along the horizontal axis is determined by elements which are suspended, through invisible paradigms, along the vertical axis. Both entail a politics of reading: in the

essentialist reading, one reads the information as offered, taking no account of anything outside the linear chain; while in the theoretical reading, one is constantly aware of other, plural meanings which both create, and undermine, the monological certainty of the linear chain.

To take an example of the interaction, and different vectoral perspectives of both views, we may consider the history of rebellion against British rule that is to be found in the Irish situation. Different readings of the same basic information can radically alter the effect of that information on notions of Irish identity. A reading of the chronology of Irish history at the end of the well known reference book *The Course of Irish History* (Moody and Martin (eds.): 1984; 405-457), indicates that rebellion against English rule was a regular feature of Irish life. Rebellions took place in: 1262-1263, 1315-1318, 1534, 1539, 1561-1567, 1568-1573, 1579-1583, 1580, 1595-1603, 1596, 1608, 1641, 1646, 1649-1652, 1687-1691, 1761, 1785, 1796-1799,¹⁷ 1803, 1848, 1867, 1884, 1916, and 1921-1922. The Provisional IRA has been carrying on a campaign of violence in Northern Ireland, from 1969 to the present, which it sees as deriving from the central imperative of these different rebellions, namely the attempt by the Irish people to drive out a foreign invader.

In essentialist terms, a reading of these different rebellions would point to the fact that roughly every twenty five years, the Irish people took up arms against the British. As far back as the thirteenth century, Irish people were attempting to drive out the British from Ireland. Such a reading would see the core aspects of Irish identity as being those which sustained this drive for independence, and which transcended differences of place and time; in other words, those traits which were inimical to the British presence. These would consist of the Roman Catholic religion, the Irish language, and a deep attachment to the land, a bond so strong that people were willing to die for it. Such tropes of identity were encouraged and expressed through both the literature and politics of Ireland, and

through English literary and political discourses with respect to Ireland. In the introduction, the use of literature to underscore a political point with reference to Elizabethan policy in Ireland, and the use of literary characters to underline the need to civilize the ‘wild Irish’, has been shown to have a political agenda. The portrayal of the central tropes of identity through different literary works served to naturalize these genres, to give them the appearance of being real. This process, called variously ‘recuperation, naturalization, motivation, *vraisemblabilisation*’ (Culler: 1975; 137), is a central function of literature in society.

Tzvetan Todorov sees the *vraisemblable* as the ‘relation of a particular text to another general and diffuse text which might be called “public opinion”’ (Todorov: 1968; 2). The *vraisemblable* is that function of literature which connects it to reality, which seemingly naturalizes images and symbols to make them seem natural, obvious, essential as opposed to constructed. Thus, the view of these rebellions as chapters in a linear narrative of national decolonization, if it is widely written in literary, social, and cultural texts, will attain a level of naturalization, in that it will become the naturalized way of reading this information. If this view is included in history texts which are taught in schools, or if this view acts as a background for historical fiction which is widely read, then it will assume a central role in developing the future generations of a society – it will become part of what Althusser terms *Ideological State Apparatuses*, and thereby influence the identity of each individual within that particular society (Althusser: 1977; 121-173).¹⁸ Thus, the literary imbricates the political through their shared use of imagery and suasive language.

In poetry written in the Irish language, there is a distinct genre of poetry called the *Aisling* poem, wherein a personified Ireland, usually in the shape of a pretty young woman, calls on the poet to rise and follow her to help defend her land. W. B. Yeats’s famous play, *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, makes the same point, with an

image of Ireland appearing as a poor old woman, only to be transformed into a young girl by the thought of young men laying down their lives for her sake. Of course, the image of a country as a young or old woman is precisely that, an image, which is created through the use of quantifiable literary devices such as personification and *prosopopeia*. However, if such images are repeated often enough, they become part of what Todorov terms ‘public opinion’; they become naturalized, they become the *given* in the theorem of the enunciation of ideas of identity. The image of Erin, old Ireland, the poor old woman, bestrides the list of dates, and brings to this list the covering of a linear narrative which equates being Irish with participation in rebellions against the British. Here, meaning is self-present and any discussion of the absences in the paradigmatic chain is unnecessary.

However, a theoretical reading would interpret these dates differently. Taking the linear narrative of rebellion, and subjecting it to a critique will bring to light a more complex series of interpretations. The initial invaders who landed at Bannow Bay in Wexford were variously called: English, Normans, Anglo-Normans, Cambro-Normans, Anglo-French, Anglo-Continental, Saxons, Flemings, Men of Saint David’s, Men of Llanduff (Gillingham: 1993, in Bradshaw, Hadfield and Maley (eds): 1993; 29-31). Thus their status as ‘English’ is open to question. Indeed, they had their own difficulties with central English kingship over a number of years.

In 1798, for example, the troops that the rebels were fighting were very often composed of Irish yeomen, brought in from different counties to suppress the rebellion. In this case, these battles were more in the nature of a civil war rather than a straightforward Irish–British confrontation, and different notions of Irishness were in open conflict. In World War I, nearly a third of a million Irish joined the British army, while only 2,000 men and women fought in 1916. Can it be said that the former are, in some way, ‘less Irish’ than the latter? Even to this

day, the wearing of the poppy, the traditional symbol which honours those soldiers who died in World War 1, has become a point of dispute among politicians and public figures in the Republic of Ireland. This question serves as an indicator that meaning constructed along the syntagmatic axis, is necessarily erasing other levels of meaning suspended along the paradigmatic axis. To avail of another terminology, that of Mikhail Bakhtin, this reading of history is monologic as opposed to dialogic. By monologism, he means the denial that, outside one particular opinion or reading, there exists 'another consciousness, with the same rights, and capable of responding on an equal footing' (Bakhtin, in Todorov: 1984; 107). This denial is signified linguistically by the denial of the other aspects or links in the chain of meaning and interpretation. The granting of rights to another perspective is an attempt at a protreptic discourse in that alterity is acknowledged and given voice. In these terms, the act of reading takes on an overt political significance by its refusal of a monological perspective on the events of history. Instead, by looking at the dialogic picture, a change can be effected in the *Zentrum* of Irish identity.

In actuality, there is a denial of an ethical dimension at work here in that the place of the other, of an Irishness with a British dimension, is not given voice in any sense. Indeed, given the ritualistic difficulties encountered by Irish public figures in wearing, or not wearing, a poppy, there is still a refusal of any polyglossic dialogue between different senses of Irishness. There still remains a long way to go before there is any sense of a Habermasian *Gleichberechtigt*, an equal footing (Habermas: 1984; 247). The centre, as unmoved mover, still firmly controls the play of political and identificatory discourse.

Another example of this privileged reading of the past is the Battle of Kinsale in 1601, which is generally seen as the final battle of the Gaelic order. As Hayes-McCoy puts it, after this battle Ireland 'was conquered' (Hayes-McCoy in Moody and Martin: 1984; 188), and this view is reinforced by Mary Francis

Cusack, who saw the battle as ‘a fatal blow to the Irish cause’ (Cusack: 1995; 458). Hugh O’Neill, the leader of this rebellion, is seen as an Irish chieftain who had the wit and perspicacity to resist the English in behalf of Ireland as a whole. Boyce sees the rebellion as the ‘last stand of Gaelic Ireland against Tudor encroachment’ (Boyce: 1995; 61). It led to the emblematic ‘Flight of the Earls’ in 1607, the leaving of Ireland by the last two great Irish chieftains, O’Neill and O’Donnell, and marked the beginning of the overall conquest of Ireland. In ideological terms, O’Neill is seen as a leader of Gaelic Catholic Ireland, indeed, he said himself that his allies who fought with him fought for ‘the Catholic religion and the liberties of our country’ (Boyce: 1995; 61). In this sense, he embodies the Gaelic, Irish, Catholic identity that is seen as natural (*vraisemblable*) for Ireland.

This monological reading of O’Neill’s rebellion is also invaded by dialogical readings. Firstly, the view of the rebellion as a country-wide uprising of Catholic grievance is not altogether true. As Boyce has noted, not all Catholics, especially in towns, were in agreement with O’Neill’s religious agenda, and remained neutral, while Catholic lords like Barrymore stood against him, insisting that Elizabeth had never refused them liberty of conscience (Boyce: 1995; 61). O’Neill’s request that Catholics who fought against him should be excommunicated, was refused by the Pope, while the Jesuits within the Pale were equally distrustful of his religious motives (Boyce: 1995; 61). To add a further level of complexity to the identification of Hugh O’Neill as an avatar of essentialist Irish identity, in the early 1580’s he served with the English forces who were suppressing a rebellion of Munster families (Beckett: 1969; 22). Consequently, before the pivotal battle of Kinsale, in 1601, when the armies of O’Neill and O’Donnell marched to County Cork from their strongholds in the north of Ireland to join their Spanish allies who had landed in Kinsale, they were attacked by a number of Irish families who saw no common cause with them. On their return journey, in defeat, they were attacked by even more Irish families,

presumably including some of those against whom O'Neill had fought some eighteen years earlier. In 1588, when the survivors of the Spanish Armada came ashore, these 'enemies of England were almost everywhere treated as enemies by the Irish as well' (Hayes-McCoy in Moody and Martin (eds): 1984; 183). These centrifugal 'rings of a necklace' serve to complicate the linearity of the monological reading by pointing to the complexities of identity that hover over and under the smooth linearity of this narrative. The simplistic view that the centre of Irish identity is conceived of as being Catholic, Gaelic, and nationalist is undercut by the vector which moves towards the circumference, and by so doing, alters the shape and constitution of the *Zentrum*. However, before examining how this interaction takes place, it is necessary to offer a closer analysis of both vectors of Irish identity.

(iii) Tara to Holyhead: The Centrifugal Vector

Near the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, there is an emblematic meeting, recorded in Stephen's diary under April 3rd, between himself and Davin. Stephen, who makes no reference to his own appearance in the novel, makes a point of describing Davin's appearance: '[h]e was in a black sweater and had a hurleystick' (Joyce: 1993; 216). Davin's paramilitary attire and hurleystick are signifiers of his participation in the Gaelic revival, hurling being one of the Irish national games, as organized by the Gaelic Athletic Association.¹⁹ Though a field game, hurling also signified an espousal of Gaelic culture, with the added implication of the hurley (a curved stick some metre long) as a weapon. Thus, these items, as well as previous conversations in the novel, mark out Davin as espousing a nationalist view of Irish identity. He 'worshipped the sorrowful legend of Ireland', and had 'sat at the feet of Michael Cusack, the Gael'; college gossip, it is said, deemed him 'a young fenian' (Joyce: 1993; 158).

Perhaps the most telling description of Davin's outlook on Irish identity is that which deals with his attitude towards Irish culture, Catholicism, England, and English culture. Here, the shaping power of myth to ossify essentialist criteria of identity is outlined, and here also, there is that repeated intersection of Irishness with Catholicism and anti-Englishness. It is precisely against this created conscience of his race, that Joyce will rebel:

His nurse had taught him Irish and shaped his rude imagination by the broken lights of Irish myth. He stood towards this myth upon which no individual mind had ever drawn out a line of beauty and to its unwieldy tales that divided against themselves as they moved down the cycles in the same attitude as to the Roman catholic religion, the attitude of a dullwitted loyal serf. Whatsoever of thought or of feeling came to him from England or by way of English culture his mind stood armed against in obedience to a password.

(Joyce: 1993; 158-9)

Clearly, Davin stands as synecdoche for Irish nationalism. His *Weltanschauung* is Gaelic, Catholic, nationalist, with para-military overtones, as is evidenced from Stephen's dry remark that, having signed the 'petition for universal peace' Davin will now 'burn that little copybook' that Stephen saw in his room. This copybook is apparently the Fenian manual of arms (Gifford: 1982; 246), indicating that Davin is a member of the Fenians, otherwise known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood.²⁰ This group, founded in 1858, held the conviction that the Irish people wanted separation from Britain and that the Fenians had the 'incontestable and inviolable right to get it for them by force of arms' (Boyce: 1995; 176). This would explain Stephen's parody of the military drilling of the *fianna*: '[l]ong pace, *fianna*! Right incline, *fianna*! *Fianna*, by numbers, salute, one, two' (Joyce: 1993; 176). In the course of this April meeting, Davin asks Stephen if it is true that Stephen is going away, and also wonders at the purpose of this journey. The reply is significant: '[t]old him the shortest way to Tara was *via* Holyhead' (Joyce: 1993; 216).

Tara is the traditional seat of the high-kings of Ireland. It is a placename commonly featured in the Celtic, heroic tales of the revival. Holyhead is a port in Wales where Irish emigrants traditionally alight in Britain. The location of 'Irishness' is now defined as a sort of '*non-locus*', as a negative. In terms of Adorno's dialectical cultural criticism, Holyhead offers a point of transcendence from which to view the immanence of Irishness; this same transcendental perspective is found in the framing Greek myth, and in the *persona* of Stephen's paternal metaphor, Daedalus. Tara becomes a notional centre, a *Zentrum*, which is defined through emigration as trope, and against essentialist Irishness. Perhaps more importantly, the *Zentrum* is defined in terms of the circumference, Holyhead. The 'Tara-Holyhead' dialectic attempts to define Irishness negatively, *sous rature* as Derrida would have it, in that it is a *non-locus*, a *non-lieu*, a site

which is the subject of debate and struggle, a site where there is a place for alterity. The core point here is that Stephen is not leaving Ireland because he is in some way renouncing Irishness; he is leaving so that he can discover that Irishness, and express it, from the perspective of the other, as he famously puts it at the end of the novel:

Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order. She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels. Amen. So be it. Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.

(Joyce: 1993; 218)

Stephen, in attempting to express some sense of Irish identity, feels that he can only achieve this by moving away from the fixed centrality of the Irishness of the revival, and instead, by attempting to create a different view of Irishness as almost a negative notion against which we can measure the actuality in all of its guises. This attitude contrasts sharply with that of Davin. Davin, who sees himself as ‘an Irish nationalist, first and foremost’, and asks Stephen if he is ‘Irish at all?’ (Joyce: 1993; 176), before enunciating his view of Irishness: ‘be one of us, said Davin. Why don’t you learn Irish?’ (Joyce: 1993; 176). Clearly for this Irish nationalist, to be Irish is to learn the Irish language, and by extension, to be anti-British. This fundamentalist strand in Irish republicanism (keeping in mind Davin’s membership of the Fenians, or Irish Republican Brotherhood), this hypostasized view of race, religion, and language as criteria for Irish identity, is one against which Joyce rebels, and this essentialist misreading of republican ideals, brought to Ireland in 1798, will be further discussed in the concluding section of this chapter, as this misreading is an example of how literary criteria effect the body politic by constantly focusing on a transformed version of the past.

As has been noted in the previous section, the Gaelic, Celtic, Irish, Catholic nexus of Irish identity is a construct inasmuch as it is created by a selective reading of history, by a focus on key aspects of that tradition, and by the suasive use of literary devices in an attempt to achieve a *vraisemblabilisation* of this construct, so that it appears to be the essence of Irishness. By a constant process of looking inwards towards this essentialized centre, one turns one's back to any outside influences, a process which inhibits any progress towards new ideas and developments in terms of political and socio-cultural growth. Temporally, the focus on the past means that identity is constantly on the defensive against modernity and against developments that post-date the hypostasized centre. The rhetoric of literature often serves as the cement that bonds these criteria together into a form of unity that is very difficult to unravel, for as Adorno has pointed out, what is differentiated, in terms of cultural and societal aspects will always appear 'divergent, dissonant, negative for just as long as the structure of our consciousness obliges it to strive for unity' (Adorno: 1973; 5).

This is a *locus classicus* of the centrifugal vector in the process of defining Irishness. The drive towards unity, fuelled by literature about Celtic heroes and *prosopopeic* female embodiments of Irishness, tended to make Irishness monological and essentialist. However, as Mikhail Bakhtin has perceptively observed, language, especially in its literary incarnation, is also a powerful tool in the deconstruction of such centralizing drives; and if this is recognized, literature can become a powerful critique of the centripetal:

Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward.

(Bakhtin: 1981; 272)

That literature is one of the major examples of the force of language is undeniable: just as literature is a vehicle for centralization and mythopoeia, so it can also serve as a vehicle for pluralization and scepticism in the interpretation of myth and history; just as it is a vehicle for the centripetal, so also is it a vehicle for the centrifugal. In other words, literature-as-mythopoeia is deconstructed by literature-as-critique. Yet, many writers who study the aesthetic refuse to acknowledge this attribute of literature.

In *Ancestral Voices*, Conor Cruise O'Brien makes a very good case for the power of literary myth and symbol as being a potent force in the ideological manipulation of politics and culture. Writing about Patrick Pearse, Cruise O'Brien cites his pamphlet entitled *Ghosts*, wherein Pearse, speaking of the spectralization of figures from the Irish nationalist pantheon, makes the point that there is only one way to appease such a ghost, namely 'you must do the thing it asks you'. Pearse goes on: '[t]he ghosts of a nation sometimes ask very big things; and they must be appeased at whatever the cost' (Pearse: 1917-22; 2; 223). Such ghosts are the stuff of nationalist ideology; they allow the past to be given a face, a voice, and a life in the present through the literary device of *prosopopeia*. Above all, *prosopopeia* is a linguistic effect; the past is given life through language, both in terms of a naming function, and more dramatically, through the use of a temporal register which utilizes the present or future tense to underline the 'life' that has been breathed into the past by this trope. Writing about the trope of *prosopopeia*, Paul de Man had this to say: '*prosopon-poiein* means to *give* a face and therefore implies that the original face can be missing or nonexistent' (de Man: 1986; 44). Through *prosopopeia*, historical figures from the past are 'given face', and hence are used to validate the actions of the present by suggesting that each particular version of history is a teleological narrative which is proceeding towards the desired conclusion. As Cruise O'Brien makes clear, what Pearse's ghosts are asking for, and must have, is blood (Cruise O'Brien: 1994; 103). Having alluded to King David's aspiration that 'thy foot

may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies', Pearse concludes by noting cryptically that the ghosts he has raised 'will take a little laying' (Pearse: 1917-22; 2; 255).

It is highly ironic that the trope of the face is also central in the ethical writings of Levinas, who sees the 'ethical essence of language', from which derives our sense of obligation as originating in 'the sensibility of the skin of the Other's face' (Critchley: 1992; 179). Here, there is no 'giving face' or creating one in the image of the culture or group who desire to revivify the past. This image of the face is contemporary and present; it is grounded in a sensibility to the other, a sensibility that is situated 'on the surface of the skin, at the edge of the nerves' (Levinas: 1981b; 15). The face, for Levinas, is the guarantee of the humanity of the other; it is definitely not some form of verbal construct, manufactured from the cultural psyche of sameness. As Critchley puts it 'ethics is always already political, the relation to the face is always already a relation to humanity as a whole' (Critchley: 1992; 226). In Levinasian ethics, humanity is signified by this very otherness, as symbolized by the face. Here, the face is very much phenomenal, as opposed to the ghostly *prosopopeia* of Pearse.

Pearse's spectral visitations ensure that the power of the past will become operative in the present, and this effect is achieved, linguistically, through the use of the present, future or conditional tenses which speak of the contemporaneity of the ghost. However, ghosts need not always be the stuff of the elemental. Ghosts can also symbolize a presence beyond that which is, they may orient themselves towards the non-material past, or future, as well as towards the material; they can symbolize a negative dialectical notion of a truth that does not exist, but would, or should, if things were different. So, the essentialist vision of Irish-Ireland is haunted by the spectre of other enunciations of Irish identity. Surely what Stephen Dedalus sees, towards the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, are ghosts, but ghosts of a different nature

to those of Pearse. On April 16th, Stephen's entry speaks of the 'spell of arms and voices: the white arms of roads...the black arms of tall ships'. These voices call to him: 'Come.' They also tell him that they are his 'kinsmen' (Joyce: 1993; 218).

Here Joyce uses ghostly imagery to illustrate a different type of Irish identity, an identity that is not haunted by centripetal ghosts of the past but by centrifugal ghosts of the future. Literature, despite the many vexed questions regarding its ontology and epistemology, is that genre wherein ideas, thoughts, and fictions may be given voice. In this sense, as well as being capable of creating the *Vorurteil* of centralization and aesthetic unity, it can also create an emancipatory notion of identity as a changing construct which refutes the essentialist drive, and instead allows for a pluralist notion of Irishness.

Stephen's ghosts are figures of possibility, they call him to a new vantage point which will allow him to define the 'uncreated conscience' of his race. In *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida discusses what he terms *hauntology*, in answer to his question: '[w]hat is a ghost?' (Derrida: 1994; 10). In this book, he discusses the spectrality of many areas of meaning, seeing ghostly hauntings as traces of possible meanings. One might compare his *hauntology* to the paradigmatic chains which hover over (haunt) the linearity of the syntagmatic chain. But Derrida makes one important distinction, in that he sees spectrality and time as closely connected. He makes the point, speaking both of the ghost in *Hamlet*, and the ghost that haunts Marx's *Communist Manifesto* (where the first noun is 'specter'), that: '[a]t bottom, the specter is the future, it is always to come, it presents itself only as that which could come or come back' (Derrida: 1994; 39).

In this sense, the ghosts of Derrida are at variance with those of Pearse. Derrida's spectrality involves acknowledging the other that haunts the self; it involves acknowledging the possibility that the 'h' in *hauntology* is a hovering presence

over the certainties of ontology. Pearse's ghosts, on the other hand, are ontological rather than *hauntological* in that they leave little room in their haunting for any other sense of 'being', apart from that of Gaelic, Catholic, and nationalist. Whereas Derrida's spectralization creates limitless possibilities for the future, or indeed, futures, Pearse's posit a monological time frame, which is teleological in terms of the achievement of the hegemony of Irish-Ireland. Hence, Derrida's ghosts are ethical, inasmuch as they define the place of the other, of alterity, in confrontation with notions of sameness, whereas Pearse's define identity in terms of sameness.

In a sense, Pearse's ghosts expunge the voice of the other; their message is essentialist, and imperative. Derridean *hauntology* is predicated on the future, on the other of ontology, so that it can be seen as an expression of Adorno's negativity which always inhabits dialectical thought. Indeed, Adorno, in discussing dialectics, refers to the process in spectral terms, telling us that negative dialectical logic is one of 'disintegration' (Adorno: 1973; 145), and his negative dialectics would seem to be a mode of resistance to a positivism similar to that of Pearse's notions of identity. So, when Pearse speaks of the injunction put on him by the 'ghosts of a nation', he seems to see this injunction as a monological inheritance, an irruption of a fixed and unified past in the present, as a guideline to a teleological future.

However, Derrida has discussed this very notion of spectral inheritance and has made the point that, far from issuing from a fixed centre, and from containing an unequivocal meaning, an inheritance 'is never gathered together, it is never one with itself' (Derrida: 1994; 16). By moving away from the central preoccupations of Pearse, Derrida's perspective allows for the influence of the present, and the future, in interpreting the past, a present that must be shaped by factors that were never available in the past. In other words, he takes cognisance of the fact that messages need to be interpreted, that ideologies are subject to

change and that it is through the act of reading, an act which, by definition, takes place in the present, that the past is given voice. Hence Derrida's point that, in interpreting the past, one must 'filter, sift, criticize, one must sort out several different possibles that inhabit the same injunction' (Derrida: 1994; 16). It also leaves room for some kind of dialogue with alterity, in that if even our ghosts are monological and monocultural, there will be no room for any other voices in the creation and presentation of Irish identity. Hence in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Stephen's attempt to achieve a perspectival sea-change, by leaving Ireland so that he can better understand what Irishness actually is. By emigrating, he is expressing a negative knowledge of Irishness, a *hauntological* Irishness, and through this, he can, from the wider circumference, proceed to redefine the *Zentrum* by changing the forces that create it.

Both Derrida and Pearse interpret the past; one acknowledges the *hauntology* of plural significations that surrounds different messages; the other ploughs a monological trail which refuses to validate any other meaning-chain but the desired one. The political consequences of such differing perspectives are large. Pearse's ghosts leave no room for any other sense of nationality apart from his own: they are spectres of sameness. Dudley Edwards quotes him as saying that 'the national demand of Ireland is fixed and determined', and makes the point that he elevated national identity to a religion (Dudley Edwards: 1990; 253). As to the fate of those who do not share this quasi-religious view of Irishness, one can offer Hamlet's spectral injunction: 'By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me!' (Shakespeare: 1963; I, iv, 85). Derrida, on the other hand, sees all discussions of ontology, of the nature of the being of anything, as imbricated in a *hauntology* of attendant traces, differences, disseminations, in other words, of alterity. The political and ethical implication of this is that such *hauntologies* allow for the introduction of the other, of other voices, other identities, and other epistemological positions. Richard Beardsworth, discussing Hegel's 'The spirit of Christianity and its fate', observes that, for Hegel, 'the ghost is the other

recognized as the violation of oneself' (Beardsworth: 1996; 83), and in an ethical perspective, there is room for such spectral others. In this case, there is a strong correlation with Levinasian ethics; as the otherness of spectrality is that which helps to define the self as an ethical subjectivity. Derrida's relation to alterity inasmuch as his responsibility to the other is also a 'responsibility toward the future', since it involves the struggle to create openings within which the other can appear' and can hence 'come to transform what we know or think we know' (Derrida: 1992a; 5). However, Derrida has discussed this very notion of spectral inheritance and has made the point that, far from issuing from a fixed centre, and from containing an unequivocal meaning, an inheritance 'is never gathered together, it is never one with itself' (Derrida: 1994; 16). To open oneself to the voice of the other requires a complicated situatedness in terms of cultural critique, and *hauntology*, I would suggest, offers yet another quasi-transcendental perspective from where the immanence of cultural positions can be offered to dialectical critique. It offers a position of negative identity in that the spectre is both here, and not here; he or she is subjectivity *sous rature*, and the influence of the immaterial on the material is analogous to that of the circumference on the *Zentrum* in terms of negative dialectical interaction.

Adorno, as has already been noted in the introduction, sees the dangers and advantages of both transcendent and immanent critiques, and suggests that only by bringing both modes to bear on the culture in question, and on each other, dialectically, can criticism avoid the dangers of each. What Adorno describes as 'total immanence' (Adorno: 1981; 26) is the centripetal position, whereby writers merely accept the given centre of a culture and repeat and reinforce this received ideology. The ghosts called up by Pearse are precisely those of total immanence; all they bring to the present political and social situation are the *idées reçues* of the past. They are the polar opposite to Derrida's notion that the specter is the future 'it presents itself only as that which could come, or come back' (Derrida: 1994; 39).

On the other hand, a completely transcendent position would achieve no purchase on the culture in question. To decry the actions of Pearse, for example, or of the Defenders (who will be discussed in the next section), as reactionary and xenophobic would be to express an ignorance of the historical, social, and educational conditions of the time which gave rise to such ideologies. Such a criticism would never achieve any purchase on Irish culture, and hence could never influence anyone. As Adorno puts it, the transcendent position is an Archimedean one (Adorno: 1981; 31), but where in the culture can the lever be placed? There can be, as he notes, a tendency to wipe away discordant elements or minuscule points of difference ‘with a sponge’ (Adorno: 1981; 32), and this can leave a critique devoid of the necessary complexity. Of course, an added level of political implication here is that the ‘sponge’ in question may not just relate to ideas and ideologies, the spectre of ethnic cleansing is always hovering near such transcendent positions.

The attempt to practice both critiques dialectically is obviously difficult. Yet, in the writings of Yeats and Joyce, as we will see, the immanent and the transcendent are brought into a mutually defining negative dialectical protreptic interaction. The same seeming difficulty is confronted in the writings of Baruch de Spinoza. Christopher Norris, in his *Spinoza and the Origins of Modern Critical Theory*, makes a similar point, noting the tension in his writings between a transcendental project ‘a quest for knowledge *sub specie aeternitatis*’, and an opposite reading ‘one that would emphasize the determinant role of historical and material factors in producing every kind of knowledge’ (Norris: 1991; 81). One mode resists the totalizing claims of the other, and at the same time, referring back to the notion of ‘economy’ cited in the opening section of this chapter, both modes, the immanent and transcendent, knowledge *sub specie durationis*, and knowledge *sub specie aeternitatis*, the centripetal and the centrifugal, need each other if there is to be any progression from an essentialist

position, without losing contact with details, individual instances, and particularities. Adorno, too, is very much involved with the particular and resistant details which give some voice to alterity within the structuration of systems, be they political or philosophical.

In political and ethical terms, this allows for a varying of perspective, and of position, in terms of the culture being offered to critique. While outside influences, or sources, are not *ipso facto* transcendental, they do offer a quasi-transcendental position from which to view the essences of the identity that are being analyzed, in this case those of Irish-Ireland, as well as introducing an ethical dimension. The Gaelic, Catholic, nationalist ethos that inhabits the centre of this expression of identity does, of course, have some measure of truth with regard to the lived experience of Irishness. However, it is not, nor should it be seen to be, the *only* criterion of Irishness, or indeed as the constitutive, defining one. It may well provide a starting point, but to see it as central, to the exclusion of all other types of Irishness, is to leave oneself open to the internecine violence that has riven three generations in Northern Ireland in the recent past. The concept of *centrality* is of major importance in any analysis of Irish identity, and of the literary works that are constituent factors of that identity. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the logocentric view of the centre as a fixed core, a self-present *locus*, an unmoved mover that is unchanging, is deconstructed by a negative view of the centre, as a *non-locus* (*non-lieu*), a *locus sous rature*, that is *hauntologically* constructed by the elements in the circumference, and which by definition, gives a voice to those elements outside the centre, as they participate in the defining of that centre, or *Zentrum*. As already noted, this redefinition of self-presence is a major theme in Derrida's project, as he has defined the 'task of deconstruction' as being the discovery of the 'non-place or *non-lieu*' which will be the other of philosophy (Derrida: 1981c; 162). In political terms, such a non-place is the negative correlative of the essentialist formulation; it allows for the

fact that the 'place' is not yet in existence; it is to come, and need not be bound by the past.

A mythopoeic politics seeks the *locus* of identity in fixed notions, for example in terms of Irish or English experience by seeing Dublin or London as synecdoches for quintessential qualities of Irishness or Englishness. The negative dialectical perspective, on the other hand, looks for 'interstitial passage[s]' between 'fixed identifications' that, in the words of Homi Bhabha open up 'the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (Bhabha: 1994; 4). Such a politics would attempt to:

think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood - singular or communal - that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.

(Bhabha: 1994; 1-2)

The dialectical interaction of these two vectors makes it possible to redefine the *Zentrum* negatively, and literature, through a protreptic discourse which forces different viewpoints into a transactional dialogue, can effect a change in identificatory perspectives, and bring such a political stance nearer to actuality. Indeed, literature is that genre wherein such ethical potentialities of language and identity can be voiced in terms of a future which would be possible in a different political situation. As Levinas puts it, one is defined as a subjectivity, as an 'I' precisely because one is exposed to the other (Levinas: 1981; 62), and I would argue that the writings of Yeats and Joyce achieves this aim. Their gaze is synchronic in that Irish identity is seen in terms of other identities; it is outward-looking in direction, spreading itself so as to interact, protreptically, with other cultures and languages. These other cultural interactions form dialectical vantage points from which to critique Irishness in all its forms, and also from which to

posit changes in any quasi-essentialist definitions of self. The dialectical interaction of both vectors redefines the central core of identity in a negative way, changing it into a *Zentrum*, which is then defined transactionally in terms of the changes in other parts. Hence, the core is always capable of change, indeed, it welcomes change and as such, does not feel threatened by progress or modernization. The influence of other cultures and societies is not seen as alien, rather is it viewed as a possibility of improving what already exists.

Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, as has been shown, feels the call of other cultures; his *non serviam* is directed at the pieties of nationalism and Catholicism; he feels an urge to leave Ireland, but this urge is not in any way an escape. It is an attempt to express the 'uncreated conscience' of his race, uncreated because Joyce felt that one needed a point from which to observe and create and this point must allow for objectivity, and also for an admixture of outside influences. He is an example of *via negativa* in terms of identity, spreading his circle wide in order to encompass other cultures, and languages, and ultimately, in order to redefine the 'conscience' of his race.

In Irish political history, the meeting of Stephen and Davin is paralleled by the events of the late eighteenth century, where the centrifugal and centripetal collided in the shape of two movements, each bent on achieving political independence for Ireland, but with two very different views of Irish identity, namely the Defenders and the United Irishmen, the key participants in the rebellion of 1798. The genesis of the term *republicanism*, in an Irish context, can be traced to the period antedating 1798. Republicanism has remained a potent signifier in subsequent Irish politics, and is still relevant today in the form of the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and Provisional Sinn Féin. Ironically, the motto of the Provisionals, 'tíocfaidh ár lá' translates as 'our day will come', and this phrase is used exactly by Davin in his conversation with Stephen in Chapter Five of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. As Stephen runs through the

history of failed rebellions of the past, and states his refusal to join any such movement, Davin replies: '[t]hey died for their ideals, Stevie....Our day will come yet, believe me' (Joyce: 1993; 177). This verbal parallelism foregrounds the thematic connection between Davin, the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and the period in which republicanism became a constituent factor in Irish political identity, and this connection is symbolized by the treatment of the figure of Theobald Wolfe Tone, leader of the United Irishmen.

Every year, on his anniversary, Sinn Féin gathers at his grave in Bodenstown, to reaffirm its allegiance to his memory. The insurrectionists of 1916, led by Pearse, similarly invoked Tone, and the United Irishmen, as progenitors of Irish republicanism. I would contend that both Pearse and the Provisional republican movement have read the events of 1798 monologically, and have taken an essentialist thread of narrative from those events which in no way gives the complete picture of the United Irishmen, or the Defenders, who are largely ignored in the sacralization of 1798. I will demonstrate that both Pearse and the Provisional republican movement have far more in common with the Defenders than with the United Irishmen, whose attitude to Irish identity was protreptic as opposed to univocal. In the final section of this chapter, an analysis will be offered of the different ethics of identity that was operative among the United Irishmen, and the Defenders, but before that, some general points need to be made about the different identificatory epistemologies that are to be found in the literary and cultural history of Ireland.

(iv) Defenders and United Irishmen: Two Views of Irish Identity

John Alphonsus Mulrennan has just returned from the west of Ireland. (European and Asiatic papers please copy.) He told us he met an old man there in a mountain cabin. Old man had red eyes and short pipe. Old man spoke Irish. Mulrennan spoke Irish. Then old man and Mulrennan spoke English. Mulrennan spoke to him about universe and stars. Old man sat, listened, smoked, spat. Then said:

Ah, there must be terrible queer creatures at the latter end of the world.

(Joyce: 1993; 217)

...we have thought little about our ancestors, much of our posterity. Are we forever to walk like beasts of prey, over the fields which these ancestors stained with blood?

(*Northern Star*: 1791; December 5th)

In the above two quotations are encapsulated the two seminal vectors of Irish identity that have existed, intersected, struggled, and often blurred throughout Irish history, as has been traced through the previous sections. The quotation from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* points to a narrow, inward-looking view of Irishness, which allows no room for outside influences. Lest it be thought that a quotation from a work of fiction is a form of special pleading, it is salutary to learn that Pádraic Ó Conaire, the Irish writer, made the point that he would erect a wall ‘thirty cubits high’ around Ireland so as not to allow in even one ‘idea from the outside world’ (Farson: 1935; 533), while the historian and lexicographer An tAthair Peadar Ua Laoghaire made a similar point about a ‘*falla cosanta*’ (a protective wall) which would protect Irish language and customs against foreign ‘infidelity’ (Ua Laoghaire: 1921; 1-2).

The image of Irishness and of Ireland presented here is that of a fixed core of identifying factors, factors which remain inviolate through time, and which stand in need of protection from all outside influences. Hence the rhetoric of siege and

defence that permeates the discourse of this brand of nationalist identity, and which is encapsulated in the title of the Defenders. This defence of essentialist categories is also a defence against modernity and change.

Its vision looks inward and backward, like the old man of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, or like Miss Ivors of Joyce's *Dubliners*, who, on hearing that Gabriel Conroy has chosen to go on a cycling holiday to 'France or Belgium or perhaps Germany' instead of going to the 'Aran Isles' to renew his knowledge of the Irish language, whispers the insult 'West Briton' in his ear (Joyce: 1994; 170-171). The implication here is that if one is interested in anything outside of Ireland, one is, by definition, not Irish, though in typical Joycean fashion, there is a more complex interaction between Western Europe as a desired place, and the West of Ireland, which also has something to tell Gabriel about his wife, her past, and their subsequent relationship. Here we see the same attitude as that of Ó Conaire, where a wall, be it literal or metaphorical, should be built around Ireland, to ensure the purity of Irish identity; two of the seminal elements of this identity being the Irish language and the Roman Catholic religion. Clearly, the old man, Miss Ivors, An tAthair Peadar Ua Laoghaire, and Padraic Ó Conaire are united in their view of Irishness. As we will see, that same view is the *Weltanschauung* that underpins the Defenders in the eighteenth Century.

The second quotation at the beginning of this section espouses a completely different vector of Irishness. Here, on December 5th, 1791, the policy of the Dublin Society of the United Irishmen was set down in the *Northern Star*, and espoused a divergent version of Irish identity. Here the vision is focused on the present, the future, and the example of other countries who dealt with similar political problems in a political way. Here we see the legacy of the Enlightenment, and of political rationality. Here the past is not valued and valorized, as it would be by P. H. Pearse on the steps of the General Post Office in the centre of Dublin on Easter Monday 1916, when he would inscribe his act

of rebellion under the rubric of a monological view of the past: 'IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom' (Dudley Edwards: 1990; 280). Instead, the metaphorical containing walls of the centripetal viewpoint are shattered by a rhetoric which views the past as a blood-stained reminder of the failures of that past to come to terms with new ideas regarding Irishness and the problems of defining Irishness. The epistemological perspective of the policy document is that of a movement away from narrow core definitions of race, language, and religion, towards broader, more pluralistic values of law, reason, and a common humanity which will set to rights the wrongs of the past, and which will be open to alterity. Clearly there are two different vectors of Irish identity at work here, and this section will discuss the intersection of both vectors at their attempted fusion in the rebellion of 1798.

My contention is that, through the amalgamation of the Defenders and the United Irishmen, the rebellion lost that epistemological Enlightenment thrust which might have made it a decisive event in Irish history by breaking down the sectarian barriers which were beginning to be seen as defining factors in Ireland, in the shape of Defenders, Peep o'Day Boys and Orangemen. Instead, this amalgamation caused the 1798 rebellion to become one aspect of a narrow, nationalist litany, as evidenced by the subsequent sacralization of Wolfe Tone by Patrick Pearse.

Tone, a product of the French Enlightenment had little time for religion, and saw the aim of his organization, The United Irishmen, as the creation of a country where the terms Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter would be subsumed under the common name of Irishman. The difference between these aims, and the reality of the United Irish/Defender rebellion allowed Pearse to co-opt Tone into a

Catholic, Gaelic, nationalist vision of Ireland in an oration given at the grave of Tone, in Bodenstown, County Kildare, in 1913. He began:

We have come to one of the holiest places in Ireland; holier even than the place where Patrick sleeps in Down. Patrick brought us life, but this man died for us. He was the greatest of Irish Nationalists....We have come to renew our adhesion to the faith of Tone: to express once more our full acceptance of the gospel of Irish Nationalism which he was the first to formulate in worldly terms. This man's soul was a burning flame, so ardent, so generous, so pure, that to come into communion with it is to come unto a new baptism, into a new regeneration and cleansing.

(Pearse: 1917-22; 2; 58)

There are two points to note here. The first is the sacramental rhetoric with which the passage resounds; the image chain of 'holy, holiest faith, gospel, soul, burning flame, communion, baptism, regeneration and cleansing,' demonstrates clearly the influence of Catholicism on Pearse's thinking. The second point follows from the first; Wolfe Tone, as Conor Cruise O'Brien notes, was a 'child of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.' His hope was that Enlightenment rationality would supplant what he regarded as 'superstitious beliefs' (Cruise O'Brien: 1994; 100). In this passage, Tone is sacralized by being compared explicitly with Saint Patrick, bringer of the Christian message to Ireland, and implicitly with Christ 'this man died for us.' The secular imperative of the Enlightenment has been subsumed into a Catholic nationalist *Weltanschauung*; Tone has become a quasi-Defender in Pearse's pantheon of Irish martyrs. The ultimate failure of the 1798 rebellion, then, was not so much military defeat, but rather the epistemological defeat of the aims of the United Irishmen. Instead of being focused on posterity, the image of the United Irishmen, and of Tone himself, has been transformed by Pearse into that of Catholic nationalists, who form part of the reified past which is the source of the essentialist mindset.

The United Irish definition of Irish identity was a secular one, where all Irish people were to be united in terms of their common Irishness, as opposed to their

disparate religious and political allegiances. The Defender view of identity was focused in exactly the opposite direction; theirs was a sectarian vision wherein to be Irish was to be Catholic. That these different philosophies were vectorally opposed can be demonstrated from a brief study of the defining epistemologies of both organizations.

Wolfe Tone, a Dublin-born Protestant, was sent to Trinity College to study logic, and was later called to the Irish bar in 1789 (Elliot: 1989; 61-74). He was far from the typical image of a British-hating Irish nationalist, indeed, one of his early career plans involved the setting up of a British colony in the South Seas, and he went so far as to hand in a copy of his plan for this colony to Number 10 Downing Street (he received no reply from Pitt, the Prime Minister) (Kee: 1976a; 48). Tone's aims, in terms of this projected colony were to 'put a bridle on Spain in time of peace and to annoy her grievously in time of war' (Tone: 1826; 1; 27-28). He also planned to serve with his brother in the British East India company at another stage of his career, before returning to Dublin in 1788 (Elliot: 1989; 60).

Clearly then, Wolfe Tone was far from an essentialist in terms of his nationalist principles. As late as 1790 (keeping in mind that the United Irishmen were founded in October 1791), Tone was still thinking of embarking on his Imperial South Seas project, about which he had by now received a cautious acknowledgement from the government. His political position was influenced largely by the French Revolution, which, as he wrote later 'changed in an instant the politics of Ireland', dividing political thinkers from that moment into 'aristocrats and democrats' (Tone: 1826; I; 43).

Perhaps the central socio-political influence of the French Revolution was the libertarian and emancipatory thrust of its informing secular Enlightenment ethic. The writings of Enlightenment thinkers were disseminated thoroughly

throughout different parts of Ireland, especially in the North of Ireland, where they found a ready reading public among Presbyterians. The work of Tom Paine was especially influential, with four Irish newspapers reprinting *The Rights of Man*, a work labelled by Tone as the Koran of Belfast (Johnston: 1980; 168). Enlightenment theories of society and government, embodied in practice by the French Revolution, offered an example of how a seemingly stratified and hierarchical society could be completely changed according to the will of the people. They also offered an ethical demand that alterity, in the shape of the people, be protected by the force of law.

It was through the shaping of this will of the people that the United Irishmen sought to achieve their aims. Drawing again on the example of revolutionary France, the press would be a forum wherein conflicting ideas and ideologies would be debated and mediated. They were intent on creating a climate of informed opinion, analogous to Habermas's culturally produced social sphere, and again, theirs was a centrifugal impulse drawing comparative inspiration from the revolutions, and revolutionary philosophies of America and France. Indeed, this form of educational improvement was central to the Enlightenment project, specifically Kant's 'What is Enlightenment', where what came to be known as the *credo* of the Enlightenment, *Sapere Aude!* 'Have courage to use your own reason', was first enunciated (Kant: 1784 in Kramnick (ed.): 1995; 1). Arthur O'Connor, in a series of rhetorical questions enunciated the power of the press to disseminate ideas which, in turn, created an educated social community, and the will for political change:

The Press is the palladium of Liberty. What has heretofore made England celebrated over the nations of Europe? – The Press. What overturned the Catholic despotism of France? The Press, by the writings of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Seyes [sic], Raynal, and Condorcet. What has electrified England, and called down its curses on a Pitt? That Press he in vain attempted to silence. What illumined Belfast, the Athens of Ireland? – The Press and the Northern Star. Why did America triumph over tyranny? –

a journeyman printer fulminated the decree of nature against the giants of England and the pen of a Franklin routed the armies of a King.

(*Beauties of the Press*: 1800; 34)

Of course, in terms of attitudes to Irish identity, this cosmopolitan passage has centrifugal leanings in that it encourages the value of French, American, and British ideas and ideologies to the analysis, and possible amelioration, of the Irish situation. Alterity here had become the stuff of Irish politics, with the broader consequence of contextualizing the age-old conflict between Ireland and Britain in a macrocosmic process of political and ethical change. This attitude to new knowledge also hints at a new valuation of the individual. The whole purpose of the United Irishmen's efforts to educate the populace is underpinned by a belief in the ability of the thinking individual to improve his or her lot, and in the equation, later to be codified by Michel Foucault, of power and knowledge.

That most of the sources of this Enlightenment knowledge came from locations outside Ireland further underpins the cosmopolitan impetus of the United Irishmen. To this end pamphlets, which distilled the writings of Enlightenment thinkers, were distributed among the peasants of the north of Ireland, between 1795 and 1797, which contained the writings of Godwin, Locke (especially his notion of the implied contract between ruler and ruled), and Paine as well as those of Voltaire and De Volney (Whelan: 1996; 63). The selection of writers distributed and read by the United Irishmen makes for an impressive list of liberal thinkers on social and political issues, and further reinforces the claim that their views on identity were necessarily pluralist – their aim was to broaden the notion of Irishness so that it might be inclusive of the different socio-religious traditions of Catholic, Protestant, and Dissenter.

Ethically, the address to the other through the processes of public debate and conversation is typical of the *Auseinandersetzung* that is central to protreptic discourse in that the place of the other is inscribed in all definitions of a more complex selfhood, it carves out a gap in the self which is necessary if identity is to be pluralist and capable of accommodating different political, social, racial and religious viewpoints. Such a notion of selfhood must be ethically derived in dialectical conversation with other influences. The list of such influences on the United Irishmen included, as well as the authors mentioned above, Priestley, Holcroft, Paine, Montesquieu, Schiller, Raynal, Condorcet, Rousseau, Diderot, Sieyès and Ganganelli.

Their methods of disseminating such ideas were impressive, with a whole print-based culture set up to broadcast the United Irishmen's agenda. Whelan cites at least fifty printers in Dublin, thirty four Irish provincial presses and some forty newspapers in print (Whelan: 1996; 63), all of whom were sympathetic to the United Irish cause. The United Irishmen's own paper, the *Northern Star*, a vehicle for the spread of Enlightenment and revolutionary ideals, at its peak sold some 4,200 copies per issue. It is reckoned that, due to collective reading of each copy by at least ten people, the effective readership was some 42,000 (Whelan: 1996; 66).

In an Irish context, perhaps the most interesting aspect of these Enlightenment ideas and their embodiment in the French Revolution was the non-sectarian and secular character of the movement. Kevin Whelan notes that the Revolution provided the intriguing spectacle for Irish Protestants of French Catholics 'systematically dismantling the *ancien régime* equation between popery, despotism and political slavery' (Whelan: 1996; 100). Hence for the first time, Catholics and Protestants could find common cause, and achieve political reform through the assertion of this commonality. The United Irishmen's project then, was the dismantling of the existing Protestant state, and its replacement with a

secular equivalent which was both ‘inclusive of Catholics and thoroughly reformed’ (Whelan: 1996; 100). In terms of the ethics of alterity, the United Irishmen were clearly engaged in a protreptic discourse wherein the other, be that other outside influences or secular and sacred ideological identities, was to be included in the creation of a new definition of Irishness. Ethically, the place of the other in United Irish epistemology was assured and constitutive of their project.

The Bastille Day celebrations of July 14th 1791 in Belfast, brought the confluence of French influences to a head, and the decision was taken by a number of Belfast reformers to form a political alliance to seek a representative reformed parliament. The only difficulty here lay in Presbyterian doubts about the ability of Catholics to overcome sectarian bigotry and obedience to Rome. It was with this in mind that Wolfe Tone wrote his pamphlet entitled *An Argument on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*. This pamphlet was probably inspired by the success of Paine’s *The Rights of Man*, which, by May 1791, had sold 10,000 copies of the three Dublin editions (Elliot: 1989; 123), and by its attacks on religious intolerance. The main thrust of his argument was that the French Revolution should have demonstrated to all that Catholics were capable of making common cause with a secular movement which was essentially national in character. By referring to the French Legislative Assembly, where Catholics and Protestants sat together, Tone was able to promulgate his view that Catholic alterity must become part of the identity of the United Irish view of Ireland. He made the point that ‘Popish bigotry’ and obedience to the ‘rusty and extinguished thunderbolts of the Vatican’ were no more in France (Tone: 1791; 17), and that by extension, they could be no more in Ireland as well. He went on to state that no serious measure of reform in Ireland could ever be obtained which would not ‘comprehensively embrace Irishmen of all denominations’ (Tone: 1791; 17). In Levinasian terms, this appeal on behalf of Catholics is ethical in that it is concerned with ‘the other as other’ (Kearney: 1995a; 186), and Tone’s view of

an inclusive Irishness is a negative one in that it has never been achieved, but is something that he sees as desirable. There is no effort to subsume the Catholic other: rather is there a negative dialectical impulse to raise the stakes beyond issues of sectarian religion altogether.

The important point about Tone's political transformation, and his polemical writings, is that the impetus came from outside Ireland. His notion of Irish identity is outward-looking in direction in that it eschews the normative and given sectarian categories of identification and mutually exclusive aspects of identity. Rather than accepting these sectarian categories, Tone looked to France for a model that would enlarge and liberate such notions of identity, which were fixed and unchanging, and allow for a broadening of the normative criteria of identity which would place sectarian divisions to one side and instead embrace the Enlightenment-driven notions of liberty, equality, and fraternity. In the ringing terms of Napper Tandy: 'the object of this institution [the United Irishmen] is to make a United Society of the Irish Nation; to make all Irishmen Citizens, all Citizens Irishmen' (*Northern Star*: 1791; December 5th). The choice of the term 'citizen' is redolent of the French Revolution, and it points towards a reorientation of *Zentrum* of Irishness.

Tone and the United Irishmen espoused this centrifugal attitude to Irish identity, promulgating Enlightenment ideas and espousing the universalism of the American and French Revolutionary movements. Realizing that Irish history had been dogged by sectarian division, they attempted to eschew the sectarian rigidities of the past and instead adopt a secularization of identity in order to include all sections of that Irish people in what was, essentially, a new definition of Irishness. History was seen as divisive and hence was factored out of their equations of identity. Instead of looking to the diachronic past, they looked to the synchronic present, and the future, and were willing to embrace ideas from outside Ireland and adapt them to Irish usages.

In 1795, the *Northern Star* made the following assertion in terms of the value of knowledge of contemporary political events in other countries to any analysis of the situation in Ireland, an assertion which underlines the futuristic and emancipatory nature of their project:

Everything is changing, every system is improving and mankind appear [sic] to become more wise and virtuous, as they become more informed. This is the consequence of knowledge, the effect of intelligence, the result of truth and reason.

(*Northern Star*: 1791; December 5th)

While such rhetoric could be seen as wildly idealistic in the wisdom of hindsight, nevertheless, it demonstrates an expansion of notions of Irishness. Here, the old dispensation which saw Catholics and Protestants as the opposite poles of a binary opposition, is consigned to the past. The past, in this viewpoint, is not something hallowed and in need of defence, but rather is the realm of a pre-Enlightenment *épistémè* where people spent their time ‘brooding over their wrongs’ (*Northern Star*: 1791; December 5th). Instead, the United Irishmen posited parliamentary reform which would attempt to achieve the homology of *Irishmen : Citizens :: Citizens : Irishmen*, where ‘Irishmen’ would be redefined in terms of their contemporary civic status and not in terms of hereditary religious affiliation.

For the United Irishmen, racial and religious criteria of identity were to be eschewed in favour of more legislative and political ones. In 1791, in Belfast, Tone spelled out the necessity of reform, and significantly, reiterated the idea that ‘a cordial union among ALL THE PEOPLE OF Ireland’ [*capitalization original*] would be both a methodological and political necessity as well as a philosophical aim of their society. He went on to add that reform could only work if it was inclusive of ‘*Irishmen* of every religious persuasion’ [*italics original*] (Tone:

1826; 367-368). What this amounts to in fact, is a redefinition of the criteria of Irish identity. Tone was attempting to anneal the centuries-old bifurcation wherein two different views of Irishness existed in the country. The Protestant, Anglo-Irish, Whig politicians saw themselves as Irish patriots, but had little to do with the Catholic peasantry. On the other hand, that same Catholic peasantry saw little chance of achieving an accord with the Protestants, and instead saw themselves as embodying the twin traits of nationhood – race and religion. Thus, each saw the other as images of an alterity which must be either subsumed or ignored. Both identificatory perspectives were fixed and unchanging, leaving little room for dialogue. Tone was offering a radical ethical alternative to this strategy.

The centrifugal nature of the epistemology of the United Irishmen is further foregrounded by the nature of the following passage from the United Irish Catechism, found in Cork, in 1797:

What is that in your hand?	It is a branch.
Of what?	Of the Tree of Liberty.
Where did it first grow?	In America.
Where does it bloom?	In France.
Where did the seeds fall?	In Ireland.

(Whelan: 1996; 57)

The importance of this catechism for the definition of Irish identity is crucial. Firstly, Ireland is seen as a nation, in its own right, standing equally with America and France. There is no sense of its being a possession or a colony of Britain, instead, in common with the other two countries, it is part of the blossoming tree of liberty. Secondly, Ireland is being defined in terms of an ongoing revolutionary and Enlightenment movement which is not culture specific. Ireland is seen as a secular entity which, rather than looking inward for self-definition, is part of an almost organic movement which connects its

proleptic revolution with that of America in 1776 and France in 1789. If one reads the answers only, the pluralism of the United Irish project is very clear, theirs is a contemporary struggle which is universal in nature: they are but one branch of the 'tree of liberty'. The catechism format is especially ironic, given the intensely Catholic *Weltanschauung* of the other group involved in the 1798 rebellion, the Defenders.

Just as the United Irishmen embody the centrifugal aspect of identity, so the Defenders embody the centripetal one, focusing on a narrow definition of Catholicism. In fact, in terms of aims and outlook, both movements constitute the polar opposites of a binary opposition. While the United Irishmen looked outwards towards America, France, the Enlightenment, and the future, the Defenders looked backwards in history and inwards in ideological perspective. Their aims involved bypassing history to arrive at some notion of an ur-Ireland wherein the British and Protestant influence had never held sway. Theirs was a rhetoric of dispossession and loss, and ultimately of sectarian revenge on the English settlers who were seen as 'not of their nation' (Bartlett: 1985; 376): here there would be no opening of arms to alterity.

Their inception was in response to the sectarian attacks on Catholics in the North of Ireland by Protestant groupings called, variously the Protestant Boys, the Wreckers but most often 'the Peep o' Day Boys' (Boyce: 1995; 129). The resultant informal mobilization of Catholics in response took place in a manner largely similar to that of former agrarian secret societies. However, there was one important difference, the Defenders were formed solely for the defence of Catholics against Protestants, and as such, the very name is a potent signifier of the sectarian and insular attitude to identity espoused by this group. Here, the Protestant other was to be fought rather than accommodated. It is hardly surprising that sectarian fighting ensued and that after a skirmish in County

Armagh in 1795, afterwards known as the Battle of the Diamond, the Protestant Orange Society (later the Orange Order), was founded (Boyce: 1995; 129).

Marianne Elliot refers to the Defenders as exemplars of 'primitive catholic nationalism' (Elliot: 1982; xvii), and in this she is defining the central difference between them and the United Irishmen. Theirs was, like the United Irishmen, an oath-bound secret society, but here the resemblance ended. The Defenders were founded exclusively to defend property and the rights of Catholics from attacks by Protestant organizations such as the Protestant Boys', the 'Peep o' Day Boys' and the 'Wreckers' (Kee: 1976a; 44). Their whole *raison d'être* then, was predicated on the antipathy between Catholic and Protestant, and while this movement began as a local one in the north of Ireland, it soon spread throughout the country. Disunity, rather than unity was their vectoral imperative, as they espoused a narrow concept of Irish identity. Their origins can also be traced from economic conflicts between Catholic and Protestant weavers in Armagh in the 1780s. Competition between weavers of different religions, in times of trade slumps such as 1792, caused the two religious groupings to develop their trade competition into open aggression. Elliot notes that it was as a 'sectarian Catholic body' that Defenderism spread from Armagh to the rest of Ulster and the midlands during 1792-93 (Elliot: 1982; 40-1).

In essence, then, the Defenders stemmed from an opposition between Catholics and Protestants, an opposition that was both economic and sectarian. In this sense, they embody the *status quo* of the Irish situation in that their inception was predicated on the religious, economic, and para-military difference between Catholics and Protestants. What they were *defending* was their own religious affiliation and their own set notion of identity. To this end, their societies were bonded in the rhetoric of quasi-religious signifiers in terms of oath and symbol. Their vector of Irish identity was totally at odds with that of the United Irishmen,

as can be seen from a tabular illustration of a Defender catechism which can be contrasted with that of the United Irish catechism cited earlier:

Are you concern'd? I am.
To what? To the National Convention.
What do you design by that cause? To quell all nations, dethrone all kings
and to plant the true religion that was lost at the reformation.
Who sent you? Simon Peter, the head of the church.

(Bartlett: 1985; 386;

also cited, in Cruise O'Brien: 1994; 17)

In this oath, while the syntactical form is similar, the epistemological thrust takes a completely different direction. The United Irish catechism placed Ireland in a curve that allowed Irishness to be influenced by, and benefit from, contemporary developments in America and France. The point of view was broad in that it looked outward to current societal, and political developments in other areas as possible influences on the *Zentrum* of Irishness. It saw Irishness as being capable of change in that the influence of the other revolutionary movements would shape the Irish rebellion, and its ideological motivation. The Defender oath is predicated on a core value of identity; it looks inward and downward to race and religion as arbiters of value. The vector of vision is focused on the past: 'the reformation' and 'Simon Peter', and on the Catholic Church as a transcendental signifier of identity: 'true religion...the head of the Church'. Here the core of identity is a centre which takes the role of unmoved mover, as arbiter of the play of the whole structure; nothing that happens in the circumference will alter it in any way; it is beyond such influences. One might well ask what place at the 'national convention' there would be for those who saw the reformation as a positive step, or who did not see 'Simon Peter' as the head of the church? Again, one looks in vain for any political or social reform or statement of aims in keeping with those of the United Irishmen. Other Defender catechisms were equally fundamentalist:

What is your designs? [sic]	On freedom
Where is your designs?	The foundation of it is grounded upon a rock
What is the password?	Eliphismatis (MacNevin:1844; 303)

Again, the rhetorical structure is that of a religious tract, again the vectoral vision is directed towards a hypostasized past, and again, the oath is predicated on a religious signifier as guarantor of the authenticity of the members' desire to belong. The rhetoric of religion is further foregrounded by the metonymic reference to Simon Peter, the 'rock', and by the quasi-Latin password 'eliphismatis'. The notion of identity that is being promulgated by the Defenders is clearly a static one – 'the foundation is grounded upon a rock' – in which there is little room for anyone outside the Catholic Church. In terms of a broadening of Irish identity, and of some progression out of the Catholic/Protestant binarism, the Defenders had little or nothing to offer. Indeed, one might make the point that the very existence of the Defenders is predicated on the existence of the opposition between Catholic and Protestant; any fusion of the two would leave the Defenders with nothing to defend.

Perhaps the main point in common between the two societies was the influence of the French Revolution, and the desire for foreign aid. In the case of the Defenders, however, this influence was diluted through the alembic of their foundationalist Catholicism, which allowed them to take on some of the ideas of the French, without ever becoming involved in anti-clericalism. Their epistemological position was basically a reactive and essentialist one, taking aspects from contemporary doctrines, but doing so from a perspective which brooked no changes in the core areas of identity – religion, language, and race.

Robert Kee cites an interesting account which illustrates the huge gulf between Defenders and United Irishmen in volume one of *The Most Distressful Country*. He notes how in February 1795, some Defenders said that their aim was to recover their estates, kill all the Protestants and 'kill the Lord Lieutenant'. The problem here was that in 1795 the Lord Lieutenant was Lord Fitzwilliam 'the centre of sophisticated Catholic hopes' (Kee: 1976a; 70). As late as 1795, Defenders and Peep o'Day Boys were waging pitched battles solely on religious grounds, which certainly boded ill for the utopian aims of the United Irishmen at that time, and for any hopes of a successful rebellion three years later.

On taking into consideration the epistemologies of the United Irishmen and the Defenders, it becomes obvious that there was a crucial rift between them in terms of goals. Both were oath-bound secret societies which hoped for some form of relief from the contemporary political system, and both were influenced by the events of the French Revolution, but here the similarities ended. The United Irishmen espoused a protreptic view of Irishness, a view wherein the past history of religious enmity and internecine strife was to be forgotten, and not used in any way as a foundation on which to build a new Ireland. On the contrary, the past was seen as something to be jettisoned in favour of the future. In this epistemology, Irish identity was something, not given and fixed, but rather to be created and forged in the light of contemporary influences from outside. The influence of the Enlightenment hovers over their writings and their political philosophy.

The Defenders, on the other hand, had little to offer in terms of emancipatory ideas and goals. Their constitutions varied widely, as did their membership. What remained central to them, however, was a view of Irishness founded on their Catholicism. While undoubtedly influenced by the French Revolution, their *Weltanschauung* was Catholic, and this Catholicism caused them to overlook the profoundly secular imperative of the French Revolution. Indeed, one could see

the core of the Enlightenment as the replacement of religious superstition by reason and knowledge. For the Defenders, however, this imperative remained unacknowledged. Conor Cruise O'Brien has termed them 'Catholic, millenarian nationalists' (Cruise O'Brien: 1994; 15), a description which seems to encapsulate their political philosophy.

The only reason that both groups came together in the first place was a purely pragmatic one: the necessity for a broader base in terms of the 1798 rebellion. The attraction of such an amalgamation is clear: the bringing together of Catholic and Protestant in a mass-movement whose aim was the breaking of the connection with England. Both groups solicited French aid, and the thinking was that, should the French arrive, they would now be met with a large body of willing recruits in the shape of the United Irishmen and the Defenders. However, the vectorial opposition that has been the subject of this section makes clear the epistemological difficulties involved in such a union.

Given the emancipatory thrust of the philosophy of the United Irishmen, and the attendant Enlightenment imperative towards secularization that was inherent in their political philosophy, the connection with an avowedly sectarian organization like the Defenders could only mean a dilution of one or other position. Which position stood in most danger of such dilution becomes clear with the use of the sectarian threat from the Orange Order as a lever to make the Defenders see the value of a union with the United Irishmen. Indeed, the point was made that 'to the Armagh persecution is the union of Irishmen most exceedingly indebted' (*The Nation*: 1843; September 23rd), as such acts drove the Defenders into a *rapprochement* with the United Irishmen. Such was the success of this campaign that by mid 1796, new members in Ulster were being sworn in as Defenders and United Irishmen simultaneously (Elliot: 1982; 96). On the surface, given that both societies saw a French invasion as a *terminus ad quem*, and given that their union seemed to eliminate religious division from

revolutionary action, this amalgamation seems to be of mutual benefit. However, this is true only on the surface as in fact, in this union was to be found the seeds of the destruction of the United Irishmen's Enlightenment vision, and, it is possible to contend, the roots of the sectarian polarization that is to be found in contemporary Northern Ireland, exactly two hundred years later. Instead of redefining categories of Irishness, they participated in the reinforcing of those very categories.

The core difficulty here is that in order to secure the alliance with the Defenders, the United Irishmen had to appeal to a form of sectarian blackmail. The playing of the Orange card, *avant la lettre*, was clearly seen as a methodological necessity, especially with a view to the creation of a popular movement which could greet a French invasion. However, epistemologically, this sectarian lever would, ironically, dislodge the ethical (in the sense of espousing alterity) thrust of the United Irishmen's philosophy which espoused a new definition of Irishness which had nothing to do with historical or religious enmity, and everything to do with a contemporary approach to politics and the state.

The aim of replacing the titles of Catholic, Protestant, and Dissenter with the common name of Irishman must have looked a little hollow when Defenders were being sworn in as United Irishmen. Robert Kee makes the point that by inciting Catholics to join a non-sectarian organization through the overt and covert appeal to threats of sectarianism from another quarter, the United Irishmen were 'playing with fire' (Kee: 1976a; 74). By this appeal to sectarian fears, the United Irishmen were turning their gaze away from the Enlightenment, from the American and French revolutions, and instead were adopting the sectarian stance of their new allies as they espoused sectarian hatred as a political tool. Instead of breaking down historical and religious barriers, as they had hoped, they were strengthening them; instead of making a 'united society of the Irish nation' they were strengthening the categories of division, and finally,

instead of thinking little about their ancestors and much of their posterity, they merely reversed the pattern, and followed their ancestors in the sterile pattern of Catholic/Protestant opposition.

It is the thesis of this section then, that by attempting to blur the obvious disparity in terms of their different vectors of Irish identity, the United Irishmen lost their chance of radically redefining the political situation in Ireland. In the aftermath of 1798, rebellions against British rule invariably followed a similar sectarian line, with the equations between Catholic and nationalist becoming as entrenched as those between Protestant and unionist. Any chance that the common name of Irishman might subsume religious and sectarian loyalties was now gone, and the centrifugal political *Vorurteil* that gave some hope of this had changed direction completely.

In terms of political philosophy, and millenarian outlook, the Provisional IRA shares many of the attitudes of the Defenders. The violence in Northern Ireland, over the past twenty five years has been characterized by a sectarian vigour which can be traced back to the Peep o'Day Boys and the Defenders. Divisions, valorized by the very 'ancestors' whom the United Irishmen sought to consign to the past in favour of a posterity yet to be formed, are the defining factors of the conflict, and each community is characterized by fear of the other. It is highly ironic that this fear, which is still rife in 1998, was the very quality used by the United Irish agents in their recruiting drive among the Defenders, and which brought about the genesis of disunited Irishmen, who still carry on 'like beasts of prey', staining the fields of Ireland with blood.

Clearly, the United Irishmen and the Defenders had opposing views of Irishness, and Irish identity. Each gave very different answers to MacMorris's question 'what ish my nation?' Attention has already been drawn to the foregrounding of linguistic difference in the verb of that question. The 'ish' acts as a performative

of linguistic difference, and by implication, of linguistic and intellectual inferiority, given the redundant 'h' attached to the third person, singular, of the verb 'to be'. So, as well as introducing the question of identity, MacMorris, through his mode of enunciation of that very question, introduces the issue of language as a concomitant, and indeed seminal aspect, of identity, and the next chapter will examine the linguistic turn of this issue. This linguistic exploration is a necessary prerequisite to the analysis of the work of Yeats and Joyce with respect to their role in the economy of the centripetal and the centrifugal *Vorurteile*.

Notes

- 1 Seamus Deane's *Celtic Revivals*, John Wilson Foster's *Fictions of the Irish Revival*, and Philip O'Leary's *The Prose Literature of the Irish Literary Revival* are all comprehensive studies of this period.
- 2 Kevin Whelan's book *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830*, is an invaluable study of issues concerning eighteenth century aspects of the creation of Irish identity, and the problems associated with this process.
- 3 For an intelligent discussion of the developmental aspects of these *topoi* in both revivals, Deane's *Celtic Revivals* is essential reading, especially the opening chapters.
- 4 In books dealing with Irish cultural history, the Irish language is often referred to as 'Gaelic'. In this study, I will use the term 'Irish' as this is the signifier more usually attached to the language in Ireland.
- 5 The name of 'Cuchulain' has been spelled in a number of different ways in English. Except where it is spelled differently in the title of books, or in lines quoted directly from books, this study will use the form: '*Cuchulain*'.
- 6 Ironically, this province was Ulster, the very area where different versions of Irish identity have engaged in ongoing warfare since 1969.
- 7 Originally cited in *The Complete Works of Mathew Arnold*, volume 9, page 322.
- 8 Seamus Heaney would later give voice to this vector of identity in the resonant lines from *Bogland* in *Door into the Dark*, when he said that:

Our pioneers keep striking
Inwards and downwards,

Every layer they strip
Seems camped on before.
The bogholes might be Atlantic seepage.
The wet centre is bottomless.

- 9 There were, in fact, two Standish O'Grady's, Standish James O'Grady and his cousin Standish Hayes O'Grady. Both were involved in the Celtic and Irish literary revivals, and both were translators of the old Irish sagas. In this study, all references to 'Standish O'Grady' refer to Standish James O'Grady, unless specifically stated otherwise.

- 10 The name 'MacDara' translates as 'son of the oak' indicating a motivated connection between this heroic figure and the land which he is in the process of defending.
- 11 Conor Cruise O'Brien discusses the ideology espoused and enunciated by Moran's journal, the *Leader*, in *Ancestral Voices*.
- 12 The fact that these definitions have been taken from Conor Cruise O'Brien's book, *States of Ireland*, is in no way to imply that he shares, or endorses these views. Cruise O'Brien's career is in many ways, a life-long interrogation of such essentialist imperatives.
- 13 McCumber cites the following sources for these derivations of centrality in early Greek writing and Mathematics. For the centre as the 'source' of the circle, see Plato, *Parmenides*, 137e; Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, III.b, 1407b27. He goes on to cite the radius of a circle as 'J', *Philosophy and non-Philosophy since Merleau-Ponty*, page 332.
- 14 The notion of 'aesthetic ideology' is based on such confluences between sign, race and place. A number of interesting discussions of this concept are to be found, but the most thorough and philosophically acute are Paul de Man's late works, especially *The Resistance to Theory* and *Aesthetic Ideology* and Christopher Norris's *Paul de Man and the Critique of Aesthetic Ideology*.
- 15 It is interesting to note the use of the generic masculine used here. The placing of 'man' in a position of centrality is no more natural than any of the other signifiers; hence, the possible articulation of a feminist position from within the deconstructive paradigm. For a conspectus of Derrida's thought on feminism, see Section Four of *A Derrida Reader*, pages 313-456.
- 16 For a description of such Greek shields, see Anthony Snodgrass's *Early Greek Armour and Weapons*, pages 37-51.
- 17 The most important of these occurred in 1798, a revolution which will be further explored in the final section of this chapter.
- 18 For an interesting discussion of the role of Althusserian theory in literary criticism, see Catherine Belsey's *Critical Practice*.
- 19 To this day, the GAA will not allow members of the British army or the RUC to participate in Gaelic games, nor will they allow any of their stadia be used to host soccer or rugby games. Ironically, Croke Park, the central stadium of the GAA in Dublin, where the All-Ireland finals are held every year, has been a venue for American football games and country and western concerts.
- 20 One of the founder members of the IRB, John O'Leary, who was a major influence on the thought and poetry of Yeats, made the point that he was none the wiser whether IRB stood for the Irish Republican Brotherhood or the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood. However, as Boyce notes, the associations with 1798 held by the Fenians would seem to favour the former title, *Nationalism in Ireland*, page 176.

CHAPTER 2

THE QUESTION OF LANGUAGE

(i) *What ish my language?*

Perhaps the most reified index of nationality and nationhood is language. Most countries in the world identify their singularity through language, and indeed, much of the educational apparatuses in different societies have as a seminal aim the teaching of the national language and culture. Right up to third level, the national language and literature of each nation is reinforced and programmed into succeeding generations of citizens. One of the problematic areas of Irish identity in all of its forms is that of linguistic expression. Since the nineteenth century, the English language has steadily replaced Irish as the general means of communication in Ireland. Given the differential imperative that governs identificatory essentialism, the necessity of linguistic dissociation from England was of prime importance to those concerned with reifying the differences between Ireland and England. This was true of both Irish and English perspectives, as we shall discover in our study of the linguistic factor.

It has already been noted in the opening chapter that MacMorris's question of identity is enunciated in an English that is ostensibly different from standard English. The grammatically and orthographically redundant terminal 'h' in 'ish' is a signifier of difference and otherness that finds echoes throughout history on

both sides of the Irish sea. It attempts to locate the genesis of national identity in linguistic differences and, by a process of extension, to see language as part of an invariant core of identity. That language is part of the defining of identity is not being denied here; what is being argued is that such linguistic signifiers of identity can, and do, change over a period of history, but very often, the essentialist *Weltanschauung* refuses to acknowledge these changes, and the result can be the ossification of certain cultural stereotypes.

Ossification in itself is a serious socio-political problem because it leads to a siege mentality which installs itself behind the ramparts of ethnic and linguistic battlements, and attempts to eradicate all those who are not part of this linguistically-sanctioned notion of identity. That such fictions and narratives are part of the building blocks of these battlements is a central concern of this study. The linguistic difficulties of the Irish literary revival, itself a watershed in the process of Irish national definition, can be traced to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and to the fictional as well as political writings of these periods. It is here that the beginnings of the politicization of the language issue can be noticed, as can the genesis of the idea that to be authentically Irish, one should speak the Irish language. Some exploration of this crucial period is definitely required if the attitudes which created the Irish literary revival, and those which followed on from that revival, are to be fully understood.¹

Ideologically understood, the issue of language is straightforward. In terms of history, the Celtic inhabitants of early Ireland, it is supposed, spoke the Irish language in some form. In later centuries, prior to the coming of the Normans, Irish was the spoken language of the country. Therefore, the Irish language is the authentic language of Irish myth and history and, *ipso facto*, becomes the necessary linguistic condition for the expression and maintenance of Irish identity. This is especially true given that the English colonists brought with them the English language, through their cultural, political, and legal systems,

which were seen as inimical to the Gaelic linguistic and cultural traditions.² By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Gaelic poets were using the Irish language as a symbol of the continuity between their contemporary situation, which was that of poets in residence to a shrinking Gaelic nobility, and the central role of the poet, or *file*, in Gaelic society. As Leerson has demonstrated, the very act of writing in Irish was an attempt at preserving that sense of poetic and cultural pre-invasion purity,³ as well as indicating the linguistic gulf between Irish and English, colonized and colonizer. The Irish language became the *terminus ad quo* from which Irishness came to be identified.

The themes of some seventeenth century poems underscored the politicization of the Irish language. Geoffrey Keating (1570-1650), to whom the following couplet is attributed, summarized this attitude to the politics of language at the time when he wrote:

Milis an teanga an Ghaedhealg,
Guth gan chabhair choigcríche⁴
(So sweet a language is Irish,
a voice untainted by foreign aid)

(cited in Leerson: 1996; 205)⁵

In this couplet, the theme of linguistic purity stands as a metonym for political and cultural purity. In Keating's mind, to be Irish is to speak Irish, which in turn is not to be tainted by the 'foreign'. Any form of interaction with the 'foreign' would only serve to taint the 'sweetness' of the Irish language with implied sourness. Here, language acts as a political signifier by embodying a polar binarism which refuses to allow for any form of dialogue between the two. The notion of sweetness is reinforced by the language's being untainted by any hint of foreignness. There is no place for alterity in this view of Irishness; there is 'self' and there is 'other'. In what I would see as a programmatic instance of the

centripetal *Vorurteil*, Leerson cites what may be an apocryphal incident that involved the Munster poet Aodhán Ó Rathaille (1670-1726).

On seeing how the son of a Protestant clergyman had accidentally hanged himself in the fork of a tree while attempting to cut down some branches, Ó Rathaille composed the following quatrain:

Is maith do thoradh a chrainn,
Rath do thoraídh ar gach aon chraoibh,
Mo chreach! gan crainn Inse Fáil
Lán det thoradh gach aon lá.
(Good is thy fruit, O tree,
May every branch bear such good fruit,
Alas! That the trees of Inisfail⁶
Are not full of thy fruit each day)

(Leerson: 1996; 241)

Given the contemporary conflicts that saw Ó Rathaille marginalized religiously and socially by the penal laws, a 'system akin to South African apartheid' (Boyce: 1995; 94), and politically and culturally marginalized by a Jacobite allegiance, his antipathy to those whom he saw as enemies is hardly to be wondered at. The poem continues in a conversation between the Protestant minister, speaking in English, an Irish onlooker, and Ó Rathaille. The minister, not understanding the Irish verse just recited, asks 'what is the poor wild Irish devil saying?', and is given the reply 'he is lamenting your darling son' by the onlooker. The result of this mistranslation is that Ó Rathaille is given two pence to buy tobacco (Leerson: 1996; 241-2). The net result of this miscommunication is a perceived victory of Irish over English on two levels. On the first level, Ó Rathaille's apostrophe to the trees betokens a seemingly motivated relationship between the Irish language and the Irish landscape.

The fact of the minister's son's death is the occasion for an optative address to the tree, in the Irish language. It is as if the Irish language is expected to have

some prelapsarian connection with the Irish landscape, as the poet prays that all the trees of Ireland might be full of such fruit, namely dead young Protestants, each day. The repetition of the ‘fruit’ image, fruit which is twice seen as ‘good’, as well as the exclamation, reinforces the sectarian message of these lines. Ó Rathaille’s poem prays for some form of energization of the landscape which will take revenge for the usurpation of its ownership. The organicist mystical quality underscoring this attitude looks back to a mythologized fusion of land and language, and uses this to grant teleological meaning to a random aleatory accident.

The second level involves the tricking of the foreigner through the use of Irish and mistranslation. The medium of Irish allows Ó Rathaille to give vent to his spleen, but at the same time, to be rewarded by the minister who believes the third party who is doing the translating.⁷ At no stage is sorrow expressed for the minister’s loss. He is other, alien, foreign, and hence not part of the poem’s communication system, nor of the poet’s identificatory system. Ironically, given that the poem is written in a mixture of English and Irish, its language is, in a core sense, monological. A particular view of identity – Gaelic, Catholic, Jacobite – is valorized over that of English, Protestant, Hanovarian, and in this poem, it wins all battles, causing the symbolic death of the other through the agencies of a mythic relationship between land and language. The fact that the minister is Protestant foregrounds another potent signifier of centripetal identity in the seventeenth and eighteenth century equation, namely religion.⁸ Here there is no place for the voice or the language of the other in Ó Rathaille’s notion of Irish identity. This is a classic example of what Levinas terms the ‘suppressing or transmuting the alterity of all that is Other’ (Levinas: 1996: 11), with the wished-for death of other Protestants as the ultimate form of suppression. There is no sense in which self and other can become part of a whole in the mind of the poet, and this was probably one of the major effects of the penal laws, wherein the differences between Catholics and Protestants were given the force of law.

One of the main effects of the penal laws was that Catholics who wished to study for the priesthood had to emigrate to the continent. This resulted in the setting up of a large number of seminaries and Catholic education centres throughout Catholic Europe. Many religious texts were written in colleges such as Louvain, Rome and Salamanca, and their media of expression were usually Latin and Irish. Leerson cites a number of such works, ranging from the Irish translation of the Catalan *El Desseoso*, entitled *Scáthán an chrábhaidh* or *Desiderius* by Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire in 1616, to *Irish Sermons*, by James Gallagher, Catholic bishop of Raphoe, written in Irish, in 1737 (Leerson: 1996; 260).⁹ The equation of Catholic-Gaelic was further reinforced by the fact that many of these clerical scholars wrote grammars and histories of Ireland in the Irish language.¹⁰

Given the strength of emotions caused by exile, it is hardly surprising that the politico-religious intersection became stronger throughout the seventeenth century. The alliance of Catholic-Gaelic-Irish speaking, as opposed to Protestant-English-English speaking, was being forged in these colleges, and in the writings that issued from these colleges. In the Franciscan college in Rome, students were ‘bound by rule’ to speak Irish, and an Irish book was read every day during communal dinners and suppers (Leerson: 1996; 261). It can be said that it was during this period of intense linguistic and religious activity that the terms ‘Irish’ and ‘Catholic’ began to become synonymous as an index of a political and religious position.

These two snapshots of history draw together the ideological strands that would arise again in the Irish literary revival. The opposition of Irish and English languages gradually becomes an ideologically charged one: to choose the English language was to embrace the culture of the foreigner; to choose Irish was to embrace the continuities of the past. Of course, such choices are made under a temporal rubric, the continuities of the past seek to eschew the fact of British

interference in Irish history. However, as Ó Rathaille's poem showed, even as the Irish language scores its victory, the very presence of English in the poem is an eloquent testimony to the fact that history cannot be denied, even in a discourse as ideologically loaded as this one. In other words, there is no question in Ó Rathaille's mind that the Protestant minister is anything other than English, in terms of politico-religious allegiance and ideology. Indeed, the equation 'English' equals 'evil' is adduced in his poem where he thanks the minister for the two pence: 'Thank 'ee, a mhinistir an Mhic mhallachtan' (i.e., an diabhal)' '(Thank 'ee, Minister of the Son of Malediction (i.e., the devil) (Leerson: 1996; 242). Here, Englishness and Protestantism are equated with supernatural evil, implying that Irishness and Catholicism are, of necessity, equated with God and goodness. The continental clerical writers ploughed the same furrow, and both seem to offer two answers to the central questions. To 'what is my nation?', they answer 'Irish, Gaelic, Catholic, Jacobite', while to 'what is my language?' they answer 'Irish'.¹¹ Just as both Ó Rathaille and the continental clerical writers use fundamentalist criteria to validate their answer, so the clerical writers of the Irish revival referred to ideological and historical warrant for their own, twentieth century reiteration of these answers to the core questions of identity.

(ii) Centripetal Revival

The term ‘Irish revival’ is generally seen to refer to a movement which came into being in Ireland towards the end of the nineteenth century. It is often used as an umbrella term to include the Gaelic revival, referring to the revival of an interest in the Irish language; the Celtic revival, referring to an interest in all things Celtic, and the literary revival, referring to an interest in creating a literature that would, in some way, culturally validate a separate Irish identity. Racially, the Celts were seen as different from the Anglo-Saxons, and hence they served as an originary point from which a separate notion of literature and culture could be derived. This period saw the foundation of the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, Conradh na Gaeilge, and numerous classes in the Irish language and in Irish music and dance. However, the seeming unity of this endeavour is undercut by the self-same issue of language, as constituent of identity that was seen in Ó Rathaille’s bilingual poem, and by an epistemological issue that arises from the two adjectives in the term itself.

The whole notion of a ‘revival’ denotes something capable of being regenerated. There is a quasi-organic imperative associated with the term, and this imperative was best summarized by D. P. Moran, a journalist who had written for Pearse’s *An Claidheamh Soluis* and for *New Ireland Review* before founding the *Leader*, a paper which became the voice of Irish nationalism. Moran saw the essential element in any revivalist project as ‘the Gael’, and he went on to say that the Gael ‘must be the element that absorbs’ (Moran: 1905; 37). Moran’s definition of what constituted a Gael has been criticized for being one-dimensional, but I would argue that he tended to be quite an authentic voice for the realities of the nationalist perspective, and would consequently agree with Conor Cruise O’Brien when he sees the *Leader* as saying ‘out loud what other Catholic

nationalists had been bottling up' (Cruise O'Brien: 1994; 36-7). In other words, the Gael was the *terminus ad quo* from which Irish identity needed to define itself; the Gael became the unmoved mover whose traits and characteristics would control the play of Irishness in the ongoing process of identificatory definition. Here, as Levinas puts it, the opposition of the same and the other leads, inexorably, to 'the triumph of the Same' (Levinas: 1996; 16), a process which seems to have been part of the nationalist agenda.

It is in the *Leader* that the nexus of Gaelic and Catholic can be seen in full. Moran never set out to say that to be a Gael, one must be Catholic. However, in practice, as D. George Boyce has cogently argued, this was the effect of much of his writing. A Protestant could learn Irish, but theirs would never be a homely, *Heimlich*, or comfortable relationship with the language, or its history. They would instead discover that they were regarded, in that language, as *Unheimlich*, as alien Anglo-Saxons, and that the eighteenth century was 'an unrelieved tragedy for the real Ireland' (Boyce: 1995; 243). Despite claims to the contrary, the Gael and the Catholic were seen as synonymous; Moran noted that 'the Irish nation is *de facto* a Catholic nation' (*Leader*: 1901: July 27th).

This view fails to make a distinction between racial or ethnic considerations, and those of a more political nature. In other words, the equation of nation with race is a false one. That the majority of the Irish race were Catholic, nationalist and possibly Gaelic, either in fact or in aspiration, is not in question. What is very much in question is the possibility of creating a modern, pluralist, democratic state based exclusively on this definition of Irishness. The Irish nation must include, through historical and geographical actuality, Irish Protestants of all denominations, and it is here that the centripetal perspective sowed the seeds of future violence and political dissension. This inability to think through Moran's statement of *de facto* Catholicity, which is synonymous with *de facto* Gaelicism, stems, I would contend, from the ideological standpoint which forces all opinion

to issue from an immanent position within the culture. Moran could see little wrong with stating that the 'great connecting link between us and the real Ireland is the Gaelic tongue' (Boyce: 1995; 243). Ethically, this absorption of alterity can only lead to political intransigence; as such binary oppositional politics leads, ultimately, to sectarian strife. Language and culture are the ideal sites for some form of *Auseinandersetzung* (confrontation) which can offer a negative definition of identity as an answer to such essentialist formulations. Only by putting both cultural and political positions in some form of confrontational dialogue where they would be in Habermasian terms on an equal footing (*Gleichberechtigt*), could there be any hope of avoiding increased sectarian tension. A 'real Ireland' defined in terms of Moran's notion of the Gaelic 'self', would have little attraction for those who would be, other, and by definition, alien.

This definition of what he terms the 'real Ireland' is an ongoing trope of the revival, a trope which underlines the essentialist nature of the Irishness that was in the process of being revived in the first place. Eoin MacNeill, one of the founders of the Gaelic League, saw the Irish language as an almost prelapsarian form of communication, which was the foundation upon which much of Europe's learning was constructed. He saw the rhyming stanza as reaching its highest form in old Irish and enthused that the beauty of old Irish poetry was as distinct from ordinary language as the heavens are from the earth (Martin and Byrne (eds): 1973; 89). Here the Gael was seen as a transcendental figure, a cultural given, or unmoved mover, whose lineal connection with the people of contemporary Ireland could only be given voice through the Irish language. As Adorno has put it, identity 'is the primal form of ideology' (Adorno: 1973; 148), and the ideological thrust of such thinking tended to alienate all those who did not share this Gaelic, Catholic view of Irishness.

Hence, the ‘real Ireland’ is envisaged as Gaelic, and it is here that the political agenda of the revivalists comes into focus. MacNeill’s praising of the old Irish past in literature is easily transferred to an interest in the history of that Irish past. In an editorial in *Fáinne an Lae* entitled ‘Ainbhios’ (ignorance), he opined that there is no better way ‘to keep the spirit of nationality alive in any race than by constantly recounting to them the deeds of their ancestors’ (MacNeill: 1898; July 2nd). Thirteen years later, he was expanding on the same theme, but now in the context of the mindset necessary for the learning of Irish: ‘[t]o anyone who has not a feeling of Irish history and does not identify himself with Irish history, the learning of Irish is mere philology’ (MacNeill: 1911; October 28th). Philology refers to the science of language, especially in its comparative and historical aspects, so clearly the pejorative use of the adjective ‘mere’ denotes that the learning of Irish was to have a more direct political signification.

Clearly, what is involved here is the covert politicization of the learning of Irish. The Irish language is not just a means of communication; nor is it the learning of a language for the sake of it, or for the pleasure, or erudition of it – ‘mere philology’; rather is it the transcendental signifier of an attitude towards Irishness, which sees the Irish race, the real Ireland, as a syncretism of Gaelic, Catholic, and nationalist, with little room in Irish-Ireland for any that are outside of this trinitarian value structure. Like Moran and Pearse, MacNeill was predicating the revival on the past, an unchanging sense of ur-Irishness which could only be revived among the elect. Pearse had made much the same point in *An Claidheamh Soluis* in 1907, arguing that the student who takes up Irish without a knowledge of Irish history loses the true meaning of the language, ‘he has torn it from its roots’ (Pearse: 1907; July 13th).

The terminology used by these writers, ‘*real* Ireland’, and ‘*true* meaning’ [*my italics*], demonstrates the essentialist tenor of the movement, in political terms. The implication is that there may be other manifestations of Irishness, there may

be other manifestations of linguistic meaning, but only Gaelic revivalism holds the real truth of the issue of what it means to be Irish. Such a viewpoint was profoundly political, whatever the protestations of the Gaelic League. Boyce makes the point that such culturally nationalistic movements which constituted the revival came in the wake of the failure of Parnell, and what he terms ‘normal politics’ in 1892. He goes on to argue coherently that the language revival movement was profoundly political, given that its *raison d’être* was the ‘preservation and advancement of a national identity based solely on the Gaelic cultural and linguistic heritage’ (Boyce: 1995; 237). The place of other definitions of Irishness in this movement was unclear at best, and endangered at worst. In this context, the Gaelic revival can be seen in the context of Herder’s development of Rousseau’s concept of the ‘natural’ into the ‘national’. As he put it, it was *natural* for a German to speak German; *unnatural* for him to speak French. For Herder, language as synecdoche of cultural nationalism was political in the extreme, a point he made to his fellow Germans by exhorting them to ‘spit out that green slime of the Seine’ (Cruise O’Brien: 1990; 255).

As ever, Moran’s *Leader* editorials were the place where the implications of the Irish-Ireland movement for other traditions were spelled out most clearly. Writing about the ‘new order in Ireland’ (*Leader*: 1900; December 1st), Moran made it very clear where the other traditions of Irishness stood: ‘[w]e want to go back to the Gael, the matrix of the Irish nation. If the Gael is to be raised, the proper place for the sympathetic Palesman is behind the Gael until he becomes absorbed’ (*Leader*: 1901; January 5th). Cultural absorption seemed to be the price to pay if the ‘sympathetic’ Protestant tradition was to live in harmony with the revival. Clearly, there was to be no equality of attitude for Anglo-Protestantism in the ‘Irish nation’; the sympathetic ones were to be ‘absorbed’ while the unsympathetic ones clearly had no place at all. Any sense that definitions of Irishness could be broadened so as to include members of this tradition was not to be taken on board. This nexus of Irishness, Catholicism, and nationalism, the

‘matrix of the Irish nation’, was not for renegotiation. In a very real sense, then, the Gaelic and Irish language revival movements sowed the seeds for the cultural, religious, and by extension political, exclusion and marginalization of the Protestant tradition in Ireland. Hence, such perspectives of Irish identity, valorized by cultural and linguistic parameters, were profoundly divisive and insular as, by relegating political and identificatory discussion to aesthetic and linguistic modes of discourse, they attempted to naturalize the equation of Irishness equals Catholic, Gaelic, and nationalist. The revival, at bottom, spelled the death knell of any hope of the attainment of a modern multi-traditional nation, as it endorsed the revival of Gaeldom. In ethical terms, there was to be no place for the other in this matrix of identity. In Derridean terms, such a programme was logocentric in that it assigns to a centre, an unmoved mover, the source and origin of all meaning and definition. Irishness derived from the Gael, which in turn signified an essentialist connection between the people who thought, spoke, and wrote in the Irish language. Here was a Fichteian conflation between identity and language, a conflation which tended to alienate any form of alterity which did not share in this communal cultural-linguistic bond.

One of the most prominent members of the Gaelic League, and the Irish revival in general, was Douglas Hyde, later to become the first president of Ireland. His argument in terms of cultural revival was overtly political and exclusivist. He opined that Irish nationalism ‘stood or fell by its cultural identity’ (Boyce: 1995; 238). This argument, which again connects the cultural and linguistic with the political, is furthered by Hyde when he explicitly sees a bifurcation between Irish identity and that of the ‘aliens’ of north-east Ulster. In Ulster, Hyde detailed the effects of history, making use of a term already adverted to by Moran. Hyde details the case of Ulster where ‘the Gaelic race was expelled’ and planted with ‘aliens, whom our dear mother, Erin, assimilative as she is, has hitherto found it difficult to absorb’ (Boyce: 1995; 238). Again, this discourse is riddled with the vocabulary of exclusion and of a quasi-organic sense of nationality, predicated

on race. Indeed, Hyde went further, making the explicit point that precisely because of what he termed ‘this little admixture of Saxon blood in the north-east corner’, the rest of Ireland would strive ever harder to cultivate all that was ‘most racial, most smacking of the soil, most Gaelic, most Irish...and will ever remain Celtic at the core’ (Boyce: 1995; 238).

Here the very essence of the Gaelic revival is predicated on the Gaelic ur-Irishness as defined in contrast to the Saxon blood of the Protestant north-east. Of course, the fact that Hyde himself was a Protestant would seem to cloud this analysis, but it is noteworthy that he differentiates between southern Protestants, part of the absorbing culture, and the northern ones who were still ‘alien’ and presumably in need of absorption. Here, the monological imperative of the Gaelic revival is at its clearest. Hyde is carving out an ideological space for himself at the centre of Irishness. Though a Protestant, he defines himself in conjunction with the vast majority of the population of the country in terms of sameness: ‘Gaelic, Irish, Celtic at the core’. Here, he attempts to outline the absorbed nature of his own Protestantism through an etiolation of that tradition’s alterity with respect to the Catholic, Gaelic, nationalist perspective. In terms of the interaction of self and other, there is to be no *Auseinandersetzung* between different traditions; instead the Protestantism of southern Ireland will range itself behind the ramparts of traditional nationalist identity, offering the alterity of the ‘aliens’ as hostages to fortune.

Such values expressly exclude any broader sense of identity, and instead define Irishness in a narrow political, social, linguistic, and cultural sense. The role of alterity in this vision of Irishness is to be absorbed more readily than heretofore. I will argue that this is the very root of the problem of essentialist Irish identity, namely that in the name of unity, diverse traditions and forms of identity are seen as intrusive and in need of absorption or assimilation. Such an imperative is offered to critique by Yeats and Joyce in a manner which has been summarized

by Adorno as an attempt to ‘substitute for the unity principle...the idea of what would be outside the sway of such unity’ (Adorno: 1973; xx).

In this context, one must take issue with part of Declan Kiberd’s thesis on Hyde in his comprehensive study *Inventing Ireland*. He sees Hyde as no ‘narrow-gauge nationalist’, as he encouraged ‘the use of Anglo-Irish literature instead of English books’, especially ‘penny dreadfuls’ and ‘shilling shockers’ (Kiberd: 1995; 144). In the light of the above comments of Hyde, however, Kiberd’s paralleling of his thought with that of Theodore Adorno seems to be wide of the mark.¹² Hyde’s own equation of culture with nationalism would seem to place him squarely inside a definition of Irishness, which leaves little room for any alternative perspectives.¹³ As will be seen, the Gaelic League was very much in concert with the Catholic church and with nationalism, thereby leaving little room for the Anglo-Protestant strand of Irishness. Given his comments on the ‘aliens’ whose absorption proved so difficult, it is hard to see him as a precursor to the Adorno whose dialectical mode of criticism attempts to give voice to immanent and transcendent perspectives, as well as foregrounding the suffering caused to so many by political and cultural violence in an ‘age of incomprehensible horror’ (Adorno: 1997; 18).

This very duality of Adorno’s thought can be used to deconstruct Hyde’s narrow views of Irishness. Kiberd quotes Hyde’s resignation letter from the Gaelic League in 1915 where he makes the point that his own ambition ‘had always been the language as a neutral ground upon which all Irishmen might meet’ (Kiberd: 1995; 153). This would seem to bear out Kiberd’s idea of Hyde as a non-essentialist figure. However, the next part of the quotation provides a telling counter-argument as Hyde goes on to point out that he and the Gaelic League ‘were doing the only business that really counted, we were keeping Ireland Irish, and that in a way that the Government and Unionists, though they hated it, were powerless to oppose’ (Kiberd: 1995; 153). The irony here, of course, is that

Hyde's definition of Irishness is in no way meant to include the unionists, that 'alien' population of the north-east of the country. In the light of his supposed non-political agenda, it is instructive that Irishness and unionism are seen as utterly inimical. Irishness has already been pre-defined, and there is no possibility of that definition being broadened so as to appeal to the unionist tradition. The final sentence quoted by Kiberd is thus, in this context, a gem: '[s]o long as we remained non-political, there was no end to what we could do' (Kiberd: 1995; 153). The personal pronoun, first person plural, speaks volumes for Hyde's sense of Irishness, and for what that Irishness excludes: namely any form of alterity. While Kiberd may be correct in that he was not ostensibly a narrow-gauge nationalist, it is clear *de facto* that his nationalism was quite narrow (indeed, to continue the analogy, almost a monorail), a point perhaps admitted by the back door in *Inventing Ireland* where Kiberd quotes Pearse and Michael Collins respectively as they stress the formative value of the Gaelic League in their own militant nationalist mindsets.¹⁴

To speak of '*Irish* literary revival', then, is to step onto contested linguistic territory. The adjective '*Irish*' becomes a site of struggle in terms of language. Should Irish literature be written exclusively in the Irish language? Or can Irish literature be written in English, but about themes and subjects which are definably Irish? Does *Irish* denote Catholic Irish, or should the term include Anglo-Irish Protestants? Such issues, as has been shown, were the subject of much debate around the turn of the century, and the disparate debating positions can be categorized as involving two different definitions of identity, definitions that can be symbolized in terms of a centre as 'unmoved mover' and a centre as *Zentrum*.¹⁵ The former viewpoint was clear. As D. P. Moran put it, 'a distinct nation is a distinct civilization' (Watson: 1994; 19), while Douglas Hyde saw 'the failure of the Irish people in recent times' as being caused by their diverging 'from the right path and ceasing to be Irish without becoming English' (Hyde: 1894; 118). The religious sub-text of Hyde's rhetoric points to another strand of

this debate, namely, the concordance of the Irish language and moral virtue,¹⁶ leading inevitably to the intersection of Irishness with Catholicism at the centre of identity, a connection which has already been touched upon. The ‘Palesman’ referred to by Moran, and seen as ‘alien’ by Hyde, was by and large Protestant, and the revival movement, while officially non-sectarian, tends to project a vision of Irishness in which to be Protestant (or to use Hyde’s qualification, northern Protestant) is to be non-Irish. Hence, religion becomes one of the strong signifiers of identity.

The whole notion of separate identity is a difficult one to categorize. Racially, the Irish and British are indistinguishable. This caused difficulties on both sides of the Irish Sea, with much racial theory adduced by British ethnologists connecting the native Irish with non-white races for the purpose of seeing them as savages worth saving.¹⁷ In Ireland, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the language issue was becoming central again, in terms of separating the Irish from the English, as Hyde has remarked. Essentialist views of identity decreed that to be Irish, one must speak the Irish language, and similarly, to be Irish was to be Catholic and Gaelic. Hyde’s ‘right path’ was analogous to that espoused by the clerical revivalists, who were, in turn, following in the footsteps of the continental clerical scholars of the seventeenth century, as discussed in the previous section. The input of clerical writers into the Irish language debates further foregrounded the connection between Irishness and Catholicism, a connection that requires further examination.

The following quotations from Philip O’Leary’s comprehensive study of the cultural politics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival*, serve to underline the ‘Irish-Ireland’ origins of the ideology expressed therein by the clerical revivalists. The first comes from An tAthair Peadar Ua Laoghaire, in an article which foregrounds the biblical inspiration of the sentiment by its original title, ‘The Story of Job and the Story

of Ireland'. He says: '[t]here is enmity between the Irish language and infidelity. They cannot keep house together. If Irish is inside, infidelity must remain outside' (Ua Laoghaire: 1921; 1-2). There are a number of points of interest to note here. Firstly, this text was originally delivered as a sermon, on January 21st, 1914 (O'Leary: 1994; 20). The use of the pulpit to make such a nationalistically-inspired declaration reinforces the Catholic-Gaelic-Irish equation. The second point is the implicit personification of Ireland in this title. History is seen as a narrative; just as Job endured suffering and hardship, so too must Ireland, but just as Job found a form of redemption, so too will Ireland be redeemed. The image posits a narrative closure, a point of transcendence when the 'story of Ireland' will have an ending. It points to an autotelic notion of history towards which the nation of Ireland is journeying. It posits a teleology of history, a national destiny, wherein Catholicism, the Irish language, and holiness are ineffably connected and define the centre of identity as fixed and firm – 'real Ireland' as unmoved mover. The third point is the personification of both the 'Irish language' and the concept of 'fidelity'; they are seen as not being able 'to keep house together.' This homely image naturalizes, anthropomorphizes, and validates the otherwise difficult to characterize opposition between a language and a moral concept. By dint of careful use of the aesthetic, the necessity for rational explanation has been avoided. The final point to note is the apodictic certainty with which the binarism 'if Irish is inside, infidelity must remain outside' is stated; one is immediately reminded of the similar moral certainty of Ó Rathaille's encomium on the unfortunate Protestant minister's son. It is also an analogous use of Derrida's notion of logocentric epistemology, with the Irish language as the centre, and everything else as 'outside'.

One finds a similar rhetorical style in a Gaelic League pamphlet, *Ireland's Defence – Her Language*. Father Patrick F. Kavanagh again sees language as an index of identity and purity. In many ways, here the medium is the message, and again, use is made of aesthetic criteria to make this point:

There is no stronger rampart behind which nationality can entrench itself than a native language. Erect, then, the defence around your nationality which your foreign enemy has so long striven to destroy.

(Kavanagh: 1902; 10)

Again, the defensive and separatist strategies that we saw in the rhetoric of the Defenders are rife in the rhetoric of this passage. The image chain is that of siege: ‘rampart; entrench; native; defence; foreign enemy; destroy,’ and the concept of nationality is that of a finite quality which must be protected from all outside influences. Again, any notion of historical or social change is implicitly equated with evil, and the imagery, reminiscent of Ó Rathaille, equates all foreigners with enemies. Again, we note the personification of Irish nationality, and of a foreign enemy (singular); and the use of the imperative mood in the apostrophe to an undifferentiated notion of ‘the Irish people.’ The aesthetic is used to blur any need for separation of the emotive and cognitive dimensions of such discourse. Irish nationality, and Irish identity are seen as givens, as logocentric positions, and therefore not in need of any interpretation.

A final example is to be found in the ringing assertion of An t-Athair Cathaoir Ó Braonáin, in a 1913 pamphlet entitled *Béarla Sacsan agus an Creideamh i nÉirinn* (*The English Language and the Faith in Ireland*). Here, the continuum of politics, race, and religion is laid down in a discourse redolent with biblical certainty, and in the discourse of a fundamentalist faith which sees alterity as unholy at best, and evil at worst. Literary, political, religious and moral frames of reference combine to make his point. Ó Braonáin writes:

English is the language of infidelity. It is infidels who for the most part speak English. It is infidels who for the most part compose literature in English. Infidels have most of the power in the English-speaking world...The sooner we discard English and revive our own language, the better off the Faith will be in Ireland.

(Ó Braonáin: 1913; 15-6)

All of these statements espouse the view that to be Irish, one must speak Irish, and this fusion of political, religious, and cultural criteria combines to equate the English language with unholiness. There is little doubt or questioning of the core issues of identity. Authority for these opinions seems vested on a sacral politics of identity. For these revivalists, there is little doubt that Gaelic and Irish were synonymous, and were defined in terms of their opposition to Englishness, an opposition predicated on the Irish language. Patrick Pearse, in 1901, spoke of a war between two civilizations, that of the Gaels ‘concerned with spirit, mind, intellect, good manners and piety’, and that of the English, concerned with ‘the body, worldly force, the strength and power of money, and the comfort of life’. Pearse saw ‘the native language’ as the main barrier against the onslaught of the ‘enemies of our nationality and our civilization’ (O’Leary, 1994; 26). In a thorough discussion of what he terms the ‘nativist’ perspective of the Irish revival, in a chapter fittingly entitled ‘The Nation’s Tongue, the Nation’s Soul’, Philip O’Leary encapsulates this position in his summative remarks that, for the nativists, Gaelic culture could not be divorced from the Gaelic language which constituted ‘the only effective safeguard for a threatened national identity’ (O’Leary: 1994; 28).

This linguistic exclusivity was the grounding aspect of an epistemological position which Frank O’Connor has termed ‘the backwards look’, and which has been glossed by O’Leary as ‘a potentially oppressive awareness of and attachment to a golden past as a principal source of cultural integrity and validity’ (O’Leary: 1994; 30). That such a viewpoint is a seminal definition of the centripetal perspective of Irish identity hardly needs to be said. O’Leary validates this view with a series of quotations from revivalist writers about ‘the old language itself, the God-given outlet of the warm throbbing Irish heart’ (Forde: 1900; August 11th). For these revivalists, Irishness can only be reached through the Irish language, and the Irish literary revival must be synonymous

with that Irish language revival, a revival which will allow the essence of Irishness ‘the outlets of the nation’s mind which would give her true character to the world’, a character which would be ‘illegible without the Irish language’ (O’Reilly: 1900; July 14th). Richard Henebry similarly espoused the backward look, seeing the Irish language as the ‘oldtime tongue of our fathers’ and as such, the only true means of maintaining ‘long and intimate contact with the Irish soul’ (Henebry: 1902; July 5th).

That there was an alternative position was understood by such Irish-language revivalists as Pearse, who, commenting on the work of W. B. Yeats, in a letter to *An Claidheamh Soluis* in 1899, made the point that if the ‘Irish-Literature-is-English idea’ was once given any form of credence, then the language movement (i.e. the Irish language revival movement) is a mistake (Kearney: 1997; 114).

Pearse is correct on two scores. Firstly, if Irishness is ascribed to those who do not speak the native language, then the category ‘Irish’ *qua* category has changed. Irishness is no longer the preserve of Gaelic Irish-speakers, it can no longer be validated by appeals to the past, to literary tropes of personification and *prosopopeia*; it now becomes open to different people, to alterity. If such redefinition can involve so central a quality as language, then other aspects, such as race, history, ideology, and religion are no longer pillars of stone within the unmoved mover, the centre of Irish identity, and the certainties of the past may become the subject of critique and change. The monological Gaelic, Catholic *mantra* of identity may become lost in a dialogical series of transformations. Such a prospect caused all sorts of polarized reactions among Gaelic revivalists.

In practical terms, some Irish-Irelanders took steps to ensure that Irishness would not be polluted by anglicization. In October, 1911, a group of Gaelic figures in Limerick founded a ‘vigilance committee’ which took upon itself the task of seizing a shipment of English newspapers and burning them (O’Leary: 1994;

36). While a large number of figures in the revival movement were circumspect about the notion of book-burning, the voice of Irish-Ireland opinion, the *Leader* under the editorship of D. P. Moran, was largely supportive, seeing Limerick as ‘giving a lead to tame Ireland, and particularly dirty Dublin’ (*Leader*: 1911; October 14th).¹⁸ Obviously, some nativist strands in the Gaelic revival could not brook any form of anglicization. Like Pearse, they feared the danger of hybridization, and the epistemological challenge that anglicization could bring, in terms of the constitution of Irish identity.

Hence, there was extreme enmity between those who espoused the Gaelic revival and those who attempted to create an Irish literature in the English language. Eoin MacNeill made the point that ‘those who try to persuade themselves that Irish literature may mean literature in the English language’ had done more to provincialize Ireland than the Act of Union (MacNeill: 1899; April 29th), while D. P. Moran denied the ‘possible existence’ of ‘Irish literature in the English language’, instead referring to Anglo-Irish literature as that which concerned Ireland, but was written in English (*Leader*: 1900; September 1st). *An Claidheamh Soluis* made this point forcibly throughout its publication period. In 1899 it averred that the ‘so-called Irish literary movement’ is a hindrance ‘and not a help to a genuine revival’ (*An Claidheamh Soluis*: 1899; June 10th), while later in the same month, it made the point that any movement ‘whose end is the creation of works in English is in its essence English’ (*An Claidheamh Soluis*: 1899; June 24th). This piece went on to see any participants in the Irish literary movement as ‘dangerous emissaries of Anglicization’. There are numerous other examples of such attitudes.¹⁹ O’Leary makes the point that many Gaels ‘had an acute sense of the beauty of Anglo-Irish literature’ (O’Leary: 1994; 288), and hence feared that it might surpass their own Irish language literature. Their first and foremost concern was the political and identificatory aspect of such writing in English for the ongoing process of the creation of Irish identity.

The key figures in the literary revival, Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory, wrote in English, thereby establishing a benchmark for future expressions of Irish identity, both in terms of its constitution, and in terms of its mode of expression. They attempted to invoke some foundational markers of identity, notably Celtism, ancient Irish myths and sagas (in translation), and the topography of the landscape. However, by the very act of writing in English, they were undermining a seminal aspect of Irish-Ireland's identificatory matrix – the language. I would argue that by speaking in the language of the other, they were offering a more ethical definition of Irishness in that they were opening channels of communication with alterity that were certainly not part of Ó Rathaille's, or the clerical revivalists', definition of Irishness. By writing about Irish issues in English, these writers were acknowledging, albeit implicitly in most cases, the presence of an 'other' in the matrix of Irish identity; they were acknowledging the presence of this otherness as a *de facto* reality in the Ireland of their time. As Hans-Georg Gadamer puts it, the presence of the other before whom we stand helps 'to break up our own bias and narrowness' (Gadamer: 1981; 26). The implications for the revival were immense, not least in terms of the epistemological validity of the term.

(iii) Revival or redefinition?

If the adjective ‘Irish’ in ‘Irish literary revival’ is taken from an essentialist standpoint, then it must refer to writing in the Irish language. Reinforcing this idea is the term ‘revival’. This term implies that something that was near to death has been revived, or brought back to life or to consciousness. There is the implication of homogeneity and continuation in the use of the term. It is as if the Irish language, and its literature had been gradually declining but now has been given new life. As Pearse shrewdly noted, this held true as long as Irish literature meant literature written in the Irish language. While this was the case, the attachment to the past, to the Irish writing of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and before, was enough to guarantee the validity of the enterprise, and the continuity of the identity being encoded in the literature. The centripetal mythology that equates Irishness with race, language, and religion, and which, crucially, sees anyone who was not an autochthonous inhabitant of the country as foreign and alien, remains on solid ground. This immanent perspective was locked inside a hypostasized culture, focused backwards in time towards the Gaelic and Irish language culture that had been in decline since the ‘Flight of the Earls’.

However, if Irish writing can now be enunciated in the English language, the whole picture is transformed. The centripetal is now invaded by the centrifugal, and the monological Irish-Ireland *Vorurteil* must succumb to the *hauntology* of the dialogic. Richard Kearney cites a comment of Pearse’s that underlines the seminal nature of the mode of enunciation of the Irish literary revival. Writing in *An Claidheamh Soluis* in 1899, Pearse said:

Against Mr. Yeats personally, we have nothing to object. He is a mere English poet of the third or fourth rank and as such he is harmless. But when he attempts to run an “Irish” Literary Theatre it is time for him to be crushed.

(Kearney: 1977; 114)

The inverted commas around the word ‘Irish’ speak volumes for the imperative that underwrites Pearse’s opinions. For Pearse, and for many others, Irishness was defined in terms of the Irish language; the use of the adjective ‘Irish’ in connection with any mode of communication whose language of enunciation was English was an oxymoron which could not be tolerated. If Yeats wrote in English, then *ipso facto*, he was an ‘English poet’ in Pearse’s terms. Hence the vitriolic dismissal of Yeats as someone of little consequence, a dismissal that is undercut, however, by the telling final verb in the quotation as, if Yeats is of such little consequence, why is there a necessity for him to be ‘crushed’?

This violent desire to block any change in the linguistic expression of cultural identity is typical of this ideological position. The centre, Irish language, Irish culture, Gaelic ideology, and Roman Catholicism is a given, an unmoved mover, which cannot possibly be altered in any way. Irishness *qua* Irishness is predefined, both essentially, in terms of these categories, and differentially, in terms of other cultures being different from these categories. This vector of identity constantly looks backwards to this central *locus*, as a point of validation. The difficulty for Pearse was that to speak of the Irish literary revival, if that revival was to be in the English language, meant that the term ‘revival’ as such was a misnomer; what was happening instead was a transformation.

By writing in English, Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Synge were crucially transforming that centre of Irishness into a *Zentrum* of Irishness. In a manner similar to Stephen Greenblatt’s invisible bullets, where the scepticism of Renaissance explorers about native religions in the new world gradually

transferred itself into a similar scepticism about some of their own religious practices in their own countries, this alteration of part of what was hitherto seen as natural and given meant that the other aspects of Irishness were similarly open to question, and to the possibility of change.²⁰ Hence, the writing in English of plays, poems, or novels, even if they espoused essentialist racial notions of Irishness were, as Pearse shrewdly suspected, the beginnings of a turning away from the predefined logocentric position into a *Zentrum* wherein the circumferential changes could effect a redefinition of the centre. As David Harvey has observed, even in the absence of any overt political agenda, cultural production has to have ‘political effects’. The artist constructs ‘ways of seeing and representing’ which of necessity create and alter social meanings (Harvey: 1990; 29).

It is these twin aspects of creation and alteration that are so dangerous to the Irish-Ireland revivalists, because what is happening in the case of Yeats and the Irish literary theatre is not a revival but a transformation and redirection of the matrices of identity which are predicated on a linguistic change. By adopting the medium of English, the literary revival in fact signalled the death-knell of the Irish language *Weltanschauung*, because the aesthetic adoption of a new language meant that there was an epistemic shift, or paradigm shift, to adopt Thomas Kuhn’s phrase, in the orientation of Irish identity.²¹

Henceforth, the mythic material of Irish-Ireland would be read in translation. The translations of Standish O’Grady and Lady Gregory, mentioned in Chapter One, while ostensibly espousing a quasi-racial view of Irishness, were in fact the initial spectre which would haunt and ultimately decentre the seemingly stable ontology of Irish-Ireland. To translate from Old or Middle Irish into modern English was to make figures such as Cuchulain, Fionn, and Oisín accessible to a modern audience. The added consequence was that such culture-specific tales were now in the realm of English language writings, in a manner similar to that

of translations from other languages, thereby creating a protreptic discourse with the alterity that essentialist conceptions of identity attempted to avoid. The spectres of other cultures and other texts would now be able to inhabit aspects of the Irish myths, and provide alternative mythologies. That comparisons would be made was inevitable, and such outward-looking comparisons would signal a new pluralization of Irish identity, especially among the writers.

If the Irish literary revival was to become in some way a signifier of Irishness, then by definition, the English language would become the mode of enunciation of this new sense of Irishness. Irishness itself was to be transformed and redirected. Racially, as already noted, there was no difference between the Irish and the British; now linguistically, there would seem to be little difference either. Literature, in many ways the genre that allows for the expression of a reality that has not yet been achieved in historical actuality, would lead the way by producing a new socio-cultural meaning of Irishness that would far outstrip the narrow, Gaelic, insular nationalism that would come to dominate Ireland politically in the early twentieth century. Derrida's notion of *hauntology*, of a different experiential realm hovering over the mainstream, which is predicated in terms of the future, is relevant here, as the Irishness of the Irish literary revival would be very different from the Irishness that the Irish-language revivalists hoped to revive. In fact, such monological Irishness would be a fatality of the literary revival, as new forms of identity would be produced, forms which would be negatively dialectical, in Adorno's terms, in that they are critical reflections upon the context of that immanent Irish-Ireland identity. Such a dialectics is negative because its 'own essence has come to be and will pass' (Adorno: 1973; 141), without claiming the foundationalist ground of the monological view of identity. In a very real sense, the expression of Irishness through the English language postulates a redefinition of the 'self' of Irishness in terms of the 'other' of Englishness. As Derrida has put it, the 'ear of the other says me to me and

constitutes the *autos* of my autobiography (Derrida: 1985; 51). In the case of the Irish literary revival, the ‘me’ being said was not the ‘me’ of the Gaelic revival.

Such forms of identity would transform the hypostasized centre by building on the linguistic bridge of English, and by including an ‘other’ aspect of Irishness by so doing. Translation into English would be a point of contact with other contemporary literatures, as well as with translations from other languages of contemporary and classical works. The introjection of the English language as the mode of enunciation of Irish identity would also have the effect of pluralizing these very notions of Irishness. Derrida’s *autos*, with its etymological connection to automobile, suggests a movement, a transference, that is part of this process. This *autos* destabilizes Corkery’s classic definition of ‘Irish-Ireland’ as a peasant people who were defined firstly in contradistinction to the ‘planters’ and ‘land pirates’, and secondly by their Irish language and literary traditions which served as indices of separateness (Corkery: 1989; 23). With English installed as the commercial, political, and aesthetic medium of expression, a new inclusiveness came into being, and with it, a new transference of identity among those descendants of the ‘land pirates’. One member of such a family indignantly made the point that her family was ‘more Irish than all the Saints and Martyrs–Parnell–Pearse–Madam Markiewicz–Maud Gonne–De Valera–and no-one ever thinks of speaking of them as Anglo-Irish. Our nearest English blood is a 100 years ago’ (Foster: 1997; 5). The speaker in question was Lily Yeats, sister of William Butler Yeats.

This confidence was a direct result of the Irish literary revival, a project in which her brother played a seminal role. Notions of identity, sanctioned by cultural production such as theatre and poetry, were becoming transactional. Irishness was no longer the prerogative of the Catholic, nationalist, Gaelic strand; now, the Anglo-Irish, Protestant strand was staking a claim to being Irish, but obviously, the Irishness in question was changing radically. As Roy Foster has noted, Yeats

was attempting to define a position regarding ‘Irish literary revival and English cultural influence’ in such a way that his own identities ‘(Anglophone, Protestant, Blakean, occultist, London-resident) could be allowed for within an Irish nationalist framework’ (Foster: 1997; 131). This was noted by John Millington Synge, who wrote a letter to the Gaelic League to protest about the attacks made on his play *The Playboy of the Western World*. Synge asked was there ever ‘a sight so piteous as an old and respectable people setting up the ideals of Fee-Gee, because with their eyes glued on John Bull’s navel, they dare not be Europeans for fear the huckster across the street might call them English’ (Synge: 1966; 2; 400).²² Clearly for Synge, the Irish-English binarism was a sterile concept which stunted any development of Irishness towards some form of European identity.

Linguistically, as we have seen, Irish language writing was focused on the historical and mythic past.²³ Geographically, the Irish language movement was focused on the west of Ireland, which occupied a central place in the iconography of Irish-Ireland. Spatially, the west of Ireland was as far away from England as was possible, a fact which probably explained the continued survival of Irish as a means of communication. The islands off the west coast, the Blaskets and the Aran islands were places ‘of pilgrimage for students of the ancient tongue’²⁴ (Wilson Foster: 1993; 95), for Irish-Irelanders, and Gaelic Leaguers, as they strove, like Miss Ivors in *The Dead*, to achieve a linguistic and spiritual rebirth. In 1898, Pearse, who founded a branch of the Gaelic League on the islands, averred that the Irish language ‘will not be allowed to decay, but will be fostered until Aran is a college and a lantern of learning for the Gaels of Ireland once again, as it was in the old days’ (Wilson Foster: 1993; 96). Yet again, Irishness is valorized centripetally, with the final phrase ‘as it was in the old days’ echoing and paralleling the religious phrasing of ‘as it was in the beginning’. Because of this perspective, Irishness was being continually seen in terms of the past and of a loss of continuity with that past. Philip O’Leary quotes

Hyde as lamenting what he saw as the simultaneous betrayal of the Irish language and Irish history (O'Leary: 1994; 163-164). For Hyde, the only way to repair this sense of loss was to restore, through the medium of Irish, this continuity with the logocentric past.

The difficulty that this obsession with the past creates is one of hypostasizing that past; it attains a transcendental status by becoming operative in the present, and by limiting the play of forces operating in that present. By definition, what happened in the past is time and context bound; what is recorded from the past is a series of choices, many of which are ideologically motivated. In other words, the 'past' is really just one of a series of possible 'pasts' which has been given cultural priority. It is a construct rather than an essence. Hyde, in his essay 'The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland', cites a quasi-transcendentalized past, which is comprised of nationalist heroes 'Cuchullain...Ossian...Christianisers of Europe...Brian Boru and the heroes of Clontarf, with the O'Neills and O'Donnells, with Rory O'Moore, with the Wild Geese, and even to some extent with the men of '98' (O'Leary: 1994; 163).²⁵ To maintain a connection with this past is laudable; however, to allow one's future to be dictated by the mindsets of this apotheosized past is to delimit any sense of participation in modernity or in any new arrangements in terms of identity or international relationships; as Declan Kiberd tellingly put it 'Irish nationalism too often defined itself by what it was against' (Kiberd: 1995; 141).

The ethos of this view of identity has been imaged, accurately, I would suggest, by John Wilson Foster, in spatial and topographical terms. He refers to the iconography of the western islands off the coast of Ireland as being emblematic of aspects of Irish identity. Given the widespread belief in the ancientness of island populations, added to the associations of medieval pilgrimages with the islands, it is hardly surprising that Irish revivalists saw it as desirable to 'cross a narrow threshold of mutinous Atlantic waves to be born again beside the holy

wells, monastic ruins, military remains, and peasant cabins of the western islands' (Wilson Foster: 1994; 96). This quotation brings together, in the *locus* of the islands, the monological categories of Irish identity – Catholicism, the Irish language, a sense of isolation, and the physical force tradition of military insurrection. It is hardly surprising then, that Wilson Foster goes on to speak of the symbolization and idealization of the island as a concept for revivalists. He opines that cultural nationalists began to attribute to these real islands off the coast 'properties both of the mythological islands of Celtic imagination and of the real but transcendently imaged islands of medieval Christianity' (Wilson Foster: 1994; 96). That such islands were centres of the Irish language made them an ideal, and idealized, creation myth of the Irish revival.

The profound irony of this position is that an island is, by definition, cut off spatially from contact with anywhere else; in orientation, its gaze must be inward if it is not to stare at vast expanses of ocean. The separateness and lack of connection with other places is symptomatic of this *Weltanschauung*. The valorization of the past of these islands led to the symbolization of 'islandness', to extrapolate from Wilson Foster, and this insularity writ large became an icon of the Irish-Ireland mindset. This insular mentality saw the past, as noted in the comments of Moran, MacNeill, Pearse, and Hyde, as an originary centre towards which all future development must be directed. As Mircea Eliade points out, to the 'primitive' mind 'all regeneration implies a return to the origins, a repetition of the cosmogony'(Eliade: 1960; 161).²⁶ In this case, what better point of symbolic departure could there be for a revival than the valorization of a sense of separateness which kept out new influences, and forced one's gaze inward and downward.

Possibly one of the key differences between the essentialist and protreptic perspectives is this attitude to myth, symbol, and the language of rational debate. By valorizing the past as sacral and quasi-transcendent, Irish language revivalists

took it, as an act of faith, that the nature of Irishness was not open to debate. Like an island in the midst of the ocean, it was obvious which was land and which was water. Literature, ideally in the Irish language, was an index of Irishness and that was all that needed to be said. The nationalistic imperative behind the Gaelic League, and associated Gaelic and Irish movements and societies, underlined the givenness of Irishness; however, there were still some awkward questions to be asked, let alone answered, before the revival could be deemed a thorough success. The overwhelming question begged by the Irish language revivalists was, whether there was, *de jure* or *de facto*, an epistemological difference between the Irish nation and the Irish race. The Irish language revivalists could be seen to be legislating for a racially-driven, ethnically cleansed, notion of Irishness where the speaking of Irish functioned as a type of transcendental signifier of ur-Irishness, an Irishness that would only be open to the Anglo-Irish Protestant if he or she were ‘absorbed’ to reiterate that term.

If Irishness, as centripetally defined, was an enchanted island, redolent of Celtic twilights and medieval monasteries, was there a bridge that would provide access or egress to those who wished to live on the island but not be suffocated by its monological traditions? The writings of the Gaelic revivalists discussed in this chapter, on race, language, religion, and literature make it clear that there seems to be little prospect for any other traditions, be they linguistic, cultural or literary, in the insular Gaelic tradition. It is here that the Gaelic and Irish literary revivals diverge. The latter, seeing the ideological baggage attached to writing in the Irish language, took a different direction and decided to attempt to create a new definition of Irishness, an Irishness which was not insular, grounded in the past temporally, and on an island myth, spatially. Instead, it offered a space for the otherness that is inherent in Ireland if it is to be a synchronic entity. Thus, while acknowledging the central aspects of Irishness, it saw fit to subject these to critique and to questioning which could have the effect of altering and redefining them. By introducing language into the problematic of defining Irishness, the

literary revivalists were invoking the criteria of Jacques Derrida *avant la lettre*, and were engaged in a double reading of Irishness, which involved both a creation of notions of identity, and a negative critique of those notions. By voicing an alternative Irishness, Yeats and Joyce were taking an ethical stand by introducing an alterity into Irishness as it was defined in terms of 'sameness', as well as offering an implied critique of essentialist conceptions of identity. In this context, they anticipate Adorno, in his supposition that nonidentity 'is the secret *telos* of identification' (Adorno: 1973; 149), as the place of the other in Irishness is gradually inscribed in the revivalist culture, creating, in the process, a critique of that culture. As Levinas put it, critique 'calls into question the exercise of the same', and this calling into question of the epistemology of 'sameness' is brought about by an acknowledgement of the other; indeed, Levinas terms this questioning by the 'presence of the Other, *ethics*' (Levinas: 1969; 43). In this sense, the writings of Yeats and Joyce, are 'ethical' in that they are attempting to open a space within the sameness of Irishness for an 'other' Irishness. The strategies used by Yeats and Joyce to bring about this openness to the other are interesting in themselves, as they create a protreptic discourse which sets up an *Auseinandersetzung* between self and other.

Yeats's own early poems in his *Collected Poems* deal with Greece and India, as opposed to the *Celtic Twilight*. His earliest poems in *Crossways*, are situated in Arcady, ancient Greece, a culture whose literature would not be available to him except in translation. Rather than locate these poem in Ireland, and deal with Irish concerns in an insular way, he imaginatively looks outwards and backwards to classical Greece, where, he thinks, the beginnings of Western civilization are to be found. In this opening poem, the pastoral idyll of the happy shepherd is used to validate an ethical literary politics: the other, here the tradition and history of the ancient world, is placed at the core of the *Zentrum* that is in the process of redefinition. As he tells us that 'words alone are certain good' (Yeats: 1979; 7), and here the 'words' are in English and dealing with an other culture

altogether. Perhaps these are the aspects to which Yeats ascribes the ‘goodness’ of words, as he legitimizes debate, discussion, and trans-cultural dialogue in an attempt to reach some form of civilized accommodation. This ability to look outside of an essentialist notion of Irish myth and history towards a broader concept of societal interaction is a direct result of the transformation of the linguistic frame of reference of Irishness into that of the English language.

The same point can be made in terms of James Joyce, who located his narratives of Irish life in the broader circumference of Greek mythology, using the myths of Daedalus and Ulysses as frameworks for two of his works, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*. Here, Irish identity is being placed firmly within a European ambit, bypassing the whole Irish-English political and linguistic conflict. This ability to look outwards allows him to soar, Daedalus-like, above the labyrinth of centripetal identity.

It is clear then, that the cultural implications of the language question are large; if one adopts the essentialist perspective, culture is monological and founded in the past; Irish culture is seen as a peasant one, firmly located in Irish traditions; writing in Irish must be the ideal cultural expression of Irishness. A less desirable, but still adequate alternative will be the creation of an Irish literature in the English language which was radically conservative in outlook, both socially and politically. Centripetal preoccupations were paramount, as conserving a vision of a pre-colonial purity in terms of an identification with place through place-name became a *sine qua non* of Irish writing. The centrifugal vector is more embracing of modernity, as generally the English language, as spoken in Ireland, establishes connections with other Anglophone cultures; hence Yeats and Joyce became central figures in the Modernist movement, their writing transcending Irish issues, and placing Ireland as a literary construct at the centre of the literature of the English-speaking world. Clearly then, such an interaction with different cultures would serve to broaden

notions of Irishness. They managed, in other words, to redefine their *Zentrum* by including forces and ideologies which opened up a discourse with alterity, and which also redefined the constants of identity in negative terms. In the case of Yeats, he was both creative of, and critical of, culturally validated constructions of Irish identity, as we will see in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 That such attitudes are still current can be seen from the establishment, in 1996, of Teilifís na Gaeilge, a television station exclusively in Irish which was to serve as a flagship for a contemporary Irish-Ireland view of identity. The abysmal viewing figures prompted the importation of Soccer matches from the Spanish football league (with commentary in Irish) and a series of All-Ireland Finals, in hurling and Gaelic Football, from the RTE archives, with commentary in English – the centrifugal undermining the centripetal even at the Irish-Ireland centre.
- 2 Of course, such a broad statement of linguistic appropriation must be qualified in terms of the particulars. Equating the English with the Normans is itself a problematic exercise that ignores 500 years of English history. The Normans would have brought French, or Anglo-French with them as a spoken language in Ireland. The fact that French words have so little influence on the Irish language seems to indicate that their linguistic influence was minimal for the first 150 years; after all, even the great sixteenth-century Anglo-Irish lords spoke Irish. In terms of the nationality of the first ‘invaders’ from England, see John Gillingham’s article *The English Invasion of Ireland*, in Bradshaw, Hadfield and Maley’s *Representing Ireland: Literature and the origins of conflict, 1534-1660*, pages 24-42.
- 3 Joep Leerson’s chapter ‘Gaelic Poetry and the idea of Irish nationality’ in *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael* is a *tour de force* of scholarly interpretation of the role of Irish-language poetry in the process of defining Irish identity.
- 4 It is customary to print foreign terms and phrases in italics. However, while offering essentialist notions of ‘Irish-Ireland’ to critique, this study in no way attempts to deny the place of the Irish language in contemporary Ireland. What is being strongly denied is the notion that to be able to

- 5 speak Irish in some way makes one a better Irish person, or a more authentic embodiment of Irish identity. Therefore all Irish quotations will appear in a similar font and style to those in English.
- 6 This translation is an interesting point in itself. ‘Guth gan cabhair choigríche’ can as easily be translated as ‘a voice without foreign help’. ‘coigríochach’ as an adjective can mean ‘strange, foreign, remote’, it can also relate to ‘neighbouring’, or ‘bordering on’. ‘Untainted’ does not appear in it at all, and seems to be an interpolation on the part of the translator, thereby further indicating the political nature of translation. I am indebted to Tony Corbett for this observation, and for many others.
- 7 ‘Inis Fáil’ is a traditional bardic name for Ireland.
- 8 A pertinent example of the politics of translation is that the Aramaic which Christ spoke has no copula, no actual verb ‘to be’, a point which deconstructs about the ‘is’ which appears, in Greek translation, in phrases like ‘this is my body’, *The Manipulation of Literature*, pages 241-242.
- 9 It is highly ironic, of course, that in gaining his ‘victory’ over the Protestant minister, and by highlighting the seeming prior, mystical relationship between Irish and the land, Ó Rathaille’s centripetal discourse is, in fact, shot through with centrifugal ironies because the very fact that he is willing to take the two pence means that he is, however invertedly, accepting patronage from the new order. The appearance of lines of the poem in English further acknowledges his acceptance of the necessity to take on board this alien language.
- 10 As will be seen in the next section of this chapter, this coalescence of clergy and a politicized notion of the Irish language was a crucial factor in the Irish literary revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- 11 See *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael*, pages 261-2, for details of some of these books.
- 12 There can be no doubting the causal role of the penal laws in this oppositional binarism, in that these laws were specifically directed against a religious denomination, and were consequently a constituent factor in the politicizing of this religious denomination. However, it is the effect and development of the Irish strand of identity that is the subject of this study, and hence my focus will be on the results of such polarizations on Irish definitions of identity.
- 13 In describing Hyde’s encomia against ‘the garbage of vulgar weeklies’, Kiberd sees Hyde’s diagnosis as prefiguring the thought of F. R. Leavis and Theodore Adorno’s critique of mass-culture and of the vulgarization of popular taste, *Inventing Ireland*, pages 144-145.
- 14 It is interesting to note that Hyde himself was an Anglo-Irish Protestant, and as such, was looking for a place for his own tradition in his definition of what it might mean to be Irish. By foregrounding the Irish language, he sidesteps the issue of religious affiliation, and attempts to raise the issue to a higher power, by concentrating on the issue of language and culture. Hyde is attempting to cement his own, and his tradition’s, place in Irishness at the expense of the Protestants of north-east Ulster. This tactic would ultimately prove to be both naive and short-sighted as the ‘aliens’ themselves had

- little desire to be so regarded, and hence saw little reason to throw in their lot with any such notion of Irish-Ireland.
- 14 See *Inventing Ireland*, pages 152 and 154. The whole chapter on ‘DeAnglicization’ is instructive in the context of any study of the Gaelic and Irish Literary Revivals.
- 15 Indeed, such issues of nomenclature are still relevant in the context of Irish Studies. In 1997, the International Association for the Study of Anglo-Irish Literature (IASAIL) decided to change its name to the International Association for the Study of Irish Literature (IASIL), a change with profound epistemological implications for the signification of the proper adjective ‘Irish’. Up to then, the implication was that literature written by Irish people, or about Irish topics, in the English language, was not ‘Irish’ in a true sense (or a ‘real’ sense as D. P. Moran might put it). The change from ‘Anglo-Irish’ to ‘Irish’ would seem to betoken a casting off of the shadows of the Gaelic revivalists and their monological view of Ireland and of Irishness.
- 16 In the context of the term ‘Irish Catholic’ Hyde’s lecture, entitled *The Necessity for de-Anglicizing Ireland*, is ironic, given his own background as an Anglo-Irish Protestant.
- 17 For an interesting account of such strategies, both academic and popular, see Thomas Gallagher *Paddy’s Lament: Ireland 1846-1847, Prelude to Hatred*. See also L. P. Curtis Jr, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* and *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, by the same author.
- 18 Philip O’Leary’s book *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival* has some interesting points to make about vigilance committees, on pages 36-45.
- 19 Many can be found in O’Leary’s chapter on ‘The Gaelic revival and the “Irish” Renaissance’, in his *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival*.
- 20 Greenblatt’s essay, ‘Invisible bullets: Renaissance authority and its subversion, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*’ in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, is a seminal exploration of the pervasive nature of cultural change.
- 21 See Thomas Kuhn’s influential study, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.
- 22 As this quotation, and much of his work in drama and prose, indicates, Synge would also exemplify the thesis of this study, namely the influence of alterity on literary constructions of Irish identity. However considerations of space make it impractical to include his writing in this book. I hope to return to his writing in a future text.
- 23 John Wilson Foster, in his book *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art*, has a cogent discussion on the place of the western islands in the Irish-Ireland psyche in chapter 6, ‘Certain Set Apart’.

- 24 This periphrastic phrase is another example of the monological mentality that drove many of those involved in the Gaelic revival. The term ‘ancient tongue’ is seen as referring exclusively to the Irish language, as if all other languages were in some way belated, and without the authority of antiquity.
- 25 James Joyce takes such a monocultural teleological catalogue of heroes and subjects it to almost surreal parody in *Ulysses*, page 244. There is a discussion of this deconstruction of an essentialist literary trope in the fourth chapter, in the section entitled ‘Patrick W. Shakespeare’.
- 26 I am indebted to John Wilson Foster’s book *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival* for pointing me in the direction of Eliade’s thought.

CHAPTER 3

YEATS: VOICES OF MYTH – VOICES OF CRITIQUE

(i) Yeats and the creation of an Irish mythology

The things a man has heard and seen are threads of life, and if he pull them carefully from the confused distaff of memory, any who will can weave them into whatever garments of belief please them best. I too have woven my garment like another, but I shall try to keep warm in it, and shall be well content if it do not unbecome me.

(Yeats: 1981a; 32)

At the time when William Butler Yeats began writing, the Celtic aspect of Irishness was of prime importance. This becomes clear in the titles of Yeats’s

earliest works, where Celtism and folklore are foregrounded. In 1888 he published *Fairy and Folk Tales*; in 1889, his first book of poems, *The Wanderings of Oisín, and other Poems* was published; in 1892 *The Countess Kathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics* was published while 1893 saw the publication of the *Celtic Twilight* (Donoghue: 1978; 8).¹ In all of these works, Yeats was attempting to express some sense of Irishness which would allow him to participate fully in the Irish literary and cultural revival. The image of a garment being woven to keep warm is an emblematic one, which in many ways describes more about Yeats's relationship with the Irish-Ireland, Irish literary revivalist, and Irish nationalist streams then would first appear obvious.

In a letter to the Editor of *United Ireland*, on December 17th, 1892, Yeats made his position quite clear. Referring to Hyde's lecture on the deanglicization of Ireland, he notes that Hyde's fears for the future of the Irish language seem to him to be well grounded: 'I fear he spoke the truth, and that the Gaelic language will soon be no more heard' (Yeats: 1970; 255). In this context, Yeats had his own points to make with respect to this whole notion of Irishness, points which, while on the surface seem to agree with Hyde, in actuality deconstruct Hyde's basic premise regarding the centrality of the Irish language. In fact, he deconstructs the essentialist premise of Hyde's writing while purporting to espouse his project of deanglicization. Yeats asks:

Is there, then, no hope for the de-Anglicising of our people? Can we not build up a national tradition, a national literature, which shall be none the less Irish in spirit from being English in language? Can we not keep the continuity of the nation's life, not by trying to do what Dr. Hyde has practically pronounced impossible, but by translating and retelling in English, which shall have an indefinable Irish quality of rhythm and style, all that is best in the ancient literature? Can we not write and persuade others to write histories and romances of the great Gaelic men of the past, from the son of Nessa to Owen Roe, until there has been made a golden bridge between the old and the new?

(Yeats; 1970: 255)²

Here, Yeats is offering to deanglicize Ireland by writing about Irish themes in English. The subtlety of his thought and mode of expression allows him to seemingly validate Hyde's objectives while at the same time advocating a mode of their achievement which must, of necessity, completely transform those objectives. Yeats, in fact, is actually changing the terms of Hyde's definition of deanglicization. He is inserting a subtle deconstructive lever into Hyde's essentialist position; he differentiates between the English language as colonial vehicle, and an English language which has an 'indefinable Irish quality of rhythm and style.' This attitude has the advantage of moving in a parallel vector with the Irish-Irelanders and the Gaelic revival. Yeats, in his hope of creating a 'golden bridge between the old and the new', was still paying homage to the past as centre, but was also, as Pearse had realized, already engaged in a process which would culminate in the redefining of that centre as a logocentric *primum mobile* of Irish identity. In other words, this golden bridge would carry two-way traffic, not only from past to present, but also from present to past in a process which would reinvent that past. What Yeats was attempting was a form of ideological critique, as he located himself within the revival movement, while at the same time through translation, bringing about a negative dialectical transformation of the ideology of that movement. Having grasped that identity is 'the primal form of ideology' (Adorno: 1973; 148), he set about redefining that same ideology of identification so as to quarry out a place for himself and his own perspective, which Foster describes as a 'more nuanced, ambiguous kind of Irishness' (Foster: 1997; 114-5). Crucially, he was not simply invoking the past, but rather transactionally reinventing that past in the light of his own 'ambiguous' sense of Irishness. There is clear precedent for a Yeatsian involvement in the invention of a tradition (something 'which came easily to WBY'),³ in his association with MacGregor Mathers who invented a 'creation-myth' for the Order of the Golden Dawn (Foster: 1997; 103).

The two proper names in this quotation are also worthy of note: the ‘son of Nessa’ refers to Conchubar Mac Nessa, mythical king of Ulster during the Red Branch cycle of heroic tales, involving Cuchulain, a figure of Celtic and Irish pre-history. ‘Owen Roe’ refers to Owen Roe O’Neill, an historical figure who led the army of Ulster in the various civil wars in Ireland from 1641 to 1652. The seamless motion from myth to history elides a seminal issue underpinning Yeats’s desire to write about mythical figures at the expense of historical ones.⁴ It also imbricates Yeats in a negative dialectical definition of Irishness, in that he is adducing a tradition which does not actually exist in the form or medium which he is utilizing. Much of the writings about these heroic figures are in the Irish language; by translating them into English, he is pointing the definitional vector of Irish identity in a new, and at that time, non-existent direction. By invoking these characters in the English language, Yeats is offering a way out of the closed system of essentialist Irishness, and closed systems, as Adorno has observed, are ‘bound to be finished’ (Adorno: 1973; 27). Also, in this way the *autos*, is achieved by giving notions of Irishness a ‘turn towards non-identity’ a process which is the ‘hinge of negative dialectics’ (Adorno: 1973; 12).

Yeats’s aim was to write about the ‘matter of Ireland’, but in the English language, given his own inability to learn Irish to any reasonable standard. While this lack of knowledge was a factor in his desire to create an Irish identity in the English language, there can be little doubt that he also had an epistemological and ethical incentive. By so doing, he would radically transform the ‘matter of Ireland’. His own historical tradition of Anglo-Irishness would have been English speaking, but he, and his sisters, saw this as no reason as to why they should not be deemed ‘Irish’. He puts the situation succinctly in a typical Yeatsian epigraph: ‘Gaelic is my national language but it is not my mother tongue’ (Yeats: 1961; 520). To write in the Irish language would be to admit that historically, his tradition and religion were not ‘Irish’, and thus, he would be

taking up that very position suggested by D. P. Moran who saw the sympathetic Palesman as standing behind the Gael, waiting to be ‘absorbed’.⁵

Yeats, as indicated obliquely in his letter, decided to avoid the binary oppositional designations of ‘Palesman-Gael’ and instead to move into pre-history, to a time when all Irish people were united by a common religion and a common language. He decided to write about Celtic legends from the past, seeing them as examples of an ‘ur-Irishness’ which would serve as a unifying banner under which all strands of contemporary Irishness could unite; here was a place which was not a place, a *non-lieu*, wherein the difficulties of sameness and otherness could be elided. As John P. Frayne, the editor of Yeats’s *Uncollected Prose* has pointed out, although he ‘repeatedly attempted Gaelic, he could not have read those tales in their original form’ (Yeats: 1970; 47-48), and was forced to rely on translations. Of course these translations transformed the centralities of Irish-Ireland by reinserting them into a new language, the language of the other, and this process of translation would radically alter the selfhood of Irishness that was contained in these texts. In Derridean terms, the ‘essences’ of Irishness were always-already in the process of dissemination through the *hauntological* processes of the language of the other which deconstructed their logocentric core.⁶

Ironically, the very existence of these translations bespoke a cultural unity of interest that was far in advance of any political unity that had ever existed in Ireland. Many of the writers who first translated the Celtic legends of Fionn, Cuchulain, and Oisín were Protestant Anglo-Irish scholars and writers, such as Sylvester O’Halloran, a seminal figure in the founding of the Royal Irish Academy in 1785; Charlotte Brooke whose *Reliques of Irish Poetry* was published in 1789; Joseph Cooper Walker; Sir Samuel Ferguson, and Standish O’Grady. Many of the societies for the study of Irish had been founded by Protestant scholars and antiquarians, interested in the language: the Gaelic

Society of Dublin, 1806; the Ibero-Celtic Society, 1818; the Celtic Society, 1843; the Ossianic Society, 1853; while in 1833, the *Dublin University Magazine*, was founded, which would educate Irish people in literary taste (Boyce: 1995; 229). Hence, the existence of these translations pointed towards a form of cultural Irishness in which all Irish people could participate.⁷

Generally, Yeats's espousals of nationalism and patriotism were some way removed from green Irish-Ireland essentialism. For example, in his October 1886 attack on Edward Dowden, about his review of Sir Samuel Ferguson's poetry, he was well aware that Ferguson was 'nationalist only in his use of Irish subject matter, and in politics was a unionist' (Ellmann: 1979; 48). In using these legends Yeats, as he wrote to Katharine Tynan, was attempting to 'search them for new methods of expressing ourselves' (Ellmann: 1964; 17-18). The personal pronoun here is crucial, especially in the light of the Protestant derivation of the translations of the legends; by translating these legends into English, and by his subsequent use of these translations, Yeats was inscribing his own tradition and his own language into the culture of Irishness, and by so doing, was redefining that Irishness. By espousing the cause of Ferguson as an example, he was making the point that nationalism and unionism were not incompatible, nor should the definitions of Irishness be ever so enunciated as to make them seem so.⁸

By delving into Celtic pre-history, the political and historical divisions that had come to define the Irish situation could be elided and annealed into a mythic and heroic cultural archive which would allow Irish people to take pride in their own culture. By availing of translations to achieve this, he was redefining the core of Irish identity by opening a place at its centre, and in the process, transforming that centre into a *Zentrum*, which could be influenced by the Protestant tradition which had brought into being the very study of the Irish language, both in the original and in translation. He paid indirect homage to Sylvester O'Halloran, in A

General Introduction For My Work, when he noted that a generation before *The Nation* newspaper was founded, ‘the Royal Irish Academy had begun the study of ancient Irish literature.’ He went on to explicitly make the point that this study was as ‘much a gift from the Protestant aristocracy which had created the Parliament as *The Nation* and its school’ (Yeats: 1961; 511).⁹ Hence, his use of translations, which while on the one hand seem consonant with the ideology of the nationalism and Gaelicism of Irish-Ireland, in actuality undermine its monological centralisms by this incorporation of the Protestant scholarly Gaelic tradition, and the language of alterity.

Through this method of writing, he hoped both to participate in the creation of a central core of Irishness, from a cultural perspective, thus keeping in touch with the Gaelic revivals and with nationalist Ireland, while at the same time redefining this centre through the circumferential activity of translation. This process has been seen by Peggy Kamuf as displaying the movement of the ‘*trans* – translation, transference, transport, transformation – as the very movement of thought between points of origin and arrival that are always being deferred, differed one by the other’ (Kamuf: 1991; 242). Hence, the very process of translation becomes an ethical act as it destabilizes the essentialist concept of selfhood that was underwriting the Irish-Ireland outlook, and instead introduces a role for alterity.

Yeats, too, is valorizing the past, and looking towards Celtic myth as a possible site upon which to build the edifice of Irish identity. However, the religious element is missing, and the language is definitely to be that of English, rather than Irish. As he put it himself, in that same letter of December 17th: ‘[I]et us by all means prevent the decay of that tongue where we can, and preserve it always among us as a learned language to be a fountain of nationality in our midst, but do not let us base upon it our hopes of nationhood’ (Yeats: 1970; 256). Rather, Yeats would base his hopes of nationhood on the creation of a new frame of

reference for defining that nationhood; he would seek out, in Derridean terms, the ear of the other which would be that place from which the self is defined, which 'says me to me' (Derrida: 1985; 51). The use of translation would force that selfhood to be redefined from the ear of the other, the English language, and by extension, the Anglo-Irish tradition which was imbricated with that language. Regarding his Celtism, it must also be noted that in an article for the *Irish Homestead* in 1895, he saw Celtism as a pan-European movement, an 'international brotherhood of Celts' which took in 'Renan, Lamennais, Chateaubriand and Villiers' (Foster 1997; 186). Clearly here, Celtism became part of his negative definition of Irishness, a non-site in contradistinction to that of the foundationalist viewpoint, wherein the transcendental perspective of Europe could provide a broader perspective on identity than the more essentialist centripetal nationalist one. So, while others were seeing the Celt as part of an essentialist centre of Irish identity, Yeats was positing an alternative notion which would redefine that centre.

It is this transforming of essentialist concepts of nationality that sets the early Yeats apart from many other revivalists. That he still locates the core of Irish identity in the past is undeniable; however, even at this stage there is a willingness to attempt to broaden stereotypical notions of Irishness, as well as the rhetorical skill to attempt to deanglicize Ireland through the medium of translation into English! His view of 'nationhood' was definitely more interrogative than that of many of the Gaelic revivalists who have been mentioned in Chapter Two.

In Yeatsian terms, the Celts and the area of pre-history, would provide a suitably negative foundation for his particular type of Irishness. Between 1897 and 1891, he was writing articles for two American papers, the *Boston Pilot*, and the *Providence Sunday Journal*, from 'your Celt in London' (MacNeice: 1967; 71). As Frayne puts it, he chose Celtic legends because they carried himself and his

readers away from ‘the pressing and impossible divisions of modern Ireland’ (Yeats: 1970; 48). I would suggest that Celtism offered an alternative paradigm of Irishness which illustrated the fact that the contemporary divisions were neither permanent nor intrinsic; while seemingly the defining parameters of contemporary social and cultural definition, they were only aspects of identity which could change. By adopting a Celtic mythology, in the English language, Yeats was achieving a negative definition of Irishness which could serve as a regulative paradigm for a new type of identity, while at the same time avoiding the unpleasant realities of the socio-cultural and religious divisions in contemporary Irish society. Writing about Celtic and folk literature allowed him to eschew the contemporarily political for the mythological: ‘[a]ll folk literature that keeps the folk tradition, delights in unbounded and immortal things’ (Yeats: 1961; 179). To write about immortality in Ireland, and not to need to speak about Catholic or Protestant doctrines concerning it, was a sleight of hand worthy of Yeats, the Anglo-Irish, English-speaking deanglicizer of Ireland.¹⁰

That Yeats had a political agenda to his Celtic revival is clear from an article entitled ‘The Literary Movement in Ireland’, commissioned by *The North American Review*, and published in December 1899. In this article, Yeats makes an explicit connection between the ‘Celtic movement’ (note that there is absolutely no mention of the Irish language in this context), which was about to become ‘a part of the thought of Ireland’, and matters political. He goes on to contextualize his comments by referring to unionists and nationalists who were ‘too busy keeping one or two simple beliefs at their fullest intensity for any complexity of thought or emotion’ to develop (Yeats: 1975; 184). Here, Celtism will attempt to break down these simplistic ideologies in what Adorno might term a logic of disintegration, wherein negative dialectics brings about a disintegration of ‘the prepared and objectified form of the concepts which the cognitive subject faces, primarily and directly’ (Adorno: 1973; 145). Clearly, his Celtic movement would be a step in the disintegration of the direct objectified

forms of nationalism and unionism, a process which could bring about more complex forms of identity in terms of Irishness. By drawing on translations, he was attempting to pour Irish themes into the mould of the English language, but in a way which would transform both. As he put it in a Senate speech of 1923, the ‘greater proportion of my writings have been founded upon the old literature of Ireland. I have had to read it in translations, but it has been the chief illumination of my imagination all my life’ (Yeats: 1960; 44). In fact, the illumination was reciprocal in that his reworking of these translations allowed him to ruminate on Irish identity from a quasi-transcendental perspective. His creation of a Celtic pantheon: Cuchulain, Concubhar, Oisín, Fergus, Deirdre, Niamh, Fionn *et al*, allowed him to postulate a sense of Irishness which was suitably removed from contemporary controversies; by writing this pantheon in the English language, he was also redefining the whole sense of Irishness that was part of these Celtic narratives.

Yeats’s Celtic writings, then, never went quite as far as the more green essentialists in their archetypes of Irishness. His twin early *topoi* of Celtic legend and folklore tales were sufficiently a-political to evade any charges of un-Irish behaviour, but likewise sufficiently vague to assume a slippery caste of thought which allowed them to be *in* nationalist discourse while not being totally *of* nationalist discourse. He was happy to take up the backward look, but his gaze on the past was not quite as myopic as some of the other figures already mentioned. As already noted the traffic on his ‘golden bridge’ between past and future was two-way. His view of the past, and of Irishness, was broader than the norm, as evidenced by his comments on the mooted destruction of Nelson’s Pillar, in 1923.¹¹ In a telling passage, Yeats opined that the monument ‘should not be broken up’ as it represented the ‘feeling of Protestant Ireland for a man who helped to break the power of Napoleon.’ These are hardly the sentiments of someone who is wholeheartedly centripetal in his perspectives on identity; for many nationalists, Nelson’s pillar was an affront to their sense of separateness,

and a constant material reminder of foreign oppression. Interestingly, Yeats goes on to explain his reasons for his view, noting that the ‘life and work of the people who erected it is part of our tradition’, and concluding his remarks with the telling assertion: ‘I think we should accept the whole past of this nation and not pick and choose’ (*Evening Telegraph*: 1923; August 25th).¹²

It is in remarks such as these that Yeats’s ambivalence to the green essentialism of much nationalist ideology can be seen. His vision of Irishness, whether expressed in prose, or in the early books on Celtic legends and folklore, was far more inclusive of alterity than that of the more Gaelic revivalists. While he shared many of their aspirations, he could not evade his responsibilities in terms of speaking for his own tradition, a tradition which he felt was just as Irish as any others, as his sister’s comment has verified (see Chapter Two). Yeats’s notion of ‘the whole past of this nation’ involves a recognition of the alterity in Irish life represented by the Anglo-Irish Protestant community. His desire to include this position would lead him to a consequent redefinition of the complexities of Irishness, and his Celtic period was an important step on this road.

There can be little doubt that his use of folklore is motivated by the same agenda. Frayne points out that Yeats’s choice of Irish mythological subjects could lay him open to charges of ‘chauvinism and a certain degree of obscurantism’, but I feel this is to miss the point of what Yeats is trying to achieve in his use of translations of folklore and mythology. The same can be said of Frayne’s assertion that Yeats’s insistence on ‘upon a certain essential Irishness in the legends’ was a device to ‘warn non-Irish poets to keep off’ (Yeats: 1970; 48). For Yeats, these translations, rather than valorizing ‘essential’ qualities of Irishness, were radically transforming those qualities through their mode of enunciation. The etymology of translation derives from *translatus*, the past participle of the Latin verb *transferre*, meaning ‘to transfer’, or ‘carry over’, and

this is precisely what Yeats is doing, he is carrying over aspects of his own tradition, and firmly placing them at the core of a new definition of Irishness.

His use of folklore and Celtic legend to achieve this is doubly effective because both topics are a-political, and therefore acceptable to a nationalist, revivalist consensus. Hence, the poems of *Responsibilities* and the Senate Speech which famously spoke of his allegiance to his Protestant tradition,¹³ are not major turning points in his attitude to Irishness. Instead, I would suggest that they merely make explicit the broader and more inclusive *Weltanschauung* that has been a part of his writing throughout his career. This negative definition of Irish identity as pluralist in terms of religious and linguistic practices is an intellectual and literary construct which preceded by some seventy years the efforts of Irish political and cultural thinkers to bring it into being. Yeats, through his placement of these translations and folktales in the centre of the nationalist movement and cultural revival, insured that his subtle transformation of that centre would not appear too overt.

Indeed, later critics have tended to dismiss his early writings on Celtic lore and folklore precisely in terms of their lack of 'authenticity'. Declan Kiberd, in *Inventing Ireland*, citing Harold Bloom,¹⁴ discusses *The Wanderings of Oisín* in terms of such a lack of authenticity. He notes its attempts to create a Celtic golden age, but says that working from 'a version of a version', it only produces the 'derivative "Celtic colourings" of a late-romantic English poem' (Kiberd: 1995; 137). Kiberd clearly sees this as a 'problem' analogous to that cited by Yeats in terms of the poetry of Davis and Young Ireland, whose comments he quotes in support of his own position. Yeats, Kiberd notes, saw these poets turning away from an 'unfolding' of Irish tradition' and borrowing the 'mature English methods of utterance' to sing of 'Irish wrongs' or 'preach of Irish purposes' (Kiberd: 1995; 137).¹⁵ He also saw their work as falling between the Scylla and Charybdis of language and style: 'what was Irish in it looked ungainly

in an English garb and what was English was never perfectly mastered, never wholly absorbed into their being' (Kiberd: 1995; 137-138). The difficulty with this analogy is that Yeats, as writer, was attempting not the supersedence of the Irish tradition over the English one, but rather the transactional redefinition of Irish identity through translation. While Kiberd seems to be putting into Yeats's mouth the idea that Irish themes in the English language are always problematic, in fact, this is a distortion of Yeats's poetic and cultural project. For Yeats, the 'matter of Ireland', and its dissemination into less logocentric criteria, was always a major preoccupation of his writing. As early as the *Celtic Twilight*, he wrote of showing 'something of the face of Ireland to any of my own people who would look where I bid them' (Yeats: 1981a; 32).¹⁶ Clearly Yeats is using the anthropomorphic image of the face in a sense similar to that of Joyce's image of the uncreated conscience of his race, in that both writers feel that their vision of Irishness is necessarily different from the prevailing one. Yeats's use of 'face' calls to mind the writing of Emmanuel Levinas, who writes about the 'irruption of the face into the phenomenal order of appearances' as the prime signifier of alterity – 'the face of the Other' (Levinas: 1989; 82). For Levinas, the face is the guarantee of the humanity of the other, a point that would need constant stress in the context of emergent green nationalism, and the imperative to absorb the tradition of the other. As Levinas puts it: '[a] being as such (and not as incarnation of universal being) can only be in a relation where we speak to this being. A being (*l'étant*) is a human being and it is as a neighbour that a human being is accessible – as a face' (Levinas: 1996; 8). There can be little doubt that Yeats's 'face of Ireland' would be based on his resolve that the 'whole past of this nation', should be remembered, including the face of alterity. Such a manifestation of the alterity of Irishness could be seen, given Yeats's choice of metaphor, as 'the epiphany of the face', which 'attests the presence of the third party, of humanity as a whole, in the eyes that look at me' (Levinas: 1969; 188).

I would argue that this ongoing process of translation sets out to achieve a synthesis of Irish theme and English enunciation, and to see this intercommunication of language and theme as ‘derivative’, or in some way inauthentic, is to misplace a seminal stage of the Yeatsian project. For Kiberd, the Irish language features as the cement that binds the uniqueness of Irish identity together. He speaks of a ‘distinctive culture of folktales, dances, sports, costumes, all seamlessly bound by the Irish language’ (Kiberd: 1995; 138). The difficulty with this view of Irish culture is that it by and large excludes the Protestant, Anglo-Irish tradition, which had been expressing its Irishness through the English language for some two hundred years.¹⁷ Interestingly, in an address to a Wolfe Tone Banquet, in London on April 13th 1898, Yeats invoked a strand of Irish identity which could never be seamlessly bound together by the Irish language, but which, nevertheless, set out key themes in his complex definition of Irishness. Stating that Ireland is ‘coming into her own and better self’, Yeats declares that she is ‘turning to the great men of her past – to Emmet and Wolfe Tone, to Grattan and to Burke, to Davis and to Mitchel’ (Ellmann: 1979; 112). None of these were Catholic in religion, or Irish speaking in orientation, and they demonstrated the broadness of scope that Yeats’s concept of Irishness encompassed. Indeed, neither Grattan nor Burke would be seen as ‘nationalist’ in the essentialist use of that term; but Yeats was attempting a prescription for the future as opposed to a chronicle of past. Such a ‘better self’ is a negative one, a Derridean *non-lieu* in that only in Yeats’s own political view are such individuals yoked together; the common epistemology that would unite them under the rubric ‘Irish identity’ has not yet been defined; it is an aspect of the ‘face’ of Ireland towards which people will need direction, and that will necessarily be a negative direction. In a diary entry, in 1930, he expressed the aim of helping to ‘preserve that which is living and help the two Ireland’s, Gaelic Ireland and Anglo-Ireland, so to unite that neither shall shed its pride’ (Yeats: 1962; 337). That literature should help to achieve this aim was probably the *terminus ad quem* towards which all of his efforts were directed, and that such literature

would necessarily be written in the English language, keeping in mind his rhetorical inversion of Hyde's notion of deanglicization into a case for the 'carrying over' of texts in the Irish language into their translated parallels in English, is a cornerstone of the Yeatsian political aesthetic.

In this context, I think it can be seen that, for Yeats, the dialectical fusion of Irish matter and English poetic forms was a crucial thematic concern of his work. By availing of translations from his own Anglo-Protestant tradition, he was redefining the *Zentrum* of Irish identity as expressed in literature. In his praise of Sir Samuel Ferguson, he specifically makes this point, noting that his special claim on the attention of Irish readers was that he 'went back to the Irish cycle', and made a 'pathway' along which many others will follow and 'bring thence living waters for the healing of our nation' (Yeats: 1970; 82). There is no difficulty here in the fusion of Irish themes with English poetic forms. Indeed, Ferguson is placed above Davis and Mangan in a poetic hierarchy that sees him equated with Homer: 'but he only, the one Homeric poet of our time, could give us immortal companions still wet with the dew of their primal world' (Yeats: 1970; 90). Ferguson, through his Anglo-Protestant traditions, embodied that sense of Irishness that Yeats wanted to include in the redefinition of Irish identity. Through his evocation of a heroic Celtic era of pre-history, he provided the material that Yeats needed, which was Celtic, but a-political and highly acceptable to green nationalism. Finally, through his use of the English language, he embodied Yeats's own centrifugal determination to effect a linguistic sea-change in the definition of a complex notion of Irish identity and culture.

There can be little doubt then, that for Yeats, his participation in the creative phase of the revival was very much a participation staged on its own terms. Yeats had his own political agenda which was precisely the fusing of Irish themes and the English language, a fusion which was analogous to the negative definition of Irishness that he hoped to bring about. As he put it in the

introduction to *Representative Irish Tales*, despite the many political changes in contemporary Ireland, Irish literature will be the same in one thing: ‘for many a long day – in its nationality, its resolve to celebrate in verse and prose all within the four seas of Ireland’ (Yeats: 1979b; 31). As Roy Foster notes, Yeats’s membership of the Contemporary Club, founded by Charles Hubert Oldham, in November 1885, would have introduced him to the Protestant strand of nationalist politics (Foster: 1997; 41). This club was ‘a broad church’ in which, as Yeats put it, ‘harsh argument which had gone out of fashion in England was still the manner of our conversation’ and where unionist and nationalist ‘could interrupt one another and insult one another without the formal and traditional restraint of public speech’ (Yeats: 1980b; 93). This *Auseinandersetzung* is precisely what Yeats wished to see as a seminal stage in the re-evaluation of Irish identity; he wanted a protreptic interaction between positions, an interaction which could lead to some type of negative dialectical definition of identity. This broadness of political argument is connected by Foster with the role of John O’Leary, immortalized in the refrain of Yeats’s scathing indictment of bourgeois Ireland, *September 1913*:

Romantic Ireland’s dead and gone,
It’s with O’Leary in the grave.

(Yeats: 1979a; 121)

As Foster points out, John O’Leary introduced the Yeatses, *père et fils*, to a concept of a ‘free-thinking Catholic intelligentsia’ of whose existence ‘Sligo unionists were blissfully ignorant’. This broadness of mindset is summarized by an admiring sentence in *Autobiographies* where Yeats remarks that O’Leary and his sister ‘lived exactly opposite the Orange leader, for whom he had a great respect’ (Yeats: 1980b; 94). He therefore indicated ways in which ‘both father and son could “belong” to the new Ireland’ and crucially, this mode of belonging would be a movement away from historical, monological, entrenched positions,

towards a world where 'like-minded people of both religious traditions could share a pride in an ancient culture, rather than remember the conflicts and dispossessions of the past' (Foster: 1997; 43).

In his choice of legendary poetic themes, Yeats participated in the attempts to define a foundational sense of Irishness. Nevertheless, he was always writing at a tangent to this project, keeping the centrifugal vector, which would be inclusive of different traditions and definitions of Irishness, very much to the fore. Hence, his reasons for the choice of these legends and folktales were divergent in intention, if similar in effect. Reading comments he made in his prose correspondence makes it clear that his aims were always the celebration, the inclusive celebration, of 'all within the four seas of Ireland.' In this context, it is interesting that rather than use the privileged trope of the revival (the kinship with the land that gave the Irish people their sense of identity and tradition), Yeats prefers to point to the surrounding seas, symbols of flux and change.

In one sense, however, one could agree with Declan Kiberd's comments on Yeats's reservations about the poetry of Young Ireland, and that would be that it definitely did subjugate aesthetic criteria in favour of the overtly political. As Yeats put it in 1937: 'I saw even more clearly than O'Leary that they were not good poetry. I read nothing but romantic literature; hated that dry eighteenth-century rhetoric' (Yeats: 1961; 511). His was always a culturally sanctioned *oeuvre*, his aims being very much artistic first, and only then political. In terms of his aesthetic choices, his reasons for the use of folklore are very different, indeed completely at variance, with those of the centripetal cultural and language revivalists. Writing in *A General Introduction for My Work*, Yeats makes the universalist assertion that folklore, far from valorizing a particular monological perspective on identity, in fact achieves the opposite effect, pointing towards the universal origin of all cultures: 'we Irish poets, modern men also, reject every folk art that does not go back to Olympus. Give me time, and a little youth and I

will prove that even “Johnny, I hardly knew ye” goes back’ (Yeats: 1961; 516). Obviously, the notion of folklore as creating an organic link with the *Volk* is not at all on the Yeatsian agenda, at least not in the centripetally oriented manner of the Irish-Ireland revivalists. Jeffares comments that Yeats departed from the spirit of the Gaelic originals (in *The Wanderings of Oisín*), believing that Irish legends and beliefs resembled those of the east (Jeffares: 1988; 39). In terms of his identificatory position, the more connections that he could posit with other cultures, the more transcendent a perspective he could adopt on his own.

In terms of his early work, then, it becomes clear that there is a coherent cultural politics at work, and that this cultural politics is pluralist and centrifugal in that it is attempting to expand the narrow, and inward-looking centripetal view that makes the Irish language, the Roman Catholic religion, and the nationalist political paradigm, the defining aspects of identity. In *The Wanderings of Oisín*, he achieves a work that is initially based on the Irish legend of Oisín, son of Fionn Mac Cumhall, who is brought to the Land of Youth (*Tír na nÓg*) by the beautiful Niamh of the golden hair (*Niamh Cinn Óir*), where he stays for three years, which in actuality are three hundred years, before returning to Ireland, becoming instantly old, and arguing with Saint Patrick about the happy days of the pagan past. That this theme fits snugly alongside the peasant and legendary plays and poems of the revival is clear. The attempt to euhemerize the figures of ancient literature, albeit in translation, would tally with the long-term goals of the creation of a separate Irish culture of which people could be proud. Yeats found the original material on which the poem is based in Nicholas O’Kearney’s translation of the ‘*Battle of Gabhra*’, Standish Hayes O’Grady’s translation of *The Lament of Oisín after the Fenians*, Brian O’Looney’s translation of Michael Comyn’s *The Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth*, David Comyn’s translation of the same poem in *Gaelic Union Publications* (1880), and John O’Daly’s translation of *The Dialogue of Oisín and St Patrick* (Jeffares: 1988; 39). Having already commented on the political nature of translation, it is interesting to note

that Harold Bloom sees this poem, perhaps because of, rather than in spite of, its being a 'version of a version', as slotting into the centre of the 'English Romantic tradition' and the whole genre of what terms the 'quest-romance' (Bloom: 1978; 87). I would go further, and place the poem in the great European tradition of quest poetry, in a line that can be traced from Homer to Virgil to Cervantes, as well as that of debate poetry, which can be traced back to the Romans. As Yeats remarks, the poem is 'emblematic of eternal pursuit' (Jeffares: 1984; 239), and the national characteristics, be they aesthetic or political, are etiolated in the interests of that overall artistic scheme.

This outward-looking aspect of Yeats's dealing with Irishness is further underlined by the title of the opening book in his *Collected Poems*, namely *Crossways*. The directional vectors invoked here are those of imbrication and intersection; there is no valorized single way; rather are there crossings, intersections, hybridizations, which in turn are seen as creative of a lasting form of identity which is inclusive, and located in the contemporary politics of the time. This title is directed towards the synchronic as opposed to the diachronic *Vorurteil* of Irishness. Rather than hark back to a prelapsarian mono-cultural, mono-linguistic and mono-racial Ireland, he writes for a synchronic, multi-racial, and multi-religious Ireland, which must accommodate these 'crossways'.

The opening poems, *The Song of the Happy Shepherd* and *The Sad Shepherd*, are not based in Ireland, either contemporary or mythic. Instead they are located in a lament for the ancient Greek culture, that reminds us of his invocation that all folk art 'goes back to Olympus'. This culture, which gave Western civilization its origin and its political, social, aesthetic and legal frameworks, is seen as no longer operative in the present. However, the traces and thought processes of Greece are still available to us in art, and it is in his own art that Yeats will allude to this place which is no longer a place, and hence a negative image of place:

The woods of Arcady are dead,
And over is their antique joy;
Of old the world on dreaming fed;
Grey Truth is now her painted toy.

(Yeats: 1979a; 7)

In the context of the earlier references to Homer and to Olympus, it is significant that the original lyrical *Lebenswelt* of Yeats should be that of a vanished Arcadia, and that notions of ‘truth’ are prioritized very early in his *oeuvre*. I think that there is a connection between the two in that Greek culture is a *terminus ad quo* from where the idea of truth, in all its complexity, can be traced. Given that one of the earlier titles of the poem was *The Seeker* (Jeffares: 1968; 3), and keeping in mind two quotations from Yeats, then these connections become clearer. The first quotation is from *Autobiographies*, where he says that ‘one should believe whatever had been believed in all countries and periods’ (Yeats: 1980b; 78), while the second is also from the same book, wherein he notes that for him, truth was ‘the dramatically appropriate utterance of the highest man’ whom he felt would be found ‘as Homer found Odysseus when he was looking for a theme’ (Yeats: 1980b; 90).

Yeats, as seeker after some form of the truth of identity, instead of beginning in the Celtic twilight, locates his opening poems in *Crossways* in ancient Greece, a place and time no longer present, but *hauntologically* imbricated in our notions of democracy and justice, specifically in terms of the Athenian Supreme Court, on Mount Areopagus. Here, in the midst of barbarism and strife, a concept of reasoned appeal, of some juridical warrant which applied to all, was central to the Greek *Weltanschauung*, and this is important to the Yeatsian aesthetic, even at this early stage of his writing. In an introductory note to *Three Songs to the Same Tune*, Yeats states his debt to the Hellenic enlightenment. He makes the point that in politics, he has ‘one passion and one thought, rancour against all who, except under the most dire necessity, disturb public order, a conviction that

public order cannot long persist without the rule of educated and able men'. He goes on to explore this notion of public order, the rule of reason and discussion, seeing it as manifest everywhere in their work, and still as much a part of their tradition as 'the Iliad or the republic of Plato' (Torchiana: 1966; 312).

In these early Greek and Indian poems, he is positing an ideal of identity as ordered and controlled by education and reason, and sanctioned by art. As Adorno puts it: '[a]esthetic identity seeks to aid the nonidentical, which in reality is repressed by reality's compulsion to identity', and he goes on to say that it is only 'by virtue of separation from empirical reality' which sanctions art to model the relationships between the whole and the part, and indeed, to reshape these 'according to the work's own need', that this can come about (Adorno: 1997; 4). By locating his early works in cultures that are other to that of Ireland, Yeats is attempting to achieve this separation from the empirical reality of the essentialist identificatory ideology of the Gaelic revival. For Yeats, the foundation of art lies in legend and myth, but not the monological, pragmatic use of myth that was underwritten by centripetal revivalists. His desire to locate his early mythologies in Greece and India derives from just this notion, that the Irish 'like the Greeks and the Indians, are an idealistic people', and the foundation of their art 'is fixed in legend rather than in history' (Yeats: 1970; 274). These early poems locate a negative concept of identity in the *non-lieu* of the crossways of different traditions. Of course, such poetry valorizes alterity in a much broader conceptualization than the Irish one, making the implicit point that the other must also be given voice in an Irish situation.

Writing about the importance of the Greek conception of art, Yeats observed that there are moments when 'I am certain that art must once again accept those Greek proportions which carry into plastic art the Pythagorean numbers, those faces which are divine because all there is empty and measured' (Yeats: 1962; 448-49).¹⁸ The emptiness of these faces leaves room for some form of

development in terms of their being filled. These empty and measured faces symbolize a hoped-for paradigm of identity where one can fill in these faces in many different ways, like Sir Samuel Ferguson, who could combine in himself the seemingly polar opposites of unionist politics and nationalist art, a paradigm for the economy of self and other that ethically underwrites much of Yeats's work. Keeping in mind Levinas's notion that the face is the ultimate signifier of the humanity of the other, such faces allow for changes in the definitions of those who are filling in the features: there is no centripetal straightjacket in terms of how it should be done; rather is there a centrifugal openness that will allow for redefinition of these criteria. The carrying over of a different form of tradition in terms of the writing of Irish themes in the English language would be one such filling in of the empty face, as would the acknowledgement that there are different strands of Irishness that need to be accommodated within 'the four seas of Ireland.'

This accommodation is found in the final three ballads of *Crossways*, *The Ballad of Father O'Hart* (Yeats: 1979a; 23-25); *The Ballad of Moll Magee* (Yeats: 1979a; 25-27), and *The Ballad of the Foxhunter* (Yeats: 1979a; 27-29). John Unterecker points out that two poems from a later collection, *The Ballad of Father O'Hart* and *The Ballad of the Foxhunter*, were added to the book at a later stage, to form a small group of ballads on Irish themes (Unterecker: 1977; 67-68). The three central figures in these poems, a priest, a sad old woman, and an Anglo-Irish foxhunter, are all given a place at the bar of the Yeatsian court of identity appeals. Father O'Hart, a seemingly historical personage, lived in the village of Coloony, a few miles south of Sligo (Jeffares: 1968; 16). The practice of giving a Protestant nominal possession of Catholic lands to avoid the strictures of the penal laws, which decreed that Catholics could not own large tracts of land, was widely accepted. Writing in 1888, Yeats glossed the poem by noting that it 'accurately recorded the tradition' and went on to say that no one 'who had held the stolen land has prospered. It has changed owners over the years'

(Yeats: 1888; 220). There are strong implications here that the land, stolen from ‘Good Father O’Hart’ by a ‘shoneen who had free lands’, and who proceeded to disperse ‘John’s lands’ as ‘dowers to his daughters’, was accursed, and that no one was able to prosper by working it. The priest himself is an analogue of Saint Francis, being beloved by wives, cats, children and ‘the birds in the white air’. Clearly his blameless life, doing good works, eschewing revenge, putting a stop to keening at funerals, and living to a ripe old age of ‘ninety-four’, was meant as a reproof to those who stole his land. Here, one sees a typical example of revival poetry, with the Protestant featuring as stage villain, whose family become upwardly mobile at the expense of a kindly, learned (‘for he was a man of books’) man, beloved by all creatures. The gloss, from *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, as we have seen, validates this reading by adducing some kind of quasi-organic connection between the priest and the land, a connection which blights the efforts of subsequent owners to make it fruitful.

However, some four years later, Yeats provided a different gloss to this poem which demonstrates how his opinions and ideological position with respect to Irish identity, and the relations between Catholics and Protestants, had developed. Writing in *The Countess Kathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics*, Yeats referred to the robbery of Father O’Hart’s lands as ‘one of those incidents which occurred sometimes, though but rarely, during the time of the penal laws’. He goes on to explain how Catholics, forbidden to own landed property, evaded the law by giving some honest Protestant nominal possession of their estates. There are instances on record in which poor men were nominal owners of unnumbered estates (Jeffares: 1968; 16). The change in tone here is striking; there is no mention of accursed lands, haunting their usurping owners with grim visitations, nor is there any hint that the ‘shoneen’ or ‘slieveen’ who stole Father John’s lands is in any way typical of the Protestant class. Instead, we see a rhetorical structure which foregrounds the rarity of such a robbery ‘one of those incidents...sometimes...but rarely’ [*my italics*]. The adjective ‘honest’ applied to

the Protestant who typically took ‘nominal possession’ of Catholic lands, makes the point that the opposite to Father O’Hart’s experience is the norm, and the adducement of ‘instances on record’ offers some notion of objective proof that Protestants in no way benefited from the ‘unnumbered acres’ which they held in trust for their Catholic neighbours. What we see here is an inversion, a complete rejection, of the earlier reading of the poem, and instead, we are offered a view of Catholics being helped by Protestant neighbours to defeat a law seen as unjust; it is an enactment of Wolfe Tone’s dictum of substituting the common name of Irishman for the religious denominations of Catholic, Protestant, and Dissenter.

I would submit that here an ethics of identity is developing overtly in Yeats’s writing. He has altered the gloss so as to emphasize the interaction of self and other in terms of Irishness; both Irish Protestant and Irish Catholic are seen as combining to counteract the sectarian effects of the penal laws. In Levinasian terms, the Protestant neighbour who took on such a responsibility is acting ethically by undertaking a responsibility for his ‘neighbour, for the other man, for the stranger or sojourner’ (Levinas: 1989; 84). Yeats, by stressing the fact that this poem deals with the exception rather than the rule, foregrounds what Derrida would see as a politics of friendship in that he is looking at a microcosmic as opposed to a macrocosmic interaction between Protestant and Catholic. He is emphasizing, in the gloss, the logic that ‘friendship (*philia*) is first accessible on the side of its subject, who thinks and lives it’ (Derrida: 1997a; 10). In the poem, such friendship is shown by Father O’Hart, who refuses revenge and lives in harmony with his Protestant neighbours. In the gloss, such disinterested friendship is the possession of the many Protestants who relieve the distress of their Catholic neighbours, for no material gain themselves. The poem, and its gloss, underscore the ethics of identity that have become central to Yeats’s aesthetic and political projects. He sees Irishness as an ethical demand which is beyond that of sectarian division, and poem and gloss make this clear.

Here poem and gloss interact to negatively define an Irishness which ethically calls self to the other in a way which ushers in ‘between friend and enemy’ every and all ‘conversion, inversion and revolution [*retournements*]’ in a manner which ‘destabilizes all the conceptual distinctions that seem to structure the existential analytic’ (Derrida: 1997a; 58). Here the other and self are defined in terms of a spatial altruism which transforms the stereotypical images and positions of Catholic and Protestant.

In *The Ballad of Moll Magee*, the poor old woman trope that has become so familiar as a *prosopopoeic* representation of Ireland, usually in nationalist guise, is rehearsed but in a different generic field. In nationalist Irish writing, the feminized personification of Ireland is a *leitmotif* of separatist aspiration. As we have already noted, a specific genre, the *Aisling* poem, is devoted to the appearance of Ireland in the shape of a woman, either young or old, who exhorts the poet to rise up and overthrow the foreign invader. Here, the poor old woman has a realistic overtone, and Jeffares makes the point that the material was heard in a sermon at a chapel in Howth, County Dublin, then a fishing village (Jeffares: 1968; 18). Having set the scene with the traditional ballad apostrophe ‘[c]ome round me little childer’, our expectation that the next line will advocate that her young audience should listen to her song (a stock response in the ballad genre), is denied by the speaker’s anxious telling of her story in order to avoid being stoned by the children; her song is sung to avoid violence rather than to give pleasure:

Come round me, little childer;
There, don’t fling stones at me
Because I mutter as I go;
But pity Moll Magee.

(Yeats: 1979a; 25)

Here, the old woman is not venerated, but assaulted due to her ‘muttering’. As the story unfolds, we see that her poverty forced her to work the ‘whole of the long day’ and that she was so tired that she could ‘scarcely drag’ her feet. Having just given birth, she was ‘but weakly’ and having worked all day, she then had to mind her baby ‘till morn’. The simplicity of the metre and the narrative discourse foregrounds the finality of the ensuing tragedy, which is told in one stanza without any hyperbolic lamenting:

I lay upon my baby;
Ye little childer dear,
I looked on my cold baby
When the morn grew frosty and clear.

(Yeats: 1979a; 26)

The poem concludes with a picture of the sad old woman, driven from her home, with nothing to look forward to, and only the memory of her loss remaining with her: ‘I’m thinkin’ of my baby/And keenin’ to mysel’. The reality of this loss, caused not through revolution or insurrection, but through simple human error and chance, tends to undercut both the heroic legendary imagery of Ireland as mother, asking her young men to come and die for her, as well as Yeats’s own later version of that myth, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*.¹⁹ In this poem, the effect of the death of a child on a mother is to drive her close to insanity.

Read in tandem with that later work, this poem points to the reality of death, and in fact deals directly with the regrets that death can give rise to, as opposed to the end of the play, where Michael Gillane, entranced by the vatic voice of the Old Woman, follows her to fight against the English, alongside the invading French troops of General Humbert, where all is glorious and heroic, and the transforming power of death and violence are stressed as the Old Woman is old no longer at the end of the play:

Peter [to Patrick, laying a hand on his arm]. Did you see an old woman going down the path?

Patrick. I did not, but I saw a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen.

(Yeats: 1992; 88)

The Ballad of Moll Magee tends to deconstruct the high-romantic mode of this discourse by underlining the reality of death, the facticity of death, and the permanence of death. Here is a folklore story which points out the other side of nationalist rhetoric, and which enunciates the value of life, and its fragility. Ethically, the death of the other implicates the self, and the status of a baby, part of the self yet separate, foregrounds the blurred distinction that can exist between self and other; as Levinas puts it, the death of the other ‘calls me into question’ (Levinas: 1989; 83). Here, the baby as other foregrounds the ethical position of the mother, as the giver of life, and as distraught when that life is taken. It is a powerful deconstruction of the glib trope of Ireland-as-mother, demanding the sacrifice of her children, that is seminal to romanticized nationalist discourse.

In the final ballad, another strand of Irish identity is given voice, as the old foxhunter is dying, and looks for a last time on his land, and on his hunting animals. This poem, taken from Charles Kickham’s *Knocknagow* (Jeffares: 1968; 18), highlights the affection that one of the Protestant Anglo-Irish can have for the land, an affection that hitherto in Irish nationalist writing was seen as the exclusive prerogative of the native Catholic population. The old man’s desire to ‘see the world once more’, to be surrounded by his hounds and huntsman so that he ‘may contented pass/From these earthly bounds’, underlines his bond with the place. The imagery of the *Lebenswelt* of the poem is redolent of life and affection, with the ‘[b]rown lollard’ going to the armchair on which the foxhunter is sitting, and ‘aged hounds and young’ licking the old man’s ‘wasted hands’. The climax of the interfusion of foxhunter and place, symbolic of the interfusion of colonizer and colonized, comes when he asks that the hunting horn be blown to ‘make the hills reply’ and Rody, the huntsman is too moved with

grief to comply: 'I cannot blow upon my horn,/I can but weep and sigh'. This picture of interfusion and harmony is completed by the blind hound who senses the passing of his master and 'with a mournful din/Lifts his wintry head' in final lament. Here, the validity of the Irishness of the Ascendancy tradition, and the mutual respect in which each tradition holds the other, is foregrounded in the trope of affection for the land.

Unterecker comments that Yeats properly felt that these ballads were 'too self-consciously Irish in subject matter to be very good poems in themselves' (Unterecker: 1977; 74), but I would argue that it is the development of a sense of Irishness that is the key to their importance, and to Yeats's self-conscious placement of them at the end of the book. They exemplify the crossways of identity, the *Auseinandersetzung* of different positions that would be part of a protreptic definition of Irishness. They also point towards a teleology of aesthetic refraction which, as Adorno notes, cannot exist without 'something being refracted'. There can be no imagination without 'something imagined' (Adorno: 1997; 4), and these ballads demonstrate the power of imagination to portray a broader, inclusive type of identificatory paradigm, as opposed to a more essentialist, narrow one. They illustrate that, despite his presence in the nationalist revival, and despite his seminal role in the aestheticization of Ireland and things Celtic, that there was always a pluralist, centrifugal politics at work in his writing, even in the early *Celtic Twilight* period. The subtext of these three ballads is the complication of the simplistic one-dimensional thematic vector of essentialist nationalism. These poems, while not major works of art in themselves, nevertheless recuperate aspects of Irishness which had been suppressed by the monological will to truth of the Gaelic revival. In this sense, these ballads bear out Adorno's dictum that artworks, through 'their difference from a bewitched reality...embody negatively a position in which what is would find its rightful place, its own' (Adorno: 1997; 227). In the next section, this

implied critique will become explicit, as the Celtic cloak of the earlier period will be flamboyantly discarded.

(ii) From creation to critique

That Yeats has been seen as a vanguard figure in the nationalist pantheon is by now an understatement. There have been a large number of studies done wherein Yeats's politics have been subjected to scrutiny. He has been seen variously, as John S. Kelly has adumbrated (Kelly: 1989; 110), as a fascist (Conor Cruise O'Brien);²⁰ as a colonial defender with authoritarian attitudes (Seamus Deane); as a nationalist who contributed in no small way to the 1916 rising (Cruise O'Brien); as a Tory in the line of Edmund Burke, who was a traditionalist but believed in liberty of sorts (Elizabeth Cullingford); as someone whose politics were largely creative and imaginary (Denis Donoghue); and as a nationalist, post-colonial poet (Edward Said).²¹ The fact that Yeats can be claimed as belonging to so many disparate groups testifies to the plurality and complexity of his political thought, and of the inter-relationships between this thought and his literary endeavours. I would suggest that Elizabeth Cullingford has encapsulated this complexity in her remark that the unity to which Yeats aspired was not attained through any narrowing of vision, but through a dialectical acceptance of difference and diversity (Cullingford: 1981; viii).²²

However, I feel that this theorization of the complex imbrication of the temporal, the cultural, the poetic, and the political does not provide a sufficiently advanced model to describe the Yeatsian process of defining, while at the same time offering to critique, the processes of Irish identity. Instead, I would favour the applicability of Gilles Deleuze's notion of the rhizome as emblematic of a specific connective relationship.²³ Deleuze cites the rhizome, which derives from the biological definition of relationships in certain tubers, as an accurate model for relationships which are formed by connections between traits that are not 'necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different

regimes of signs, and even nonsign states' (Deleuze: 1993; 33). Here, we are close to Adorno's notion of a dialectical criticism wherein the immanent and the transcendent are brought into connection so as to attempt to discuss a cultural situation from within, while at the same time keeping in mind some measure of transcendental objectivity as a regulative notion. The relationship between each element can be seen to be rhizomatic in that the different elements are connected, not by any intrinsic similarity, but by virtue of their being in the dialectical relationship, where they are connectively juxtaposed.

Keeping this model in mind, the complexities of Yeatsian politics, while no less difficult, can be seen in a clearer perspective. That Yeats began as a member of some sort of nationalist ideology, however vague and Celtically twilit, is clear. His early symbolic poems in his book *The Rose*, published in 1893, were meant to embody some sense of Ireland as a quasi-organic entity, which could thus be seen as symbolizing a parallel organicism in terms of the Irish people, and their political aspiration. Writing during the Celtic, Gaelic, and cultural revivals, Yeats was certainly riding the *Zeitgeist* of the time in this regard. Jeffares cites the rose as a polysemic symbol, which was utilized by English poets and Gaelic ones 'not merely in love poems but in addresses to Ireland'. Rose was the name of a girl with black hair in Irish patriotic poetry; she was Róisín Dubh, Dark Rosaleen, and personified Ireland (Jeffares: 1968; 23). Edward Larrissy develops these Irish associations, referring to Mangan's English version of the poem (sometimes attributed to Red Hugh O'Donnell), *My Dark Rosaleen*,²⁴ and also noting that the symbol may refer to the Red Branch dynasty of Ulster (Larrissy: 1994; 62). The inclusion of the almost programmatic credo of nationalist thought, *To Ireland in the Coming Times*, would seem to copperfasten the rose as symbolic of what might be termed the matter of Ireland, and of Yeats's desire to be seen as a part of this broad Irish movement.

However, like so much else in Yeats's early work, there is a proliferation of relationships, a rhizomatic proliferation, between these nationalist symbols and a broader symbolic range of associations. Many critics have written about the polysemic nature of the rose-as-symbol, and this dissemination of meanings connected with the rose serves as a further epistemological device to situate Yeats as cultural critic, both immanently and transcendently. Frank Hughes Murphy cites seventeen different meanings that either Yeats or his critics have attributed to the rose, and while one may not necessarily agree with, or indeed, be aware of, them all, nevertheless, they do serve the purpose of pluralizing the image of the rose itself:

spiritual love; eternal beauty; woman's beauty; a compound of beauty and peace; a compound of beauty and wisdom; Shelley's Intellectual Beauty, altered to sympathize with human suffering; physical love; Ireland; religion; Maud Gonne; the sun; the divine nature; the flower of the Virgin; Apuleius's flower (The Golden Ass); the female impulse towards life (as opposed to the male impulse towards death [symbolized by the lily]); the female generative organs; a key Rosicrucian symbol.

(Murphy: 1975; 33-34).

Obviously, if the rose is part of Yeats's associations with Irish nationalism, then it is an association that is rhizomatically connected with a large number of signifiers which will ultimately serve to deconstruct the essentiality of this nationalist ideological position. Here the discourse of nationalism is invaded by the plurality of other discourses associated with the rose. The dissemination of signification at work here deconstructs the organic connection of the rose with Ireland, and instead suggests an almost negative association. As Spivak has put it, such dissemination refers to the seed 'that neither inseminates nor is recovered by the father, but is scattered abroad' (Derrida: 1976; xi). Here, the seeds of the rose as symbol are not unique to Ireland; they are scattered abroad symbolically and spatially. Hence, to cite Adorno again, the dialectical process of cultural criticism proceeds apace. Yeats both uses the iconography of mythic nationalism,

and at the same time rhizomatically associates these potent icons with a broadening of perspective, thereby creating a far more complex definition of identity from a cultural standpoint, thereby taking on the role of Adorno's cultural critic, as he both participates in the culture and does not participate (Adorno: 1981; 33).

In *The Rose*, then, many of the poems which feature the rose-as-symbol, such as *To the Rose Upon the Rood of Time*, *The Rose of the World*, *The Rose of Peace*, and *The Rose of Battle*, cannot really be read solely as nationalistic in tone or theme. Instead, the heteroglossic alterity of other symbolic meanings of the rose undermines and pluralizes the monological interpretation of the rose-as-Ireland trope. Perhaps the most overt Irish theme in this book is to be found in the closing poem, *To Ireland in the Coming Times* (Yeats: 1979a; 56-58). In this poem, Yeats apostrophizes the reader and tells him or her, in the imperative mood, that he is part of the tradition of writers who 'sang to sweeten Ireland's wrong'.

Here it would seem that he is making an overt 'poetic statement of personal commitment' (Schricker: 1982; 138), but immediately, that commitment is qualified and pluralized by a dissemination that causes him to identify with a very broad definition of art in the service of nationhood. While committing himself to the service of 'Ireland', he redefines this 'Ireland' in the process. This poem begins:

*Know, that I would accounted be
True brother of a company
That sang, to sweeten Ireland's wrong,
Ballad and story, rann and song....
Nor may I less be counted one
With Davis, Mangan, Ferguson. [italics original]*
(Yeats: 1979a; 56-57)

Sir Samuel Ferguson was, as we have seen, a unionist in politics, Thomas Davis was brought up ‘High Tory and Episcopalian protestant’ (Boyce: 1995; 154), while James Clarence Mangan appealed to Yeats on artistic rather than personal grounds. Yeats, in 1900, would stress his admiration for Mangan, saying that his best work was ‘as near perfection as anything that has ever been written’. Roy Foster also notes a further similarity in that Mangan too, advocated that a poet of genius must wear a mask, and that, like Yeats, he also sustained an ‘unhappy love-life and unrequited passion’ (Foster: 1997; 90).²⁵ Hence, these three writers, two of whom were avowedly nationalistic, with the third representing the unionist perspective, demonstrate the polyglossic strands that contrive to make up what is deemed as ‘Irish’ literary and cultural identity; even such seminal figures tend to undermine the essentialist *credos* of traditional nationalists. Hence, this ‘revival’ was more in the nature of a revaluation.

As well as the ambiguous nature of these Irish literary avatars, Yeats added a further complicating layer in his enunciation of a devotion to a broader sphere of influence than nationalism in what was, on the surface, the announcement of his arrival as a ‘frankly political poet’ (Foster: 1997; 123). Here, in Adorno’s terms, he participates in nationalistic culture, *sub specie durationis*, but also attempts to achieve a more objective perspective, *sub specie aeternitatis*, through the invocation of more transcendental categories: ‘*Nor be I any less of them/Because of the red-rose-bordered hem*’. Given our understanding of the polysemic nature of the rose-as-symbol, it becomes clear that this poem, while it may be political in intent, is nevertheless far from being an unqualified acceptance of cultural nationalistic essentialisms. The heteroglossic and rhizomatic associations of the rose permeate and pluralize the certainties of Young Ireland, and its cultural identification of Irish literature in the English language as ‘racy of the soil’ and ‘nationalistic in that it reflected Irish life and Irish values’ (Fallis: 1978; 5). As Yeats perceptively commented in his *Autobiographies*:

Ireland, since the Young Irelanders, has given itself up to apologetics. Every impression of life or impulse or imagination has been examined to see if it helped or hurt the glory of Ireland or the political claim of Ireland. A sincere impression of life became at last impossible, all was apologetics.

(Yeats: 1980b; 520)

It was in order to differentiate himself from such ‘apologetics’ of identity that Yeats makes his references complex. The Romantic nationalism espoused by Davis who saw Irish culture as distinct, and unique in terms of history, and who delved into Celtic myth and legend as a methodology for grounding this sense of Irishness, is framed by the addition of the unionist politics of Ferguson, who also wrote about Celtic myth and legend. A further framing device is to be found in the goal of the red-rose-bordered hem, which introduces further heteroglossic and symbolic associations. Finally, the poem makes its claim towards a regulative notion of dialectical perspective, achieved through the notion that all political and cultural processes are ultimately validated by ‘truth’s consuming ecstasy’, and it is this, as Adorno notes, that is art’s value in society, in that ‘it keeps itself alive through its social force of resistance’ (Adorno: 1997; 226). Yeats will resist the socio-cultural drive towards ethnic, linguistic, and racial ‘sameness’ through his poetry, and it is the artwork’s ‘semblance of being-in-itself’ that is ‘the mask of truth’ (Adorno: 1997; 227).

Here it becomes clear that his poetry will never be fully immanent within the nationalist position. His work embodies an ethical imperative which constantly deconstructs the ontological certainties of nationalist ideology through the *hauntological* introduction of a broader frame of reference. This imperative lends a critical dimension to his poetry, as he sets out a position for art as a ‘relation with the other’, in a Levinasian sense. Levinas makes the point that by means of such ‘intellectualism the artist refuses to be only an artist, not because he wants to defend a thesis or cause, but because he needs to interpret his myths himself’ (Levinas: 1989; 143). This process, which he has elsewhere termed a ‘critique’

(Levinas: 1989; 147), is central to Yeats's poetic project. We have already seen how he offers essentialist ideological positions to critique. However, he also offers his own early interpretation of myth to a similar form of critique.

Hence, his famous renunciation of his earlier *Celtic Twilight* style, the 1912 poem in *Responsibilities*, *A Coat*, is not in fact the thematic *volte face* it might seem. Throughout his earlier writings, as we have seen, Yeats has been gradually broadening the field of vision of his notion of Irishness. What is being said in *A Coat* is an explicit encapsulation of an agenda that has already been present, in a negative dimension, in his earlier writings, and it is a *locus classicus* of what Adorno calls 'criticism': that is 'where the mind tears at its bonds' (Adorno: 1981; 21). The image here is that while these bonds may never in fact be cast off, it is the activity of tearing at them that is of value. In a sense, Yeats is here tearing at the bonds of a predefined notion of Irishness which held him in some sort of cognitive straight-jacket, and which directed all of his imaginative work in a predefined direction.

In *A Coat*, Yeats sets out what seems to be a programmatic exposition of his relationship to his earlier writing; here he explains his participation in centripetal forms of identity, but is now unhappy with the results of that creation, and turns his back on such foundational notions. Declan Kiberd sees this poem as one of a series in which the poet sheds a number of illusions and comes to terms with reality, and does this in terms of a rewriting of versions of 'his earliest lyric of fairyland and childhood, *The Stolen Child*' (Kiberd: 1995; 111-112). As has been noted, he has already pointed towards his disaffection with essentialist notions of identity, but now, he is explicit:

I MADE my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies
From heel to throat;

But the fools caught it,
Wore it in the world's eyes
As though they'd wrought it.
Song, let them take it,
For there's more enterprise
In walking naked. (Yeats: 1979a; 142)

Here, the notion of the song in the world is symbolic of a disseminating movement away from the 'old mythologies'. However, it should be noted that at no time in this poem is he utterly repudiating or disowning his 'song' or his 'coat'. Indeed, as our explorations of his political use of translation, and of his ongoing process of pluralization of the imagery of Ireland have demonstrated, it would be totally to misunderstand his evolving political sense to expect this. What is being lacerated here is not the song itself, but rather the misunderstanding and misprision of the 'fools' who 'caught' the coat, and proceeded to wear it 'in the world's eyes/As though they'd wrought it'.

Hazard Adams, writing in *The Book of Yeats's Poems*, sees this poem as rejecting 'outright all clothing' on the grounds that 'his old coat of embroidered mythologies has been copied by fools' (Adams: 1990; 108). This interpretation is echoed by Gale Schricker who notes that Yeats declares that 'he no longer needs the archetypal structural supports of "old mythologies" or the garments of society' (Schricker: 1982; 148), and by Suheil Bushrui who sees this poem as expressing the change in Yeats's attitude from glorification of Ireland's past to a cynical awareness of its present philistinism (Bushrui in Connolly (ed.): 1982; 112). While accepting that such commentary deals with an overt dissatisfaction expressed in the poem, nevertheless I would argue that the centrifugal imperative that has been traced from the early writings deconstructs such readings of this poem.

John Unterecker, in a highly significant discussion of *A Coat*, offers a close reading of the opening sentence, and ponders the ambiguity that is to be found

therein – ‘I made a coat out of my song’ or ‘I made a coat for my song’? He goes on to note that the ‘reader, if acute, is bound to struggle’ with this ambiguity (Unterecker: 1977; 34), but I think that this is only partly true. I would suggest that this emblematic line is what Derrida would term a *brisure*, or hinge, whereby there is an opening of plurality and difference in the text. Hence Unterecker’s ambiguity disseminates univocal meaning, and initiates a negative dialectical connection between both statements, making performatives out of seeming constatives. The imbrication of ‘song’ and ‘coat’ symbolizes the ongoing process of a deconstruction of essentialism, as signified by the ‘fools’ who wore his coat, which was covered with ‘embroideries/Out of old mythologies’. It is important to realize that there is a structural difference between the coat *qua* coat and its decorative coverings; the coat itself is different to the mythological decoration; having already made either a coat for his song, or having turned his song into a coat, there seems to be the possibility that he can, if necessary, repeat the process. I think it is fair to say that this dissemination of meaning in the opening metaphor signifies, stylistically, what Richard Ellmann noted in *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*.

Writing about George Moore’s perception of Yeats, Ellmann perceptively remarked that what Moore had not realized was that in the nineties, Yeats had ‘not one style but two’ and that ‘he used one to undercut the other’ (Ellmann: 1979; 135). This differential stylistic imperative symbolized the growing pluralism of Yeats’s cultural politics, and also the heteroglossic turn that the poetry and dramatic works were taking. My reading of this poem sees it as analeptic of earlier emphatic statements in *Responsibilities*, wherein Yeats is disassociating himself from the narrow-gauge nationalism of Irish-Ireland, and instead is beginning to overtly carve out a niche which will allow him to expand the central conditions of Irish identity with a view to creating a new definition of Irishness. Here one thinks of Levinas’s statement that ‘[l]anguage is born in responsibility’ (Levinas: 1989; 82), implying that the responsibility involved is

to the other, to other traditions, other ideas, but most essentially other people. In this sense, the poem is a Levinasian critique of a totality of meaning, as symbolized by the fact that the coat offers covering 'from heel to throat'; it is symbolic of closure in that there is nothing possible to be gained by a dialectical, or dialogic, exchange with any form of alterity; what is inside the coat will be sufficient, so everything else must be kept out. Hence, the terminal metaphor of 'walking naked' encapsulates an openness to the other, to an alterity which can, and should, influence the 'I'. In his study of otherness, published in English in 1981 entitled *Otherwise Than Being Or, Beyond Essence*, Levinas makes a distinction between the 'saying' and the 'said', and in an interview with Richard Kearney in the same year, he discussed this differentiation. Levinas made the point that 'saying' is 'ethical sincerity in so far as it is exposition' and as such, is irreducible 'to the ontological definability of the said' (Levinas: 1981a; 193-4).²⁶ Yeats, in symbolically wanting to walk naked, exhibits a similar ethical openness to the alterities inherent in the contemporary Ireland of his time, and refuses to be part of the 'ontological definability' of Irish-Ireland.

Hence, I would argue that the enterprise of 'walking naked', of setting out, overtly, his centrifugal stall, has already been undertaken in the *Introductory Rhymes to Responsibilities*, where he spells out his definition of Irish identity, and of his own tradition. Here, he inscribes his patriarchal and matriarchal lineage in terms of his responsibilities to that Anglo-Protestant tradition, within which he exists, and which is in danger of socio-cultural absorption, as noted in Chapter Two. It is part of his responsibility to define Irishness so as to include this tradition.

In these *Introductory Rhymes*, Yeats accepts a number of responsibilities which he sees as a necessary part of his aesthetic project, and by extension, of the cultural politics inherent in that project. He begins, not in the world of embroidered mythology (demonstrating that the argument of *A Coat* has already

been accepted), but in the history of his own family, with Jervis Yeats a Dublin linen merchant ‘free of the ten and four’, which meant that he had been exempted by the Irish parliament of certain customs duties; and his great grandfather, John Yeats (1774-1846) rector of Drumcliffe, in Sligo, and a friend of Robert Emmet – the leader of a failed rebellion in 1803 (Jeffares: 1968; 118-119). Perhaps the most significant lines of this poem, in the context of the present discussion, are to be found in the military associations of the Yeats family:

*Soldiers that gave, whatever die was cast:
A Butler or an Armstrong that withstood
Beside the brackish waters of the Boyne
James and his Irish when the Dutchman crossed. [italics
original]*

(Yeats: 1979a; 113)

Here, the poet is facing the responsibility of affirming his personal loyalty to members of his family who fought for the Protestant King William, against the Catholic King James, in the Battle of the Boyne, in 1690.²⁷ This battle, won by King William, has ever since been celebrated by unionists as the crucial point in maintaining and sustaining the union between Britain and Northern Ireland. The important point to note here is that Yeats is overtly staking a claim to Irishness for his ancestors who, as part of the other tradition, made their choice to fight for William against James.

Traditionally, in the iconography of Irish nationalism, the Jacobites are seen as the forces of good, whereas the Williamites are viewed as the army of the invader, with the attendant signifiers of Catholicism and Protestantism, and selfhood and otherness, serving to underline these associations. In Yeats’s lines, these ancestors of his are also part of his definition of Irishness, a point which implies that the said definition is a transforming one, widening the definitive aspects of the core of the *Zentrum* of Irishness so as to include those of the

Protestant and Williamite persuasions – the other. Here, the narrow definitions of nationalist Ireland, predicated on a mythology which valorizes the ancient Celtic traits of Ireland, which see the role of the ‘sympathetic Palesman’ as being behind ‘the Gael, the matrix of the Irish...until he becomes absorbed’ (*Leader*: 1901; January 5th), are deconstructed by a centrifugal definition of Irishness which must come to terms with all aspects of its cultural history. As Yeats put it in a letter to Alice Milligan, on request for a copy of *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, his experience of Ireland had brought him to the view that the work of an Irish man of letters must be ‘not so much to awaken or quicken or preserve the national idea among the mass of the people but to convert the educated classes to it on the one hand’ and, more importantly ‘to fight for moderation, dignity, and the rights of the intellect among his fellow nationalists’ (Yeats: 1955; 399). It is this moderation in terms of the given categories of Irish identity that is being accepted as a responsibility of the poet in this poem. This moderation can be seen as an ethical notion in terms of the role of the other. The language of responsibility is the language of *Responsibilities*, a ‘saying’ that is an ‘ethical openness to the other’ (Levinas: 1981a; 194), and to the dignity and rights of the intellect. Such a programme is very much a part of Yeats’s negative view of Irishness.

This becomes even more obvious when we take into account the original lines that were in the poem instead of those quoted. Apparently, according to Jeffares, Yeats originally thought that his ancestors had fought on the Jacobite side in the Battle of the Boyne, and consequently lines 9 to 12 of *Introductory Rhymes* originally read as follows:

Pardon, and you that did not weigh the cost,
Old Butlers when you took to horse and stood
Beside the brackish waters of the Boyne,
Till your bad master blenched and all was lost.

(Jeffares: 1968; 119)

Here, the vicissitudes of history are seen as part of the negative positing of Irish identity in terms of a decentring of seemingly logocentric certitudes. Yeats was originally quite happy to glorify the role of Jacobite ancestors; by doing the same for his Williamite ancestors, his family history can be seen to broaden the category of Irishness in its diffuse political allegiances. Just as Ferguson and Standish O'Grady provided the translations for much of nationalist mythology, which was in turn reified into the foundation of a green essentialism, so Yeats's own ancestors, Williamites, and friends of Robert Emmet, embody the same protreptic imperative, and the responsibility of enunciating this is accepted in the title of the book. In this respect, T. S. Eliot's prescient remarks about what he terms the 'violent and terrible epistle dedicatory' are all the more relevant: 'the naming of his age in the poem is significant. More than half a lifetime to arrive at this freedom of speech. It is a triumph' (Eliot: 1957; 256). This 'freedom of speech' is also to be found in *A Coat* and in *Cuchulain's Fight with the Sea*.

The use of his family as a personal iconography assists his project in another way. John S. Kelly, writing about Yeats's political thought, makes the highly astute point that in these *Introductory Rhymes*, Yeats practises a series of casuistries wherein he desynonymizes the 'wholesale and retail trade' as 'merchants are distinguished from hucksters because they espouse the wasteful virtues.' More significantly, he goes on to note that, through the '*sprezzatura*', they are 'in history but transcend history through a joyful self-assured nonchalance' (Kelly: 1989; 156). Hence, in terms of Adorno's edicts on the necessity of cultural criticism to be of, and yet distant from, a particular culture, Yeats's family provide a *brisure* which opens up different aspects of Irishness, and locates these aspects, not in the world of mythology, but in history, the very area which much of the Celtic revival sought to avoid, given the dissensions and conflicts which were seen as its Irish legacy. The song-as-coat motif of *A Coat* refers to the embroidered decorations as a way of covering the body of the song,

perhaps as a source of decorative protection from the rough winds of history. As Yeats put it elsewhere: 'I too have woven my garment like another, but I shall try to keep warm in it, and shall be well content if it do not unbecome me' (Yeats: 1981a; 32). Having achieved what Eliot calls 'freedom of speech', keeping warm is no longer a priority, and he instead looks to 'the rights of the intellect' to define what Irishness actually is. The movement from the warmth and assuaging a-historicity of myth into the cold light of history is perhaps the greatest responsibility undertaken by Yeats, and his aim now, as already remarked, was to help Gaelic Ireland and Anglo-Ireland to unite so that 'neither shall shed its pride' (Yeats: 1962; 337). Such a unification would be something as yet unthought or unsymbolized except in the negative dialectics of Yeats's political and poetic constitution of identity, an identity which recognizes the alterity of the other. As Derrida puts it, '[d]issociation, separation, is the condition of my relation to the other' (Derrida: 1997b; 14), and indeed, of the identity of a culture, person, nation, and language. In all cases, he sees such identity as self-differentiating, as having a gap or opening within it (Derrida: 1992b; 9-11). For Derrida then, as for Yeats, it follows that this gap in personal identity allows the address and speech towards the other; such identificatory tensions allow a space for alterity, and so, far from being 'a way of avoiding responsibility...it is the only way to...take responsibility and to make decisions' (Derrida: 1997b; 14). This is precisely what Yeats is attempting, and in the next section, the process of critique will proceed apace.

(iii) Cuchulain discomforted

The more complex attitude to Irishness that is outlined in *A Coat*, is given further impetus in his revision of the Cuchulain myth, a myth which he helped to create. The centrality of Cuchulain to the project of the Irish literary, Gaelic, and cultural revivals cannot be overstated. As part of the project of reviving a Gaelic mythology wherein Irish virtues and strengths could be embodied and reflected, the story of Cuchulain is paramount. His place in the Celtic pantheon is analogous to that of Beowulf in Anglo-Saxon myth, Achilles in Greek myth, and Siegfried in Germanic myth. By restoring the deeds of this supernatural hero to the discourse of English-speaking Irish people, the translators and redactors were recuperating a martial strand in the *mythos*, as well as bypassing a historical narrative of defeat and retreating to an ur-historiography and mythology of constant victory, usually in the face of terrible odds.

The original sources for the Cuchulain legends were in historical manuscripts, *Leabhar na hUidhre (The Book of the Dun Cow)*, *Leabhar Laighean (The Book of Leinster)*, and *Leabhar Buí Leacan (The Yellow Book of Leccan)*. The translations of the Cuchulain legend came thick and fast from the beginning of the Irish literary revival. The initial impetus came from Standish O'Grady's *History of Ireland 1: The Heroic Period* (1878) and there followed Eleanor Hull's *The Cuchullin Saga in Irish Literature* (1898); Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (1903); L. Winifred Faraday's *The Cattle-Raid of Cualnge* (1904); A. H. Leahy's *Heroic Romances of Ireland* (1905); Strachan and O'Keefe's *The Táin Bó Cuailnge* (1912); T. W. Rolleston's *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race* (1912), and Joseph Dunn's *The Ancient Irish Epic Tale Táin Bó Cúailnge* (1914).²⁸ Clearly, the figure of Cuchulain was of seminal

importance to the project of euhemerism that was central to the epistemology of the revivalists, and by extension, to their notion of Irish identity.

Eleanor Hull, writing in the introduction to her 1898 collection of Cuchulain myths, makes the overtly political point that patriotism rests not on pride in the beauty of the home place, nor yet again on a sense of pride in its prosperity. Instead, she avers, it rests on ‘the historic imagination’, and she goes on to define this as a connection with certain events in ‘the past history of our country’, or with incidents ‘sometimes of a semi-legendary character’, that have fostered a ‘pride in the deeds and epochs of their fore-fathers’ (Hull: 1898; xi). The most interesting point here is the concatenation and blurring of distinctions between the historic, the mythic, and the legendary. That such legends could be seen as historical in themselves made the Yeatsian imperative of seeking in them an alternative to the divisive trends in history tangential at best, and obsolete at worst. Yeats’s a-historical attitudes had little in common with the historico-militarist attitude to the Cuchulain saga among essentialist revivalists.

John Wilson Foster makes the valid point that one of the key tropes in the Cuchulain cycle was a sense of group loyalty to the *élite* corps of champions headquartered in Eamain Macha (Wilson Foster: 1993; 12). This sense of a native warrior aristocracy as a foundation upon which a new revivalist clerisy could be modelled was underpinned by Standish O’Grady, whose *History of Ireland 1: The Heroic Period* (1878) and *2: Cuculain and his Contemporaries* (1880), set the tone for the Cuchulain myth. But perhaps ‘myth’ is the wrong word here, as O’Grady clearly felt that what he was writing was, in fact, historically accurate: ‘early Irish history’, he remarked, ‘is the creation mainly of the bards’ (O’Grady: 1918; 23). By this rhetorical sleight of hand, O’Grady can write his ‘*history*’ of Ireland and at the same time glorify the mythological heroes of Irish myth. The elision of the two categories allows him to posit a temporal historicity for Cuchulain, seeing him as a point of importance about

whom fact and legend cohered. O'Grady sees the saga of Cuchulain as falling 'completely within the historical penumbra' (O'Grady: 1970; 28), and goes on to note that in ancient Ireland, the history of one generation became the poetry of the next (O'Grady: 1970; 6).

Yeats became involved in the debate about the historicity of the saga figures overtly, in 1895, with the publication of Douglas Hyde's book *The Story of Early Gaelic Literature*. Clearly for him, the stakes were quite high; the sagas as a fusion-inspiring myth would advance his politico-aesthetic project of a broader definition of Irishness, while the sagas as history, adopted to essentialist nationalistic ends, would serve as a further divisive narrative in the definition of Irish identity. Consequently, he rejects Hyde's attitude to the sagas as pandering to his own 'little groups of enthusiasts' who wish to mine them for those aspects of 'fragments of ancient customs which are mixed up with their romance' which may be of 'historical importance' (Yeats: 1970; 359).²⁹

Ironically, Yeats too participated in the creation of the Cuchulain myth. He wrote five plays in which Cuchulain was the central character: *On Baile's Strand*; *The Golden Helmet* (later retitled *The Green Helmet*); *At the Hawk's Well*; *The Only Jealousy of Emer* and *The Death of Cuchulain*. However, in this discussion, I will focus on a much earlier work. Yeats's attitude to the canonical Cuchulain of the revival is crystallized in his early poem from *The Rose*, entitled *Cuchulain's Fight with the Sea* (Yeats: 1979a; 37-40).³⁰ This poem was first published on June 11th, 1892, under the emblematic title *The Death of Cuchulain* (Jeffares: 1968; 28). I would argue that in this much revised treatment of the Cuchulain myth, its place in the revivalist canon is offered to a centrifugal critique which interrogates many of the quasi-historical attitudes to this, and other Celtic myths, by a strand of green nationalism which saw them as foundational.

The poem takes some recognized traits and sources of Cuchulain's life, and subtly alters them for artistic, and political purposes. The plot of the narrative is sequential, with a number of colloquies juxtaposed as if they were cut and pasted for dramatic effect – already, it is clear that Yeats is seeing this material as essentially dramatic. In the opening section, lines 1-18, Emer, Cuchulain's wife, is told by a swineherd whom she has watching 'the road between the wood and tide' (Yeats: 1979a; 37), that her husband, Cuchulain, is returning from battle and that no man 'alive, nor none among the dead/Has won the gold his cars of battle bring' (Yeats: 1979a; 37). However, on being further questioned by Emer as to why he blenches and shakes 'from foot to crown', he admits that there is with Cuchulain 'one sweet-throated like a bird', this being Eithne Inguba, his young mistress (Jeffares: 1968; 29). Emer's reaction to this news is non-verbal and violent, a combination which is seen repeatedly in this poem.

Thereupon Emer 'smote with raddled fist' the unfortunate messenger, and the poem moves upon the medial caesura to the second scene, with Emer's son coming into the picture, as a cattle herd. Emer tells him that it 'is not meet/To idle life away a common herd', and the following interchange ensues, a dialogue which is chillingly brief and without either explanation or moral scruple on the part of either mother or son:

'I have long waited, mother, for that word:
But wherefore now?'

'There is a man to die;
You have the heaviest arm under the sky.'

'Whether under its daylight or its stars
My father stands amid his battle-cars.'

'But you have grown to be the taller man.'

'Yet somewhere under starlight or the sun
My father stands.'

'Aged, worn out with wars

On foot, on horseback or in battle-cars.'

(Yeats: 1979a; 38)

Here, the close relationship between mother and son is almost parthenogenetic; it is as if she has given birth and nurture to him without any sense of the father whatsoever; Cuchulain is at no stage seen as someone who is loved by either mother or son. Furthermore, the son has no moral or ethical compunction about obeying his mother's command, asking only 'what way' his 'journey lies,/For He who made you bitter, made you wise.' The graphematic structure of the lines allows medial caesurae to enact the almost somatic response of the son to the demands of the mother. It is as if he is willing to follow her bidding even before the statement which expresses her desire has been fully completed. Emer then tells him to camp near the Red Branch company, but only to reveal his name to anyone: 'Whose blade compels, and wait till they have found/Some feasting man that the same oath has bound' (Yeats: 1979a; 39). Here language is used, not for communication and openness, but rather as a tool for controlling and limiting the interaction of different individuals. These oaths limit the freedom of response of both Cuchulain and his son; they are a signifier of the power of a past act of saying to influence actions in the present and in the future. The power of the past is enacted in the language of such oaths.

The fact that this is all done so quickly adds to the dramatic effect of the piece, as does the swiftness of the scene change, signalled by the verbal parallelism of the next line, which declares that among 'those feasting men Cuchulain dwelt'. The story moves towards its *dénouement* with father and son fighting, and after a brief moment of quasi-*anagnorisis*, the battle proceeds towards its conclusion:

'Your head a while seemed like a woman's head
That I loved once.'

Again the fighting sped,
But now the war-rage in Cuchulain woke,

his father. This act of parricide is again Freudian in its epistemology, with a physical and motivated attack replacing the unconscious and largely symbolic, or linguistic in the Lacanian paradigm, rivalry.³¹ The family relationships which surround this Celtic hero hardly seem the stuff of a socio-political template, with jealousy of ‘one sweet-throated like a bird’, Cuchulain’s mistress Eithne Inguba, seeming to be the only abiding emotion, as whatever love that may have once existed between Cuchulain and Emer is now gone: ‘like a woman’s head/That I loved once’. On the other hand, whatever Cuchulain feels for Eithne, communication between them seems totally absent.

Indeed, in this *Lebenswelt*, lack of communication is the most abiding trope, with violence – ‘She smote with raddled fist’ – presaging the violent interaction between father and son, which culminates in what should be a moment of *anagnorisis*, as the son reveals himself in the chiasmic utterance ‘Cuchulain I, mighty Cuchulain’s son’. However, the only response that his father can make is one which is more suitable to a favourite hound or horse when it is fatally injured: ‘I put you from your pain.’ Significantly, however, language is foregrounded in the poem, with the druidic power of utterance being placed under the political imperative of Conchubar, who realizes that, once three days of post war-rage brooding have elapsed, Cuchulain will ‘arise, and raving slay us all’. To avoid this, druidic mysteries are ‘chaunted for three days’,³² and the violence, though not etiolated, is displaced onto the sea, which eventually kills him.³³ Given the lack of communication between all the major participants, perhaps the violence can be seen as a displacement of communicative action: the only characters who do not do violence to each other are Emer and her son, but here, the communication between them takes on the function of a performative with violent consequences: ‘there is a man to die.’

If revivalists see the translations of the sagas as a cultural *parousia*, with Cuchulain replacing Christ, then Yeats’s emblematic poem *The Second Coming*

could be seen to have a prophetic relevance to the effects of this ethic of internecine political violence as it is evidenced in Irish culture. If the relationships between father and son, as symbolic of different generations, are enunciated through violence, with recognition of any relationship only coming into being following fatal wounding, then what hope is there for any serious level of communication between different ideologies in a society which sees such myths as foundational? The same can be said for the trope of language in the poem; if all language as communication can achieve is a displacement of the war-rage, as symbolic of violence, then what hope can there be of communication as a device for resolving differences, or for the recognition of difference in a society that draws cultural and mythic strength from such sagas?

In political terms, Yeats could not approach the sagas from an essentialist nationalist perspective. Indeed, in *A General Introduction for My Work*, written in 1937, Yeats specifies his attitudes to nationalism, declaring 'I am no Nationalist, except in Ireland for passing reasons' (Yeats: 1980a; 269). For him, the myths and legends of Ireland are protreptic in theme, connecting Irish mythology with that of Europe. His use of Celtic and Gaelic mythology is centrifugal in that he seeks to establish a rhizomatic relationship between Ireland and Europe; rather than have his Celtic heroes and heroines speak with a nationalist Irish voice, he would have them speak in a European accent, a point he makes about the Countess Cathleen, who, he notes, could speak a blank verse which he had 'loosened' for her because he thought of her 'as mediaeval and thereby connected her with the general European movement' (Yeats: 1980a; 268). Of course the fact that these sagas were being read in translation further reinforced Yeats's argument. His aim was far from that of centripetal nationalism, which saw the sagas and legends as the exclusive property of Irish-Ireland, and as constitutive of the very definition of that notion of Ireland. Indeed, he made the overt statement in his *General Introduction* that he had always 'hated and still hate[s] with an ever growing hatred the literature of the

point of view' (Yeats: 1980a; 256). Hence, his deconstruction of the essentialist position in terms of the euhemerism of Cuchulain in this early poem. The dangers of this euhemerism would have been obvious to Yeats in 1937, as he thought back on the events of Easter 1916, and the career of Patrick H. Pearse.

For Pearse, Cuchulain had become a type of fetish, a *persona* in whose mythical footsteps he would follow. Pearse would inscribe the myth of Cuchulain into contemporary Irish social, cultural, and political life. As was discussed in Chapter One, his fusion of Cuchulain and Christ is aesthetically sanctioned through a teleological narrative of suffering and redemption for a chosen people. Pearse went on to absorb Tone and Emmett into his sacrificial narrative, thereby creating the received canon of Irish nationalism. The final member of this narrative cast of salvific characters is, of course, Pearse himself, as a combination of Christ and Cuchulain, come to save his people through sacrifice. Cuchulain is used as a signifier of identity, of a chosen people, who by being chosen, are themselves divine, for as Pearse notes if 'we do not believe in the divinity of our people we have had no business, or very little, all these years in the Gaelic League' (Pearse: 1917-22; 2; 91-92).

As Philip O'Leary observes, the young Pearse was 'undeniably captivated by the bombastic grandeur of O'Grady's imagination' (O'Leary: 1994; 255), and in 1916, Pearse, using the self-sacrifice of Cuchulain as a prototype, inscribed himself into Irish history by leading the mythically inspired Easter rebellion which was a material failure but a spiritual victory. For Yeats, the dangers of this infusion of myth into politics and history, dangers captured in the ambiguity of some of his most famous lines:

All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born,

(Yeats: 1979a; 203)³⁴

are underlined by 1916, and in *Cuchulain Fights the Sea*. Here the mythic tones are deconstructed so as to undermine their essentialist quality as a template for the process of defining Irish identity. Here the Cuchulain myth, an epic story full of magic and formulaic writing, is seen in stark tones, written in unmythopoeic language, and the effects are to juxtapose a mythic poem with a modern sensibility. I would suggest that for Yeats, the appropriation of the Irish sagas by essentialist nationalism was the *fons et origo* for the writing of this poem. He saw Standish O'Grady, and his cousin Standish Hayes O'Grady, as 'representing the old Irish land-owning aristocracy', with the former being, like Yeats himself 'no Nationalist' (Yeats: 1980a; 258). He also saw mythology as connecting Irishness to Europe, and the world, noting that tradition is 'always the same. The earliest poet of India and the Irish peasant in his hovel nod to each other across the ages' (Yeats: 1989; 97), and through such contrasting perspectives could be used to define each other negatively.

In much of Yeats's mythological writing the ghostly voices of different Irish traditions hover *hauntologically* over any monological strand of essentialism. Much of his sensibility has been shaped in the English literary tradition. He lived in London for much of his life. As he puts it himself, his soul has been nurtured by Shakespeare, Spenser, Blake, and perhaps William Morris, and by:

the English language in which I think, speak, and write...everything I love has come to me through English; my hatred tortures me with love, my love with hate. I am like the Tibetan monk who dreams at his initiation that he is eaten by a wild beast and learns on waking that he himself is eater and eaten.

(Yeats: 1980a; 263)

In this sense, Yeats attests to the 'presence' of the face of the other (Levinas: 1969; 188), and exemplifies the dialectical criticism advocated by Adorno in that he is part of the culture of Ireland, but he is also apart from that culture, separated by a sense of Englishness. In short, he is attempting to provide some

form of redefinition of the centres of Irish identity, so as to include the Protestant tradition, as well as facing outward towards European culture which will provide a point of transcendence from which Irishness can be further, negatively, defined. This definition will be negative, and will be open to the alterity 'English'.

Always, in Yeats, we find this rhizomatic relationship, this centrifugal imperative, between Ireland and Europe. Perhaps it is the spatial and temporal magnitude of the European experience that he adduces in a bid to achieve some further point of transcendence on the Irish situation. Given the history of conflict and reconciliation that is seminal to the European experience,³⁵ and given the place of culture in the creation and idealization of Europe as a totality, clearly Yeats sees European culture and history as very attractive.

Perhaps the most overt example of this attempt to define Ireland in European terms is to be found in a poem which was written as Yeats's most telling contribution to the Hugh Lane gallery controversy, in which a collection of neo-impressionist paintings was offered to the people of Ireland if they would finance a gallery to house them. This controversy bespoke a refusal on behalf of much nationalist and bourgeois opinion to proffer any openness to alterity, in the form of the Anglo-Irish Lane, the French impressionist paintings, or the Bridge Gallery, designed by the English architect, Edwin Lutyens.³⁶ Yeats deliberately chose to invoke Renaissance images to undercut the insularity which he saw as rife in Dublin at that time in his poem, bearing the title *To a Wealthy Man who promised a Second Subscription to the Dublin Municipal Gallery if it were proved the People wanted Pictures*. This poem, which appeared on the letters page of the *Irish Times*, on January 13th 1913,³⁷ contains allusions to Duke Ercole de l'Este of Ferrara who had five plays by Plautus produced during the wedding of his son Alphonso in 1502 (Jeffares: 1968; 127); Guidobaldo di Montafeltro, Duke of Urbino, who built a palace known for its art treasures, especially books

bound in gold and silver, and Cosimo di Medici who commissioned the architect Micholozzo to draw up plans for the Library of Saint Mark's in Florence.³⁸ All were Renaissance patrons of the arts, and all were undeniably foreign (an allusion to Lane's preferred architect, Lutyens, being English). Clearly, their presence in the poem offers a critique of narrowness and insularity posited in terms of temporal, spatial and cultural images of alterity.

For Yeats, Irish identity should be sufficiently diverse and well grounded to be able to accept French paintings from an Anglo-Irish benefactor, in a continentally inspired bridge gallery, designed by an English architect. His 'responsibilities' to the creation and critique of these notions of identity are part of what make him a great writer, and a very political writer in the sense of espousing plurality. The voices of the Renaissance patrons of the arts in this poem help to create a negative definition of an Irishness that is polyphonic and polyglossic, and quite at home among such European exemplars. Yeatsian identity formation is essentially dialogic in that it involves the imbrication of two, or more, voices in protreptic interchange which allows each voice to speak and be heard. His ultimate troping of this dialogic interchange is that of Man and Mask (with the mask providing a metonymic connection with Levinas's notion of the face of the other), where self and anti-self engage in a dialogue whose aim is not the achievement of a Hegelian dialectical *Aufhebung*, but which instead is redolent of the epistemology of Adorno's negative dialectics, as Yeatsian thought proceeds 'dialectically' inasmuch as such a thought means to 'think in contradictions'. Such a dialectics is 'suspicious of all identity' (Adorno: 1973; 145), and as has already been noted, even the Renaissance figures invoked by Yeats hardly serve as paradigms of identity for their own political cultures and societies. For Yeats, such a negative dialectical progression is a necessary means of forcing self into a form of *Auseinandersetzung* with alterity: a confrontation of positions out of which one could gain not only a greater understanding of each individual standpoint but also of the relationship between them (Michelfelder:

1989; 2). Much of Yeats's style is predicated on such a negative dialectical conversational confrontation. One only has to think of the poems wherein there are two *personae* in dialogue: Self and Soul; *Hic* and *Ille*; Crazy Jane and the Bishop; Man and Echo; Saint and Hunchback; the cat and the moon; and in all these poems, the confrontation, while critical of existing realities, is underwritten *hauntologically* by some form of negative ideal, which is seldom overtly stated, but always implied. Such dialogue poems have a long European provenance, further underlining their value in the Yeatsian identificatory project.

For Yeats, Irishness could never be foundationally defined in terms of race, ideology, or religion. Nationalist verities held little value for him. Instead, his writing, as I think is clear even from this comparatively brief conspectus, can be read as a project whose major aim is the creation of a negatively defined Irishness, achieved through a critique of all that is essentialist and foundationalist. I can do no better, before moving on to another Irish writer whose definitions of Irishness were similarly at odds with centripetal nationalism, than to leave the final words to Yeats. This speech was composed while he was a senator, but remained undelivered. This was a pity as he overtly states the aims and goals for his country, aims and goals which his own work had gone some way towards achieving:

For the last hundred years Irish nationalism has had to fight against England, and that fight has helped fanaticism, for we had to welcome everything that gave Ireland emotional energy, and had little use for intelligence so far as the mass of the people were concerned, for we had to hurl them against an alien power. The basis of Irish nationalism has now shifted, and much that once helped us is now injurious, for we can no longer do anything by fighting, we must persuade, and to persuade we must become a modern, tolerant, liberal nation. I want everything discussed, I want to get rid of the old exaggerated tact and caution. As a people we are superficial, our Press provincial and trivial, because as yet we have not considered any of those great political and religious questions which raise some fundamental issue and have disturbed Europe for generations.

(Yeats: 1970; 522)

Notes

- 1 I have omitted two of Yeats's early works from this chronology as they are not thematically connected to the discussion in hand. These are his autobiographical novel, *John Sherman*, and his prose tale *Dboya*. Both are generally read as *juvenilia*, with perhaps the major *caveat* that the island of Inisfree, later to become the subject of one of Yeats's most anthologized poems, is first mentioned as a rocky retreat in *John Sherman*.
- 2 I think that the rhetorical skill of this deconstruction is highlighted by my inability to find any critical reference to its *modus operandi*, and its ideological agenda, in any study of Yeats's writing.
- 3 The abbreviation WBY for William Butler Yeats is a stylistic feature of Roy Foster's biography of Yeats, *The Apprentice Mage*.
- 4 The juxtaposition of both proper names implies also that narrative and literature possess the power to create connections between disparate figures and between different narrative and truth-constitutive discourses. This conflation of myth with history could be seen as a Yeatsian shot across the bows of other myths of nationality which were being taken for truth in nineteenth century nationalist circles.
- 5 Yeats's project could be seen as an attempt to introduce the palesman as the figure of alterity in a new, ethical definition of Irishness which would come about through dialogue between self and other in a way which would redefine Irishness for all concerned. In this sense, despite his delving into Celtic lore, his methodology could be seen as synchronic as opposed to diachronic in that he was dealing with Ireland as it was constituted in the contemporary present.
- 6 For an interesting discussion of the process, and epistemological effects of translation, see Jacques Derrida's *Des Tours de Babel* in *Difference in Translation*, pages 165-248. An abridged edition of this article is available in *Between the Blinds: A Derrida Reader*, pages 243-253.
- 7 While these translations were avowedly unpolitical, there is a strong case to be made for seeing the very process of such translations as a political and ethical act. Here, the literature of the Irish language was being abrogated by the colonizer, or else being opened to the voice and language of alterity, depending on one's ideological point of view. These translations would alter and reinvent the matter of these tales and sagas, and such alteration would place these narratives formally in the ambit of contemporary issues of language, culture, and politics. By translating them into English, these Protestant, Anglo-Irish scholars were reinscribing their own tradition into a particular sense of Irishness, as well as leaving their mark on those traditionally Irish texts.

- 8 In terms of looking for ‘new’ ways to express ‘ourselves’, it is interesting to note that Yeats, in 1891, was a contributor to both the Parnellite paper *United Ireland*, as well as the ultra-Tory *National Observer*; clearly even as early in his career as this, different aspects of Irishness held attractions for him, *The Apprehtive Mage*, page 113.
- 9 In the context of creating a definition of Irishness in terms of negative dialectics, the conflation of the Royal Irish Academy and *The Nation* newspaper is a further example of what might be called Yeats’s juxtapositional negative dialectic, in that from the quasi-transcendental temporal perspective of the present, he is able to see connections between groups who would appear, to an immanent observer, to be inimical to each other.
- 10 A subtext of Yeats’s Celtism was the factoring of religious ideologies out of the equation of Irish identity. The Celtic world predated the oppositions of Protestantism and Catholicism, as well as those of the Irish and English languages. In terms of Celtic lore, it mattered little whether the initiates were Catholic or Protestant, Anglo or native Irish; what mattered was the interest in, and knowledge of, the lore of the Celts. Hence the elision of religious issues, an elision that would be a constant factor in Yeats’s concept of Irish identity.
- 11 Nelson’s Pillar, a monument to the victory of Horatio Nelson at Trafalgar, was erected in the main street of Dublin, originally called Sackville Street (later renamed O’Connell Street in honour of Daniel O’Connell). It was subsequently wrecked by an explosion on March 8th 1966.
- 12 The systematic train of Yeats’s thought is clear from a reading of his personal philosophy, in *A Vision*.
- 13 This speech was delivered to the Irish Senate on the passing of a Divorce Bill, which would make it illegal for citizens of Ireland, regardless of denomination, to divorce and remarry, on June 11th 1925.
- 14 For Bloom’s discussion of this point see his *Yeats*, page 87-103. Quotations in double quotation marks refer to Kiberd’s citing of Bloom.
- 15 The original Yeatsian source for this quotation was an article published in *Irish National Literature*, in *The Bookman*, July 1895.
- 16 In terms of defining culture as an anthropomorphization, specifically in terms of the face as a synecdoche of the person, his poem *The Fisherman* is worth noting. In this poem, the notion of an audience that is ready for his writing on Irish themes in the English language is expressed in terms of the face:

All day I’d looked in the face
What I had hoped ‘twould be
To write for my own race
And the reality.

- Here, there is a sense of the audience as an individual, and here, as in the quotation under discussion, there is an ethical component at work in Yeats's imagery. The foregrounding of the face is proleptic of Levinas's view of the face as the ultimate signifier of the humanity of the other.
- 17 It also excludes a large number of nationalist leaders of the past who were English speaking, including Robert Emmet, Theobald Wolfe Tone, Daniel O'Connell (who could speak Irish but felt that English was more economically advantageous to the Irish people) and Charles Stewart Parnell.
- 18 I would offer the tentative suggestion that yet again, his use of the trope of 'face' indicates a preoccupation with the other as other.
- 19 Roy Foster, in *The Apprentice Mage*, adduces textual evidence to suggest that a lot of this play was in fact written by Lady Gregory, in collaboration with Yeats, in the Summer of 1901, pages 249 and 580.
- 20 While *Passion and Cunning* has merited its place among the canon of Yeatsian criticism, I remain unconvinced that Cruise O'Brien has proven his case sufficiently. The conflation of Kevin O'Higgins with Benito Mussolini, a conflation on which much of the suasive force of the essay rests, is, to my mind, specious. Mussolini as fascist dictator was never, by any stretch of the imagination a democrat, whereas O'Higgins, despite his 'seventy seven executions' was demonstrably a democrat, and one who was fully devoted to the creation of a democratic state in Ireland. Indeed, O'Higgins's political aims can be judged from the following remarks, made in 1922: 'In Ireland in 1922 there was no state and no organised forces....No police force was functioning through the country, no system of justice was operating, the whole wheels of administration hung idle, battered out of recognition by the clash of rival jurisdictions', *Nationalism in Ireland*, page 339. That O'Higgins used strong measures is undoubtedly true, but to see him as a proto-fascist, by juxtaposition of his name with that of Mussolini, is hardly proving the case. O'Higgins's quelling of the brief 'army mutiny' (caused by the mooted demobilization of the army in March 1924), by dint of a calm approach wherein he promised an enquiry into the demobilization process, as well as allowing that a number of officers who had deserted their posts (a crime punishable by death) would be deemed to have 'retired' from the army, is hardly the act of a politician with fascist tendencies. The same could be said of his opinion regarding the site of ultimate control in the state, the civil authorities or the army: '[t]hose who take the pay and wear the uniform of the state, be they soldiers or police, must be non-political servants of the state', *The Irish Experience*, page 174. Hence, I feel that this equation of O'Higgins, and by extension Yeats, with fascism, does not really carry evidentiary weight.
- 21 While acknowledging the force of Said's argument, I feel that this placement of Yeats as a postcolonial poet is oversimplistic, given his far more complex attitude to the relationships between Ireland and England, colonized and colonizer, and Native and Anglo-Irish. Indeed the whole thrust of this chapter is to attempt to render some notion of the complexity of thought that is found in

- Yeats's poetry and political stances on these issues. One example of this complexity is to be found in the list of luminaries who were the guarantors of his Irish Literary Theatre. These included Lecky, the conservative Trinity Professor J. P. Mahaffey, Sir Horace Plunkett, Lord Castletown, Lord Ardilaun, Lord Dufferin, the Duchess of St Albans, James Dillon, John Redmond and T. M. Healy. Lest it be thought that Yeats is a pillar of the colonial enterprise, an example of the complexity and depth of his political attitudes is to be found in the manifesto for the Irish Literary Theatre, written by Yeats, which was an attack on the establishment for cutting itself off from the life around it, *The Apprentice Mage*, page 206. Clearly the difficulties of identification here are not to be contained in the overt binary opposition of colonizer/colonized, as Said implies.
- 22 Elizabeth Cullingford's book, *Yeats, Ireland and Fascism*, is a well-researched study of the complexities of the political development of Yeats.
- 23 The other terms he uses for connective relationships are the root and the radicle. The root 'endlessly develops the law of the One that becomes two, then of the two that becomes four', *The Deleuze Reader*, page 27. It is expressive of binary logical connections between elements. The radicle describes a connective relationship where the primary root has been destroyed and in its place arises a multiplicity of secondary roots, which graft on to it and develop, *The Deleuze Reader*, page 28.
- 24 Red Hugh O'Donnell was the earl of Tyrconnell who fought with Hugh O'Neill during the nine years war against the English (1595-1603) under Elizabeth, as well as at the Battle of Kinsale. He left Ireland for Spain on December 27th 1601, later dying at Simancas in August 1602.
- 25 It is interesting to note that James Joyce, like Yeats, held the work of Mangan in high esteem. For a well-argued discussion of this influence see Seamus Deane's essay 'Joyce the Irishman' in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, pages 31-54.
- 26 I would proffer some form of connection here between Levinas's notion of 'saying' as ethical openness, which in some way refuses the monological certainties of ontology, and Derrida's notion of *hauntology* which in an analogous manner, disseminates the certainties of ontology through the spectral presence of its other or others.
- 27 This is the same 'King Billy' whose victories are celebrated every Summer by Unionists and the Orange Order, during what has come to be termed 'the marching season'.
- 28 For an interesting discussion of the ideological positions that underwrote the translations, especially of Lady Gregory, and the contemporary translation of the *Táin* by the Irish poet Thomas Kinsella, see Leerson's *Remembrance and Imagination*, pages 197-207.
- 29 This hijacking of the Cuchulain sagas by an essentialist grouping of nationalists is analogous to the themes of *A Coat*, where the 'fools' caught the coat, and 'wore it' as though 'they'd wrought it'. This poem criticizes the essentialists of the Gaelic revival who were willing to, in Yeats's words, mine all of the sagas for material which would be grist to their particular ideological mill.

- 30 Yeats cited *Myths and Folklore of Ireland*, (1880) by the Irish-American writer Jeremiah Curtin (1835-1906) as the source for this poem, and praised Curtin's 'fine collections' in the *National Observer*, February 28th, 1891, *Letters to the New Island*, page 129.
- 31 See Jacques Lacan's *Écrits - A Selection*, especially the third, seventh and ninth chapters.
- 32 Foster makes some interesting points about Yeats's fascination with the 'psaltery', a harp-like instrument which he hoped would accompany his poems, pages 250; 257-267.
- 33 Harold Bloom cites the ending of an earlier draft of the poem, entitled *The Death of Cuchulain*, as being 'finer' than the death he was to die 'in the vision of the aged Yeats'. He goes on to cite the ending of the earlier version, where Cuchulain warred 'with the bitter tide/And the waves flowed above him, and he died', *Yeats*, pages 114-115.
- 34 The ambiguity of the poem as a whole needs to be studied in more detail. Even now, it is often seen as an apologia for the 1916 insurgents, with Ellmann seeing the poem as writing about a 'miracle', *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*, pages 217-218, but the text of the poem in no way reinforces this thesis. The central image of the poem, the changing of hearts to stone, is hardly a comparison meant to create positive connotations of the Rising. The same can be said of the lines near the climax of the poem, 'Was it needless death after all?/For England may keep faith/For all that is done and said.' Interestingly, there is no question mark after 'faith', indicating that Yeats saw it as a distinct possibility. What the poem does is to draw back from a complete identification with the rebels, or with their cause. As he tellingly puts it 'enough/To know they dreamed and are dead'.
- 35 One thinks of the devastation of two world wars, preceded by the vast number of inter-European conflicts dating back to the fall of the Roman Empire, and the reconciling drive that began with Franco-German steel pact, and culminated in the European Union which is breaking down the old antagonisms. While such a reference is anachronistic in terms of Yeats himself, the reconciling and civilizing imperative that he associated with European culture is clear from the poems.
- 36 For an informative account of the Lane controversy, and the efforts of Yeats therein, see Foster's *The Apprentice Mage*, pages 327-8; 477-483 and 493-498.
- 37 The original title of this poem in the Irish Times. It read: *To a friend who promises a bigger subscription than his first to the Dublin Municipal Gallery if the amount collected proves that there is a considerable "popular demand" for the pictures.*
- 38 T. R. Henn has made the points that Cosimo di Medici is Hugh Lane; Michelozzo is Lutyens and the San Marco Library is the projected gallery over the Liffey, *An Honoured Guest*, page 41.

CHAPTER 4

JOYCE: A COMMODIUS VICUS OF RECIRCULATION

(i) Joycean epistemology of identity

James Joyce, in *Dubliners*, epitomized an Ireland which was far removed from the mythopoeic Celtism of the revival, and wherein issues of Irishness and of Irish identity seem of secondary importance in the lower middle-class lives of the characters.¹ The reader who goes to *Dubliners* looking for tropes associated with the revival will be disappointed; however, there are a number of highly salient points in the collection which are related to the Joycean notions of Irishness, points which will be proleptic of the more declarative style of his later writings in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*. Perhaps the most logical place to begin is with the first story in *Dubliners*, namely *The Sisters*:

Three nights in succession I had found myself in Great Britain-street at that hour, as if by Providence. Three nights also I had raised my eyes to that lighted square of window and speculated. I seemed to understand that it would occur at night. But in spite of the Providence that had led my feet, and in spite of the reverent curiosity of my eyes, I had discovered nothing. Each night the square was lighted in some way, faintly and evenly. It was not the light of candles, so far as I could see. Therefore, it had not yet occurred.
(Gifford: 1982; 289)²

Thus begins the first paragraph of *The Sisters*, the opening story of the collection. However, this will cause some confusion among readers familiar with *Dubliners*, as there are significant differences between the above quotation and the paragraph that begins the collection. The fact is that this quotation comes from the *Irish Homestead*, wherein this story was first published on August 13th, 1904.³ Interestingly, when this story was published in the *Irish Homestead*, Joyce signed his name as ‘Stephen Daedalus’ (Beja: 1992; 34).⁴ When the story appeared at the opening of *Dubliners*, in 1914, this paragraph had undergone some significant revision.

I would argue that the import of these revisions is of major significance to any understanding of Joyce’s attitude to the importance of structure in his work, as well as to his attitude to language and interpretation in terms of the political nature of his overall project. While the essential information remains the same, there is a transformation to the mode of the telling of this information. In Levinasian terms, the said is similar but the saying is altered, and I would contend that this alteration is ethical in its mode of operation, as it explicitly leaves a space for alterity in the revised version of the story. In fact, I would go so far as to suggest that the kernel of Joyce’s epistemology of language is to be found in this paragraph:

There was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke. Night after night I had passed the house (it was vacation time) and studied the lighted square of window: and night after night I had found it lighted in the same way, faintly and evenly. If he was dead, I thought, I would see the reflection of candles on the darkened blind, for I knew that two candles must be set at the head of a corpse. He had often said to me: ‘I am not long for this world,’ and I had thought his words idle. Now I knew they were true. Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word paralysis. It had always sounded strangely in my ears, like the word gnomon in the Euclid and the word simony in the Catechism. But now it sounded to me like the name of some maleficent and sinful being. It filled me with fear, and yet I longed to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work.

(Joyce: 1994; 1)⁵

This section will argue that the reasons for these revisions are significant, and point towards a negative epistemology of the nature of identity, an epistemological position which will inform his future work. The revisions are significant from the perspective of a Joycean teleology, as they point towards a unifying force in his aesthetic wherein the revisions of the first paragraph of *The Sisters* are proleptic of the linguistic difficulties of *Finnegans Wake*, and point towards that work in terms of a reading practice and method. They also point towards his notion of a theory of Irishness that parallels Derrida's notion of the *hauntological*, Adorno's immanent and transcendent dialectical cultural critique, and the oscillation between the centripetal and the centrifugal that has been part of this book's interrogation of differing notions of Irish identity.

From the outset, the shaping function of Joyce's art was informed by a teleological drive. As Morris Beja notes, Joyce did not intend *Dubliners* to be seen as 'a collection of tourist impressions' (Beja: 1992; 32). The seriousness of his intentions regarding this collection is also reinforced in a letter to Constantine P. Curran, written in 1904, just after *The Sisters* was completed. In this letter, Joyce notes that he was planning 'a series of *epicleti*....I call the series *Dubliners* to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city' (Joyce: 1957; I; 55). It is worth noting that Joyce signed this letter 'S.D.' or Stephen Daedalus – surely a case of *nomen est omen*, as this authorial similarity connects the story with the letter, and proleptically sets up a resonance between both writings and the later works, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*,⁶ wherein Stephen appears.

There are two strands in a syntagmatic chain connecting these three pieces of writing. The pseudonym of 'Stephen Daedalus' suggests that the pronominal first person singular in *The Sisters* can be connected with the growth to consciousness of the artist who will have his portrait so carefully delineated in *A Portrait of the*

Artist as a Young Man. Through the use of this signature, in both the first version of the story and in the letter, the name of 'Daedalus' indicates both an authorial presence (the Joycean pseudonym), and an absence, for no such 'real' extra-textual person exists who could append such a signature either to the story or to the letter. Here, the linguistic convention of the signature is used to deconstruct the basis of that very convention, in that there is no 'real' Stephen Daedalus who wrote the first version of *The Sisters*, nor did he write the letter to Constantine Curran. Already, at the outset of the Joycean *oeuvre*, there is an incipient deconstruction of the representational paradigm of language, and, by extension, of the essentialist positions of socio-political identity that have been promulgated in the cultural revival movement. One can also see this *hauntological* presence of Stephen Daedalus as a negative identity for Joyce himself.

Hence, the signature 'S.D' or 'Stephen Daedalus' signifies what Derrida terms a subtracted signature: 'the name of that which is effaced or subtracted beforehand, yet which leaves a mark, a subtracted signature on the very thing from which it withdraws' (Derrida: 1991; 355-356). The three names, James Joyce, Stephen Daedalus, and Stephen Dedalus define each other negatively in that they each are connected to the person of 'James Joyce', but that ontological certainty is disseminated by the *hauntological* interaction of the other two.⁷

As well as this authorial connection, the syntagmatic chains of both the letter and the first paragraph of the story are similar in their foregrounding of signifiers of Greek origin. The syntagmatic chain '*gnomon...epicleti...hemiplegia*' has a resonance that will echo through the Joycean corpus, given his fondness for words of foreign origin, neologisms, puns and portmanteau words. The overt 'foreignness' of such words foregrounds the place of the other in Joyce's work. Alterity in terms of language, race, and thought are central to Joyce's conception of the project of writing. Faced with cultural nationalism and the different Gaelic and Celtic revivals, his response was to foreground, in Adorno's terms, points of

transcendence from which the immanence of the revivalist *Weltanschauung* could be offered to some form of critique, and for Joyce, these quasi-transcendental perspectives were created through a new epistemology of language.

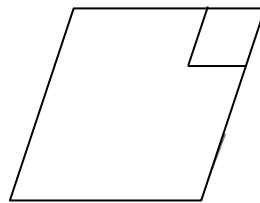
In *Stephen Hero*, Joyce makes it clear that there is no sense of a *Heimlich* linguistic homecoming in the learning of the Irish language: ‘Stephen found it very [hard] troublesome to pronounce the gutturals but he did the best he could’ (Joyce: 1986; 58).⁸ Here, the actuality of English as a native language for the majority of the Irish people is foregrounded even as the protagonist is undertaking an Irish language class. The negative materiality of the language is further accentuated by the use of the signifier ‘Beurla’ (Joyce: 1986; 58) to designate the Irish word for the English language. In fact, no such word exists in the lexicon of Irish, the term being a transliteration of the Irish word ‘Béarla’, meaning ‘the English language’.⁹ Just as there is a negative nominal epistemology to be found in the early writings of Joyce, so here, a negative, *hauntological* epistemology of language is put forward, with the actuality of the Irish language being deconstructed through the refraction of the English transliteration. In terms of linguistic structuration, ‘Beurla’ becomes a negative entity as it is neither one language, nor the other, while at the same time being recognizable in terms of what is being signified. Its function is analogous to that of the three names adduced above in that it hovers between the positions of ‘neither/nor’ and ‘both/and’. It is an example of Derrida’s *non-lieu* of a concept of linguistic identity placed *sous rature* (under erasure). Here, the principle of identity in terms of language is manifested in what Adorno has called, speaking of negative dialectics, the ‘manifested untruth of total identification’ (Adorno: 1973; 6). In Joyce’s neologistic use of this term, as in the other linguistic negative epistemologies that are to be found in his writing up to and including *Finnegans Wake*, identity and ‘contradiction of thought are welded together’ (Adorno: 1973; 6). Any form of essentialist education between nationality,

language, race, and place is resisted through Joyce's concept of an art, which makes 'itself resistant to its meanings' (Adorno: 1973; 15), and this is an aesthetic criteria which will reappear in Joyce's work.

Indeed, in *Finnegans Wake*, this linguistic and aesthetic resistance becomes the theme of the book, as a reading practice, in the usual sense of that term, will not suffice in any interaction with the text. In *Finnegans Wake*, the connections between signifier and signified, or more correctly between signifiers and other signifiers, must be teased out, with no guarantee of any definite, fixed meaning. There is a rhizomatic relationship. Other languages, other meanings, and other races hover over almost every sentence in the book. I would contend that this reading practice is implied in *The Sisters*, and that the Joycean epistemology which underwrites such practice is stated, albeit obliquely, in the opening paragraph of this story, as it appears in *Dubliners*.

The word 'gnomon' has been glossed by a number of eminent Joycean critics.¹⁰ Don Gifford sees the term as deriving from Euclid's *Elements*, book II, in which a *gnomon* is defined as what is left of a parallelogram when a similar parallelogram containing one of its corners is removed (Gifford; 1982; 29). C. H. Peake, however, suggests a different meaning of the term, as that of a pointer on a sundial which, 'by its shadow indicates the time of day' (Peake: 1977; 14).¹¹ Hélène Cixous makes the point that this word functions phonetically, and she relates it to the repetition of 'paralysis' in that it too is one of those 'incantatory expressions' which are strange because they are incomprehensible. She goes on to foreground the sound of the word 'gnomon', noting that Joyce, as though to strengthen the impressions of 'black magic', associates 'paralysis' with two other words which 'are signs of intellectual and spiritual deviation', namely 'gnomon' and 'simony' (Cixous: 1976; 378). This notion of 'perversion' is taken up by Colin MacCabe in his *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*, wherein he speaks of the 'perverse nature of the Joycean text being evident in *The Sisters*' (MacCabe: 1978; 33).

While all of the above glosses are relevant to some degree, I would suggest that both meanings of the word, that of a geometrical figure and that of a pointer on a sundial, provide a resonant symbol of the Joycean concepts of negative identity. The figure of a parallelogram with a smaller parallelogram removed suggests a desire for closure and completion that can never be achieved, for, if the parallelogram in the corner is filled in, then the shape will cease to be a *gnomon* and instead revert to being a parallelogram. To this extent, the *gnomon* is that shape which tends towards closure, always seeming to have a phantom dotted line haunting its ontology, and always tending to be what it is not.



In many ways, it is emblematic of that refusal of essentialist, fixed, identity which we saw in Yeats's poetry. It is a diagrammatic and conceptual signifier which stresses that identity and definition are always a process of becoming, as opposed to positions of fixity. In terms of heterological thought, of finding room in a conceptual scheme for the other as well as the self, the *gnomon* is a resonant paradigm, as, taking parallelogram as other and *gnomon* as self, the dialectic between them demonstrates the intersubjectivity that I would contend is the *terminus ad quem* towards which the writings of Yeats and Joyce are proceeding. To be a *gnomon* is to have a *hauntological* relationship with a parallelogram, and yet not to be a parallelogram; it is to have an independent ontology of 'self' which is, at the same time, imbricated in terms of the 'other'. It is to be defined, negatively, by an other which, while not a part of the self, is nevertheless *hauntologically* present as a *non-lieu*, or non-concept. It suggests a metaphor of

identity which, while acknowledging the centripetal, feels free to move between it and a marginal position that represents negativity and plurality. Thus, the dialectical interaction of 'self' and 'other', an interaction that is crucial in terms of an epistemology of identity, is signified in the *gnomon* as geometrical figure.

The notion of identity, in terms of the *gnomon*, is both differed and deferred; it is a classic example of what Derrida has termed *différance*, a concept which includes alterity as that which is differed from as well as that which is being deferred. The place of alterity in this epistemological paradigm, while still problematic, is nonetheless a structural *datum* of the paradigm. Protrectically speaking, while the dialectic between parallelogram and *gnomon* is still unfulfilled, nevertheless this dialectic is what negatively defines the *gnomon* itself. As a synecdoche of alterity, the *gnomon* signifies the mere 'presence of the other before whom we stand' and which helps us to 'break up our own bias and narrowness, even before he opens his mouth to make a reply' (Gadamer: 1981; 26). In this sense, there is a Levinasian resonance to the use of the term in that it is defined through an alterity to which it owes its ontology yet which is not part of that ontology. Hence, the *gnomon* can be seen as implying that man's 'ethical relation to the other is ultimately prior to his ontological relation to himself' (Levinas: 1981a; 186).

This dialectical position of intersubjective identity that exists between the *gnomon* and the parallelogram is the *telos* towards which Joyce's negative orientation of identity is directed. The negative dialectical critical position is also suggested by this figure which defines through an absence, and this *hauntological* relation is reinforced in the second gloss of the *gnomon*, namely that of a sundial. Here, too, the identificatory dialectic of self and other is enacted through the stasis of the actual pointer itself and the movement of the shadow which points out the time.¹² The dialectic of presence/absence and materiality/immateriality is encapsulated in the fact that we see the shadow as a

pointer, and as capable of movement when in fact, it is the shadow that actually travels, while the pointer itself remains static. Indeed, the pointer itself points to nothing except the sky, and can only function through its relationship with the light of the sun. The whole process is relational, and again, a presence is predicated on an absence, with one disseminating into the other.

Etymologically, *gnomon*, derives from the Greek *gnómón*, ((<T:T<) meaning indicator [literally one who knows], and ultimately from the verb *gignóskein*, ((4(<T*6,4<) meaning ‘to know’ (Bernhart: 1972; I; 901). Hence my argument that this term is intrinsic to a Joycean epistemology in general, and in particular to an epistemological position on Irishness and on Irish identity. I would argue that Joyce is engaged in a process of deconstructing any notion of essentialist Irishness, and that this process begins in *Dubliners*. The appeal to a linguistic chain deriving from Greek is redolent of Yeats’s early placement of his own writing within the recreated space of classical Greece, with its espousal of literature, civilization, law, and democracy. All of Joyce’s work will be placed within a *parergon* constituted of Greek legend and writing, and the relationship between the *parergon* (frame) and the *ergon* (work) is, in Derridean fashion, far more complicated than a simple outside/inside dichotomy;¹³ the relationship is *gnomonic* in that the Greek frame interacts with the enclosed work, creating a new form of identity between them, where one is *hauntologically* present within the ontology of the other, both in terms of shape and in terms of light and shadow.

Interestingly, the final Greek term in the syntagmatic chain noted earlier – *hemiplegia* – is not quite the simple ‘paralysis’ that has been almost universally seen as a defining thematic and structural imperative in *Dubliners*. The term actually refers to a paralysis in one side of the body only, and again, we see the interaction and dialectical play of motion/stasis in the body of the work, an interplay that is synecdochic of a view of identity that looks outward and upward

for an identificatory matrix. In fact, the etymology of *hemiplegia* points us in this direction: *hémi* meaning ‘half, and *plége* meaning ‘stroke’ (Bernhart: 1972; I; 978). Here, the stasis-kinesis dialectic or economy again points to a view of epistemology in general, and I would suggest, of identity in particular, as involving this form of movement, or dialectic. Identity here is neither static nor random motion, neither *monoglossia* nor *polyglossia*, but some form of interaction between them, with the Greek origins of civilization as a regulative notion keeping relativism in check. That relativism would need to be kept in check is a point made early in the argument of *Negative Dialectics*.¹⁴ Adorno is careful to note that negative dialectics is as opposed to relativism as it is to absolutism, and makes the programmatic point that a criticism of relativism is ‘the paradigm of definite negation’ (Adorno: 1973; 37). The culture that created the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the notion of a supreme court on Mount Areopagus, serves this function well, in Joyce as it did in Yeats.

The medial Greek signifier, *epicleti*, enacts a consolidating role in the Joycean epistemology. As Ellmann has noted, it derives from a mistranslation of ‘*epicleses* (Latin) or *epicleseis* (Greek)’ and it refers to an invocation in which the Holy Ghost is besought to transform the host into the body and blood of Christ (Ellmann: 1977; 169). Here language functions as a calling together of transcendental and immanent; of spiritual and material; of the ideal and the real. That this conflation has not yet happened, that what is signified by the term is a moment of becoming, is crucial to the Joycean epistemology. I would argue that the crucial point here is that the *epicleseis* define the call to the Holy Spirit; in this sense, the word belongs to a protreptic mode of discourse in that it relates to a time which is preliminary to the desired fusion or conflation.

This moment of becoming, this movement between two or more different aspects of an identity, be that the different names of God, or the nominal chain that we saw in the signature appended to the *Irish Homestead* version of *The Sisters*, can

be seen in terms of what Walter Benjamin has defined as a constellation.¹⁵ This term, best understood in terms of his homology ‘ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars’ (Benjamin: 1977; 34), allows for a non self-present form of identity, while at the same time eschewing a relativism that could lead to a postmodern paradigm of images, floating signifiers and simulacra.¹⁶ Adorno sees the constellation as that which illuminates a specific aspect of any object. It represents from outside ‘what the concept has cut away from within: the “more” which the concept is equally desirous and incapable of being’ (Adorno: 1973; 162). Theoretical thought, as a constellation, provides a position of immanent critique (which is quasi-transcendental to the particular concept in question), through the grouping around the particular concept of others which are constitutive of it. In other words, the history of the individual concept, or object of critique, is both ‘in the individual thing and outside it’; it is something in which the individual thing has its place. Such thinking, such becoming aware of the constellation ‘in which a thing stands is tantamount to deciphering the constellation which, having come to be, it bears within it’ (Adorno: 1973; 163). For Joyce, identity is such a constellation, which is created through a negative linguistic epistemology, an epistemology which is signified by the parallel trinitities of names and foreign signifiers.

It is through the constellation of James Joyce, Stephen Dedalus and Stephen Daedalus, and that of *gnomon*, *epicleti*, and *hemiplegia*, that Joyce’s epistemology of identity must be viewed. This deliberate foregrounding of different nominal and linguistic perspectives is precisely what Benjamin saw as paradigmatic of the constellation. In *Illuminations*, he discusses the epistemology of the discipline of history, a topic of extreme relevance to our discussion, as the Celtic and Gaelic revivals saw themselves as following in a historical tradition, as indeed did the insurrectionists of 1916. Benjamin made the point that while historicism is concerned with the causal relationship between different events, ‘no fact which is a cause is for that very reason historical’. He makes the point

that the event became ‘causal’ or ‘historical’ posthumously, through events that may be separated from it ‘by thousands of years’, and he goes on to note that a historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. (Benjamin: 1969; 265). For Joyce, his work is predicated on the creation of such constellations wherein the different aspects of identity, epistemological, cognitive, linguistic, and traditional will come into connection. Indeed, one could suggest an analogy between Benjamin and Adorno’s concept of ‘constellation’ and the Joycean notion of epiphany.

Joyce’s epiphanies date back to a ‘series of prose sketches’ called *Silhouettes* (Ellmann: 1977; 51), which anticipated the later more developed work.¹⁷ The term ‘epiphany’ is borrowed by Joyce from Christianity (without acknowledgement one must note), referring to the revelation of Christ to the Magi. Writing in *Stephen Hero*, the novel which was eventually revised, and transformed into *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce puts into the mouth of his alter ego Stephen Dedalus, the following definition: ‘[b]y an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or of a memorable phase of the mind itself’ (Joyce: 1986; 188). For Joyce such epiphanies are moments of clarity when the soul of a thing, ‘its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of the commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany’ (Joyce: 1986; 190).¹⁸ However clear this definition would appear to be, it does raise some interesting issues.

Towards the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the following example occurs, pointing towards Stephen’s feeling of being called to Europe, and more specifically, to France.¹⁹ He felt the call of European culture and

learning as evidenced in *Epiphany XXX*, which also occurs towards the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*:

The spell of arms and voices: the white arms of roads, their promise of close embraces and the black arms of tall ships that stand against the moon, their tale of distant nations. They are held out to say: We are alone. Come. And the voices say with them: We are your kinsmen. And the air is thick with their company as they call to me, their kinsman, making ready to go, shaking the wings of their exultant and terrible youth.

(Joyce: 1993; 218)

The actual process of perception that is structurally constitutive of this epiphany is worth noting here. The objects that gave rise to the epiphany are 'roads' and 'ships'; it is through the transforming gaze of Joyce that these create the epiphany. This raises the question as to whether the epiphanaic moment is part of the subject or the object: does the 'whatness' of a thing derive from the thing itself, or from the gaze of the watching eye? Is this 'whatness' already present, or is it a construct in terms of perception?

In *Stephen Hero*, Joyce gives a cogent account of this creative perception, which establishes the identity of an object in relation to the subject, Joyce himself. Referring to the clock on the Ballast Office, in Dublin as an example, Stephen tells his friend Cranly exactly how this process is brought into being. He explains that he will:

pass it time after time, allude to it, refer to it, catch a glimpse of it. It is only an item in the catalogue of Dublin's street furniture. Then all at once I see it and I know at once what it is: epiphany....Imagine my glimpses at that clock as the gropings of a spiritual eye which seeks to adjust its vision to an exact focus. The moment the focus is reached the object is epiphanized.

(Joyce: 1986; 189)

As Stephen Connor points out, there is a double movement to be discerned in Joyce's notion of epiphany. On the one hand, the epiphany is a 'showing forth'

as the whatness of an object leaps out; on the other, however, such a showing forth is achieved through the ‘focus’ of the eye, which implies a perceiving intelligence (an ‘I’ behind the ‘eye’) at work (Connor: 1996; 12-13). I would suggest that what is at work here is the Joycean *gnomonic* epistemology which refuses to see objects, or concepts, as essentials, or as fixed. Rather does he perceive in terms of what Adorno would term a *Kraftfeldt* (force-field) which consisted of the transactional and relational interplay of different, and sometimes opposing, forces. Hence, one could see the epiphany, not in terms of the binary oppositions of subject/object or perceiver/perceived, but rather in terms of a constellation of a series of juxtaposed clusters of changing elements that, according to Martin Jay, ‘resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle’ (Jay: 1984; 15). Clearly then, any attempt to prioritize the perceiving subject over the perceived object is doomed to misrecognize the *gnomonic* epistemology of the epiphany. Instead, the constellatory mode of thinking brings together, in mutually negative definition, the relationship between the ‘whatness’ of the object, and the insight of the observer in a manner homologous to that of the *gnomon* and parallelogram, or the pointer and the shadow.²⁰

Derrida’s notion of *hauntology* then, with its hovering, spectral presences which pluralize the certainties of ontology, is a paradigm of this constellatory epistemology. This ongoing process of intertextual imbrication, of haunting of self by the other, provides a coherent thematic commentary on Joyce’s work, which is, in many ways, predicated on an imbrication of the Irish with the European, an imbrication which is *gnomonic* in its constellatory negative definition of Ireland in terms of a European ‘other’.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is predicated on the Greek legend of Daedalus and Icarus, while *Ulysses* is structurally organized around Homer’s *Odyssey*, one of the seminal narratives of Western Europe, with *Finnegans Wake*

being written in a macro-imbrication of almost fifty languages. The value of such negative definitions is clear from the words of Joyce from *Finnegans Wake*: '[h]is dream monologue was over, of cause, but his drama parapolylogic had yet to be' (Joyce: 1975; 474, 4-5). For Joyce, a monological, essentialist Irishness would always be consigned to the oneiric realm, whereas the more realistic option for the writer concerned with issues of identificatory definition would be the creation of protreptic confrontations of different aspects of Irishness, a 'drama parapolylogic' wherein definition would always be constellatory and relational, as opposed to fixed and essentialist.

The title of *Dubliners* helps to foreground this *gnomonic* conceptual approach to Irishness. Firstly, the focus is on the citizens of the capital city, seat of British administration as well as the headquarters of advanced nationalist opinion such as Sinn Féin, along with nationalistically inclined newspapers such as the *Leader* and the *United Irishman*. In the collection there is little reference to the rest of Ireland, with the exception of the closing pages of *The Dead*, and the 'piercing North of Ireland accent' of Mr Alleyne in *Counterparts* (Joyce: 1994; 74). These *Dubliners* have little in common with the depictions of Irishness in the sagas already referred to in Chapter Two, or with the peasant dramas that were part of the *milieu* of revivalist drama. Here, the definitions of Irishness are micrological in their preoccupation with the diurnal business of urban living; they also usher into the debate about identity the issue of social class and the alienation of labour. Here there are no hardy peasants tilling the soil, and communing with nature. Here, people work in unpleasant jobs, for pay.

The *leitmotif* of work, of low paid labour, is a recurring one throughout *Dubliners*. The absence of the definite article in the work's title seems to indicate a programmatic account of 'Dubliners' in general, as opposed to a group *sui generis*. One of the uniting tropes in their lives is that of work. In *The Sisters*, Eliza immediately tells of her central preoccupation in terms of her deceased

brother James's funeral: 'There's poor Nannie,' said Eliza, looking at her, 'she's wore out. All the work we had, she and me, getting in the woman to wash him and then laying him out and then the coffin and then arranging about the Mass in the chapel' (Joyce: 1994; 7). In *An Encounter* there is the injunction given to Dillon by Father Butler to 'get at your work or...' (Joyce: 1994; 11), with the *aposiopesis* implying what lies in store for a Dubliner who does not get his or her work done. The protagonist of *Araby* 'chafed against the work of school' (Joyce: 1994; 22), while the eponymous Evelines's life is framed by work: '[o]f course she had to work hard, both in the house and at business' (Joyce: 1994; 27).²¹ This foregrounding of the necessity of labour, and usually indoor labour for little or no wages, forges a bond between Dubliners and Londoners or Parisians of the same social class. There arises a constellatory *Kraftfeldt* where the people are defined by their labour, a labour which is paralleled in all the cities of Europe. There is very little of essentialist Irishness to be found in these stories.

What references to Irishness that do appear further underline the negative definitions of Irishness that are espoused by Joyce, even as he writes from Trieste. A reader looking for the signifier 'Gaelic' will be disappointed. The term 'Celtic' appears twice, both times in *A Little Cloud*, and both times, used in quietly disparaging terms. Little Chandler is daydreaming about becoming an artist, and typically, is composing the reviews without composing any text which could be reviewed. In this mood, he wonders if the 'English critics, perhaps, would recognize him as one of the Celtic school by reason of the melancholy tone of his poems' (Joyce: 1994; 62). For Joyce, such poetry is seen as lacking, as can be seen from the ironic touch of Chandler's remark that, to add to the Celticity of the poems, he 'would put in allusions', which would help him to strike the expected '*Celtic note*' (Joyce: 1994; 62). The superadded quality of such quasi-essentialism is parodied here by the affectation of making his name more 'Irish-looking' by inserting his mother's name before his surname 'T. Malone Chandler' (Joyce: 1994; 62). Here, notions of monological cultural

nationalism are parodied as the proto-writer has assumed a Celtic persona, and slotted into the Celtic school without ever having written a Celtic word. In a sense he embodies, in the words of *Finnegans Wake*, 'our worldstage's practical jokepiece and retired cecelticocommediant in his own wise' (Joyce: 1975; 33, 2-4). Joyce sees the Celtic revival (and the associated Gaelic revival) as a form of retirement from modernity and the present. The daydream of Little Chandler is analogous to the daydream of a return to Celticity; both attempt to avoid the plurality and multivalence of the present, in favour of a stuttering ('ceceltic...') espousal of the values of a past which is, in its creation and pseudomorphism of values and cultures, a 'practical jokepiece'. The satirical thrust of both 'Celtic' points (the Irish-looking name, and the necessity for 'allusions' which would serve to strike 'the Celtic note'), is directed at such a superimposed notion of essentialist identity that is anachronistic and politically naive.²²

Perhaps this is why the only Celtic note in *Dubliners* appears to be off-key. Joyce had little use for an identity that would be monological and monolingual, a point made disparagingly in *Finnegans Wake*, where he talks about the Irish verse form, the rann, and *hauntologically* imbricates it with a song sung by Wrenboys, 'The Wren, the wren, the king of all birds', so that it becomes 'the rann, the rann, that keen of old bards' (Joyce: 1975; 363, 5).²³ For Joyce, having already voted with his feet, and achieved a quasi-transcendental perspective on Dublin from the continent, Celtism could have little to offer in terms of a modernist notion of Irishness. On a broader note, the Irish revival, which, as we have seen, was central to contemporary debates about identity, appears twice in *Dubliners*, and both times, it is the target of Joycean irony, as we will see.

In *A Mother*, Joyce gives us a cynical view of the effects of this revival on the already created sense of identity of the Dubliners in question. He makes it clear that he sees it as impossible to 'create' a monological or monolingual notion of Irishness in any meaningful way. For him, the 'keen of old bards' will always be

a superadded quality which people will espouse for all sorts of reasons, a point that is keenly made in the case of Mrs Kearney:

When the Irish Revival began to be appreciable Mrs Kearney determined to take advantage of her daughter's name and brought an Irish teacher to the house. Kathleen and her sister sent Irish picture postcards to their friends and these friends sent back other Irish picture postcards. On special Sundays, when Mr Kearney went with his family to the pro-cathedral, a little crowd of people would assemble after mass at the corner of Cathedral Street. They were all friends of the Kearneys – musical friends or Nationalist friends, and, when they had played every little counter of gossip, they shook hands with one another all together, laughing at the crossing of so many hands, and said good-bye to one another in Irish. Soon the name of Miss Kathleen Kearney began to be heard often on people's lips.

(Joyce: 1994; 121)

The term 'appreciable' has immediate economic implications, and the determination of Mrs Kearney to take advantage of her daughter's name by getting her to learn Irish ('Kathleen' being seen as suitably Irish-looking, to echo Little Chandler's perspective), results in a combination of language, culture, and religion. As the story unfolds, commercialism is seen as an important trope, as both the committee and Mrs Kearney are determined that culture and value for money should go hand in hand. This process of cultural reification, scornfully told, is reminiscent of some Yeatsian tirades against the Catholic *bourgeoisie* who felt that 'men were born to pray and save' (Yeats: 1979a; 121).

However, *A Mother's* engagement with the revivalist *mentalité* works at another level in that it is a parody of perhaps *the* work of the Gaelic and Celtic revivals, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*. In this play, as already discussed in Chapter Three, Ireland is anthropomorphosed into an old woman, who takes a young man, Michael Gillane, from his wedding to fight and die for her. The mythic message is that the children of the nation must be willing to give their lives for their nation. In Joyce's story, the heroine shares the first name of Cathleen (Kathleen), while the man who arranges her contract rejoices in the second name: 'Mr

Holohan, assistant secretary of the *Eire Abu Society*' (Joyce: 1994; 120).²⁴ This conjunction, allied to the maternal theme that runs through both works, is more than coincidental. The signifier '*Abu*'²⁵ is an Irish word meaning 'up' as in 'Up Ireland' or 'may Ireland be triumphant'. These connections imply a *hauntological* correspondence between both works, and the issue of money, so central to Mrs Kearney, '[s]he will get four pounds eight into her hand or a foot she won't put on that platform' (Joyce: 1994; 131), while so peripheral to the Old Woman in *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* '[t]his is not what I want. It is not silver I want' (Yeats: 1992; 84), further strengthens the correspondence. Mrs Kearney will not allow Kathleen to perform her musical accompaniment without payment, while the Old Woman offers only suffering and death as practical rewards to those who will fight for her. Joyce, by substituting financial demands for the sacrifice of lives, ironically counterpoints the control function of the mother in both works. In *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, Michael Gillane's life will be ruined through probable death or capture in the event of the abortive rebellion. By the end of *A Mother*, 'Miss Kathleen Kearney's musical career was ended in Dublin after that' (Joyce: 1994; 130). In the *Lebenswelt* of the play, sacrifice was the expected reaction of all right-thinking Irish people; Joyce more shrewdly depicts a reaction to Celtism and Irish-Ireland as one of self-interest.

The core difference is the grammatical number of that 'self'. In *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, it is plural and collective. The Old Woman's final lines combine a hortative cry with a vatic vision, and the sameness of the subjects of her vision is foregrounded through the rhetorical device of symploce, as the first and last words of each clause are repeated:

Many that are red-cheeked now will be pale-cheeked; many that have been free to walk the hills and the bogs and the rushes will be sent to walk hard streets in far countries; many a good plan will be broken; many that have gathered money will not stay to spend it....They that have red cheeks will have pale cheeks for my sake...

They shall be remembered forever,

They shall be alive forever,
They shall be speaking forever,
The people shall hear them forever.

(Yeats: 1992; 86)

The address to ‘many’ and ‘they’ clearly implies a homogenous subjectivity, all of whom, like Michael, will respond to such a call. Self-interest, his wedding, the love of Delia, money, the ownership of a farm, are all cast aside in the service of ‘Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan’ (Yeats: 1992; 85). Her appeal is a self-fulfilling prophecy in that it is through her mythopoeic image that subjectivities such as that of Michael, the ‘many’ and the ‘they’, have been created in the first place.

In Joyce’s story, the subjectivities are heterogeneous, and are all motivated by an individual self-interest. The fact that the name ‘Cathleen Ni Houlihan’ is translated into ‘Kathleen...Holohan’, and dispersed over two different people is mimetic of Derrida’s view of identity as necessarily having an opening or gap within itself (Derrida: 1997b; 14). This dissemination of identity is also mimetic of a dissemination of essentialism in terms of the revival itself. For Mrs Kearney, the Irish revival is a way of advancing the musical career of her daughter; Mr Holohan hopes to secure a skilled accompanist at a reasonable rate of pay, at least with reference to his expectations of overall revenue from the four concerts; the committee hopes to cut its losses financially; Kathleen hopes to please her audience, while Miss Healy, one of her nationalist friends, and a contralto, took over from Kathleen, and played ‘one or two accompaniments’ (Joyce: 1994; 132). The whole theme of the story is the complex interaction of different types of subjectivity, and indeed, the expectation denied when some people act in a manner that is different to the perceived opinion of how they should act: “‘I thought you were a lady,” said Mr Holohan’ (Joyce: 1994; 132). In this story, identity is definitely plural, and this point can be extrapolated from *A Mother* to the complete collection.

Joyce himself has given the reader some directions in terms of reading these stories. He made the point that the stories are organized around organic principles: *The Sisters*, *An Encounter*, and *Araby* ‘which are stories of my childhood’; *The Boarding House*, *After the Race*, and *Eveline* ‘which are stories of adolescence’; *The [sic] Clay*, *Counterparts*, and *A Painful Case* ‘which are stories of mature life’ and *Ivy Day in the Committee Room*, *A Mother*, and *Grace* ‘which are stories of public life in Dublin’ (Ellmann: 1977; 216). It is as if Joyce is describing the growth of an individual, progressing through these stages, and yet, the same characters do not figure in any of the stories; what growth there is can only be achieved through the reader’s ongoing process of *gnomonic* imbrication of each story in terms of the others. In this sense, a singular subjectivity is disseminated and denied; instead what is offered, through the epiphanic mode of cognition, are glimpses of difference, of disseminated subjectivity, which occur in the constellation brought about in the mind of the reader, as the oscillation between the different stories builds up a picture of multiple identities of the delineated Dubliners. Homogenization is not to be achieved, nor is there any sense of a Hegelian *Aufhebung*. What is achieved is a sense of multiple subjectivities, negatively defined against other subjectivities from the other stories, and this oscillatory process of epiphany leads us to a reading of *Dubliners* which is entirely in keeping with Joyce’s *gnomonic* epistemology. The shadowy *hauntological* presence of characters from different stories in the consciousness of the reader, allied to the developmental scaffolding that Joyce is so careful to provide, allows the fixed *gnomonic* pointer of each story to be more fully informed by the shadowy movement of the other stories and their characters, stories which were, let it be remembered, originally entitled *Silhouettes* (Ellmann: 1977; 51).

Joyce’s concept of identity, then, is similar to that of Theodore Adorno in terms of the clear-sighted view that real thinking must focus on those resistant details

which refuse to be systematized into dialectical or totalizing structures. In this sense, *Dubliners* may be seen as an example of Joyce discussing completely different notions of Irishness from those which were hegemonically dominant in the revival ethos. *Dubliners*, as we have seen, has very little to do with Celtic, Gaelic, or Irish language issues; the macrocosmic questions of identity are subsumed beneath the diurnal detritus of the microcosmic details of lower middle-class living in Dublin. However, despite the intricate presentation of the details of life among his *Dubliners*, he does write about the Irish literary and cultural revivals, and about how they effect the lives of his characters. Always, however, there is a *gnomonic* space which allows for a different, negative interpretation. His portrayal of these ‘Dubliners’ is informed by a dictum of Stephen Dedalus in *Stephen Hero*, when he tells Cranly that ‘no esthetic theory...is of any value which investigates with the aid of the lantern of tradition’ (Joyce: 1986; 189). As Emer Nolan accurately notes, Joyce’s unflinching localism ‘subverts the myth-making and the integrative, falsifying vision of cultural nationalism’ (Nolan: 1995; 29). For Joyce, such ‘tradition’ is both false and fabricated. In an attitude redolent of Yeats’s *A Coat*, he sees the falseness and fabrication of attempting to create a made-to-measure overall identity which is then assumed by all.

The element of fabrication in Mrs Kearney’s adoption of the ‘Irish Revival’ by taking ‘advantage of her daughter’s name’ and bringing ‘an Irish teacher into the house’ (Joyce: 1994; 121), is paralleled by Little Chandler’s attempt to compose a poetic *persona* to fit snugly into the Celtic School. In Joycean terms the ‘Irish revival’ on which Mrs Kearney is so fixated, is merely one of ‘humpteen dumpteen revivals’ (Joyce: 1975; 219, 15), which like their homophonic nursery rhyme precursor, is far from a unified, self-sufficient entity. Little Chandler’s quasi-artistic Celtism is set up as viewed from England; the Celtism to which he aspires must be validated from the perspective of Englishness, as opposed to Irishness. We are told that ‘every step brought him nearer to London’; that it

would be the ‘English Critics’ who would recognize him as ‘one of the Celtic School’, and it is from the notices of these critics that he begins to invent ‘sentences and phrases’ which his book would get: “*Mr Chandler has the gift of easy and graceful verse*’...‘*A wistful sadness pervades these poems*’...‘*The Celtic note*’” [*italics original*] (Joyce: 1994; 62). Hence, his Celtic note has a ‘made in England’ label attached, a fact which undercuts the essentialist and isolationist pretensions of the Celtic revival.

Indeed, his admiration for his friend Ignatius Gallaher is also validated by English opinion. He is impressed by Gallaher who is now ‘a brilliant figure on the London Press’ (Joyce: 1994; 59). The whole story revolves around their meeting, a meeting which has been seen by Robert Scholes as yet another contest between Ireland and England (Scholes: 1969; 379), though I feel this is oversimplistic. What is being criticized here is the pretension towards self-sufficiency of the linguistic and cultural revival, as well as that of its political adjunct, Sinn Féin. Joyce is prefiguring what he will later, in *Finnegans Wake*, term ‘the hour of the twattering of bards in the twitterlitter between Druidia and the Deepsleep Sea’ (Joyce: 1975; 37, 17-18).

For Joyce, this ‘twattering’ of the ‘retired cecelticocommediant’ is mimetically voiced as a stuttering form of identity, which is struggling to enunciate its vision of a Celtic and Gaelic identity, while all the time being undermined by what Bakhtin terms *heteroglossia*, the multiplicity of voices that form the modern nation. He is pointing up a Bakhtinian process of decentring, as the attempt to seal off and make self sufficient the Irish language and culture becomes destabilized by the historical presence of English, as a spoken language, which is unable to be denied. Instead of attempting to further this process of denial, Joyce instead embraces the English language, and points up the ironies of a revivalist ideology which very often is expressed through the English language. As he will

put it in *Finnegans Wake*, parodying the stuttering enunciation of identity that he sees as characteristic of the [ce]Celtic revival:

I am woo-
woo willing to take my stand, sir, upon the monument, that sign
of our ruru redemption, any hygienic day to this hour and to
make my hoath to my sinnfinners, even if I get life for it, upon
the Open Bible and before the Great Taskmaster's (I lift my hat!)
and in the presence of the Deity Itself andwell of Bishop and
Mrs Michan of High Church of England as of all such of said
my immediate withdwellers and of every living sohle in every
corner wheresoever of this globe in general which useth of my
British to my backbone tongue and commutative justice that
there is not one tittle of truth, allow me to tell you, in that purest
of fibfib fabrications.

(Joyce: 1975; 36, 23-34)

Here, the ironic situation of a group whose name translates as 'Ourselves Alone', and whose whole ethos is Irish-Ireland as self-sufficient, taking their solemn oath in their 'British to [the] backbone tongue', reinforces the *gnomonic* epistemology that is to be found in *Dubliners*. Irishness, even seemingly Celtic and Gaelic Irishness, is necessarily defined negatively in the English language; any other epistemological stance is a 'fibfib fabrication'. Just as the geometrical *gnomon* is haunted by the parallelogram from which it was formed, and just as the *gnomonic* pointer on the sundial is haunted by the moving shadow, so Irishness, however self-determined, must be haunted by its other – Englishness. Hence, Joyce, rather than attempting to follow the isolationist tendencies of advanced nationalism and cultural revivalism, would choose to take on the dialectical imbrication of Ireland and England, and to make a virtue of his situatedness within the Anglophone world so as to create a notion of identity which would espouse alterity in all its forms. He would go on to define Irishness negatively, in terms of a *hauntological Kraftfeldt* which consisted of Ireland, Europe, and a neologistic use of the English language.

(ii) *Nets that must be flown by*

The thrust of the concluding sections of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is the conflict between centripetal and centrifugal notions of Irish and aesthetic identity. In lines that have become a resonant *credo* of Joyce's own exile from Ireland, he puts in the mouth of Stephen this astute summary of the effect of essentialist aspects of Irishness on an individual consciousness. Here, speaking of the soul, Stephen makes the point that:

The soul is born, he said vaguely, first in those moments I told you of. It has a slow and dark birth, more mysterious than the birth of the body. When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets.

(Joyce: 1993; 177)

This can be seen as a programmatic and overt statement of negative identity. It is very different in theme and in style from the preceding stories of *Dubliners*. In *Dubliners*, the style was covert and indirect; as narrative voice tended to blend with characters in free indirect discourse, with little personal input from any central narrative presence. Here, the voice, expressed in the personal pronoun, first person singular, is actively embracing the outward heteroglossic movement that will be seen as creative of a new form of Irishness. The verb of motion that brings his assertion to its rhetorical climax is a deliberate invoking of the negative movement of the *gnomon*, whether in terms of a movement to the hovering parallelogram, or the moving shadow of the pointer, or in terms of the etymology of *hemiplegia*, in the direction of the *hémi* ('half'), that has not been the victim of the *plége* ('stroke'). The desire to seek out new dimensions and new modes of identity should not, however, be seen as a flight from his own country or his own sense of Irishness. On the contrary, it is in the cause of some

redefinition of Irishness that he feels he must achieve a transcendent position, and move to Europe; here he will attempt to redefine a sense of Irishness within a European context:

Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.

(Joyce: 1993; 218)

The key word here is 'uncreated'; the essentialist, nationalist conscience of his race is to be found in Ireland in abundance. In the final chapter, Stephen speaks of that conscience in terms of imagery of darkness and furtiveness: 'under the deepened dusk he felt the thoughts and desires of the race to which he belonged flitting like bats across the dark country lanes, under trees by the edges of streams and near the poolmottled bogs' (Joyce: 1993; 205). The imagery of the flitting bat, a creature of the night who shuns the light of day, would seem fitting to Stephen as he speaks of his own dissatisfaction with the Ireland of his time. This is the Ireland which attempts to define him in its own terms, terms enunciated by Davin who says a 'man's country comes first' and goes on to tell Stephen that he can be 'a poet or a mystic after' (Joyce: 1993; 177).

What Stephen is attempting to do is to create a negative portrait of Irish identity, as he puts it the 'uncreated conscience' of his race. To create this, he must have some regulative point from where he can begin to dialectically juxtapose the immanent and the transcendent in Adorno's terms. Two tropes allow him to achieve this, his resonant name and the trope of emigration, and both combine to offer a transcendental perspective on Ireland.

Stephen's name is a signifier of otherness from the beginning of the book. Nasty Roche, on first hearing it asks '[w]hat kind of a name is that?' (Joyce: 1993; 21), while later in the opening chapter, Athy says 'you have a queer name, Dedalus'

(Joyce: 1993; 34). This strangeness of name, allied to Stephen's early preoccupation with words, names, and stories marks him out as different from the other boys. From the earliest stage, Stephen situates himself in terms of a society and a *Lebenswelt* that reaches out beyond Ireland, and nomenclature is a seminal trope in this situation. His friend, Fleming has inscribed the following doggerel on his geography book:

*Stephen Dedalus is my name,
Ireland is my nation.
Clongowes is my dwellingplace
And heaven my expectation. [italics original]*

(Joyce: 1993; 27)

However, on the flyleaf of his geography book, he inscribes his name, but in a manner which redefines himself within a far wider set of parameters that the above is proleptic of his later flight to Europe in the closing chapter. Given the connotations of space and place with which this study is concerned, it is significant that the site of these different views of Stephen's place in the world is a geography book. The study of place, and of identity, which is seminal to the discipline of geography, implies that Stephen is attempting to utter a personal cognitive geography which will define himself:

*Stephen Dedalus
Class of Elements
Clongowes Wood College
Sallins
County Kildare
Ireland
Europe
The World
The Universe.*

(Joyce: 1993; 27)

Here, Joyce is locating himself within a far broader spatial span than that allotted him by Fleming. In Fleming's placement, Stephen is slotted into an expected range of definitional identificatory parameters: he is Irish and Catholic, and his future path is predetermined. Here, there is an echo of Davin, who tells him that his country must come first. The identificatory epistemology is foundationalist in that there is no room in this narrow prescriptive paradigm for alterity of any sort.

His own spatial inventory, however, places him as a citizen of Dublin-in-the-world. His Irishness is still asserted, but, in *gnomonic* terms, it is defined against the huge other shape, the universe, of which it is a very small part. There is a similarity here with Mr Duffy, in *A Painful Case*, who chose to live 'in Chapelizod because he wished to live as far as possible from the city of which he was a citizen' (Joyce: 1994; 93). Joyce at no stage renounces his Irishness; but he does wish to achieve some form of distance from the Dublin of the revival.

His name also foregrounds this sense of distance, as does his visualization of himself as a citizen of the universe, rather than one of Irish-Ireland. For Joyce, the *hauntological gnomonic* definition of identity will always see the present Ireland defined dialectically against the hovering alterity of Europe, and the world. The proper name is central to any epistemology of identity; one's name is that which locates one as part of a language and a culture. Just as the signifier 'Dedalus' conjures up mythic images of a spectral father who will provide his foster-son with a means to fly above the maze and nets of nationality, so the name of God, itself a potent signifier of Catholic essentialism, is invoked in the opening chapter of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, but the evocation is through the ironic eye of Joyce, telling us from a transcendental perspective, about the young Stephen's immanent participation in essentialist modes of perception.

Stephen, pondering the inscription on the flyleaf of his geography book, wonders about what comes after the universe. His answer is: '[n]othing. But was there

anything round the universe to show where it stopped before the nothing place began?’ (Joyce: 1993; 27). He then goes on to think about everything and everywhere, but feels that such thoughts are ‘very big’ and imagines that only God can think about them. One could see such a perspective as evidence that the Jesuits in Clongowes were doing their job well, and the adequation of epistemology with religion would seem to fit in nicely with the pieties of Irish-Ireland that we saw in the previous chapters. These pieties will be subjected to an ironic rendition in the following quotation from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, as Stephen goes on to see God in ethnocentric terms, noting that:

God was God’s name just as his name was Stephen. Dieu was the French for God and that was God’s name too; and when anyone prayed to God and said Dieu then God knew at once that it was a French person that was praying. But, though there were different names for God in all the different languages in the world and God understood what all the people who prayed said in their different languages, still God remained always the same God and God’s real name was God.

(Joyce: 1993; 27)

Through Joyce’s ironic eye, an eye which will, in *Finnegans Wake*, speak of a ‘thousandfirst’ name (Joyce: 1975; 254, 19), the monological religious and linguistic imperatives of the Gaelic revival and advanced nationalism are etiolated into the simplistic thought processes of a small child. Through the ironic positioning of the narrative voice, Joyce the author, achieves a transcendent perspective on Stephen the character, and as such can achieve something very like Adorno’s notion of dialectical criticism. As well as this, he is able to portray such a contempt for alterity in terms of language, as childish and immature, as the *Dieu* is ‘absorbed’ (to recall the phraseology of D. P. Moran) into the Anglo-Saxon signifier ‘God’. That such a perspective was still extant in the revivalist mindset has been only too clear, as we have seen.

Joyce as author will make a space and a time for alterity, a point that is abundantly clear in the *hauntological* evocation and transformation of the opening lines of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in a later passage from *Finnegans Wake*:

Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo...

(Joyce: 1993; 19)

Eins within a space and a wearywide space it wast ere wohned a Mookse. The onesomeness wast alltolonely, archunsitslike, broady oval, and a Mookse he would a walking go...

(Joyce: 1975; 152, 18-20)

It is clear that the childish narrative certainties are *hauntologically* redefined in the analogous piece from *Finnegans Wake*. A parallel reading reveals the dissemination of the certainties of the earlier epistemological position. In the quotation from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, there is an experiential familiarity evident throughout the piece. The opening, borrowing from the *topos* of the fairy or folk tale, is comforting and recognizable, as is the ‘baby-talk’ which is the frame of reference of the story. There is *one* time, *one* road, *one* cow and *one* ‘nicens little boy’. All is familiar and comforting. There is no problem with identification here; temporally and spatially the reader is in familiar territory.

In the version found in *Finnegans Wake*, such certainties are dissipated in the linguistic frame of reference which defamiliarizes the familiar fairy tale opening, and achieves a transactional metamorphosis of time into space. This imbrication of time and space in an Einsteinian paradigm of relativity, further underscores the scattering of monological certainties that is to be found in Joyce’s work. I would further suggest that the two passages are analogous to the Levinasian

terms of 'saying' and 'said' which he writes about in *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*. As already noted, Levinas distinguishes between the 'said' which is ontologically definable and constitutive of fixed identities by proclaiming and establishing an 'identification of this with that in the *already said*' (Levinas: 1981b; 37), and the '[s]aying' which 'states and thematizes the said, but signifies it to the other, a neighbour, with a signification that has to be distinguished from that borne by words in the said' (Levinas: 1981b; 46). Alterity in terms of language and understanding are foregrounded in the saying which, through the *Auseinandersetzung* with the other, is open in terms of meaning and signification. In the said, there is monological meaning and 'this as that' adequation; in the saying, signification is open to alterity and to alternatives of meaning. As Critchley summarizes, the philosopher's project is the 'reduction of the Said to the Saying', and he goes on to make the point that ethics, far from overcoming or abandoning ontology, instead deconstructs the latter's limits (Critchley: 1992; 8).

Thus, *Finnegans Wake's* multilingual spectralization of the beginning of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, further underlines the ethical perspective that language offers Joyce. English is no longer seen as the property of the colonizer; instead it is defined *gnomonically* in terms of its negative relationship with the many other languages and discourses in *Finnegans Wake*. As Joyce puts it in the above quotation, the 'onesomeness wast alltolonely' (Joyce: 1975; 152, 19); this 'onesomeness' is precisely that monological strain that has been traced through the definitions of Irishness that were constituent of the Irish revival. Such 'onesomeness' is, of course, practically impossible in terms of the modern world, a point which is mimetically demonstrated in *Finnegans Wake*, where an indigenous Irish person has no readier insight into the range of meanings codified in the text than has a person of any other nationality. In this sense, the text itself functions as a critique of the essentialist epistemological position that underwrites the revival. Earlier in the same text (Book 1, section 6), Joyce

pointedly refers to the tale of Shem a ‘blind blighter’ (Joyce: 1975; 149, 2) who is also a ‘fain shinner’ (Joyce: 1975; 149, 7), and the blindness of immanent nationalism, be it political, linguistic, or cultural, is clearly the source of such parodistic reference, especially given an address that comes slightly later in the same section: ‘[g]entes and laitymen, fullstoppers and semicolonials, hybrids/and lubberds!’ (Joyce: 1975; 152, 16-17). Here, Joyce is addressing his ‘nation’ and the address could be seen as an echoing answer to the question of Irishness – ‘Hush! Caution ! Echoland!’ (Joyce: 1975: 13, 5) – with which our discussion opened, but here, through a protreptic language of conversation and confrontation, the Irishness in question is a negative one, which encompasses alterity while still recognizing the nature of that alterity.

For Joyce, his nation is a transactional blurring of the binarisms of essential identity: ‘[g]entes and laitymen’ can refer to people, deriving from the Latin noun *gens*, or to ladies and gentlemen, or the people sharing descent along the male line, or to class distinction between some form of aristocracy and those who are ‘ordinary’, or to clergy (in the sense of patriarchal power in the church), and the laity. The words ‘fullstoppers and semicolonials’ can refer to the rules of grammar, which make meaning and nationhood possible by delimiting the play of language, or to the ongoing dialectic of colonialism and colonization, or to the ambiguous position of Ireland in terms of its status as a postcolonial country. The final phrase, ‘hybrids and lubberds’, conflates land and sea with differences of identity in a pairing that is very much at odds with the ‘onesomeness’ noted earlier. Here, hybridity is seen as a natural condition of modern identity, a perspective which completely contradicts Stephen’s earlier comments regarding God and *Dieu*.²⁶

In short, each word is signifying otherwise inasmuch as there is a constant openness to alterity of all sorts. In terms of the opening passage of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the single road, single time and single ‘nicens little

boy' are opened up to a Yeatsian *Crossways* of other roads, other times and other people – the voice of the other. This polyglossic language defines the self as an openness to the other, and as such is profoundly ethical. In Levinasian terms, as already mentioned, it is the difference between the saying and the said. For Levinas: '[s]aying makes signs to the other, but in this sign signifies the very giving of signs'. He goes on to stress the primacy of alterity in the saying, noting that it 'opens me to the other before saying what is said' (Levinas: 1989; 183). I would argue that in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce is involved with language as an ultimate form of saying, which opens the identity of the individual, and by extension the group, to alterity. Levinas has termed this '*the idea of the infinite*' [*italics original*] (Levinas: 1996; 19),²⁷ and in a further explanatory passage, describes the infinite in a manner that I think is extremely relevant to Joyce's portrayal of alterity in his writings. Levinas makes the point that:

The idea of the infinite consists precisely and paradoxically in thinking more than what is thought while nevertheless conserving it in its excessive relation to thought. The idea of the infinite consists in grasping the ungraspable while nevertheless guaranteeing its status as ungraspable.

(Levinas: 1996; 19)

This is true of the ethical dimension of Joyce's writing, wherein the narrative *topoi* of the opening of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* are subjected to a destabilizing linguistic polyglossia in the latter quotation. In the case of the German words 'eins' and 'wohned' (the latter also deriving from Old and Middle English sources), there is an opening up to alterity voiced in the language of difference. The latter quote offers a negative critique of the epistemological assumptions regarding narrative, teleology, and language that are inherent in the former quotation as the *hauntological* presence of languages and stories destabilizes the seeming singularity of one story and one language. Thus, different languages provide a perspective from whence to mount an immanent critique of one's culture; however, there is another perspective from where a

parallel critique may be offered, and that is through a sense of Irishness which is spatially negative and proteptic, namely, an Irishness which is not of necessity located in Ireland.

(iii) Emigration as trope

This notion of emigration as a literary and theoretical trope allows for the creation of an epistemological perspective in terms of defining Irishness negatively. This is especially true in terms of the conclusion of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where the notion of the emigrant creates a space for a perspective from which the essentialist notions of Irish identity can be subjected to interrogation. The emigrant as historical figure allows for a pluralization of identity, for an ‘*other*’ to be added to Irishness, be it Irish-American, Irish-Australian or Irish-English; the emigrant as trope allows for the internalization of this historical pluralism, and its transformation into an epistemology which will critique essentialist notions of Irishness as given, fixed, or hypostasized. The position of emigrant also provides a platform from which a dialectical cultural criticism of Ireland can be enunciated. It allows Stephen, in the text, and Joyce himself, in his life experience, to take up a position with respect to Irish culture which, in Adorno’s terms, permits him to shed light ‘on an object in itself hermetic by casting a glance at society’ and in this case, to present ‘society with the bill which the object does not redeem’ (Adorno: 1981; 33). In Joyce’s case, this unredeemed bill is the European dimension which is enunciated at the close of the book.

This contradictory position, of being part of a culture while at the same time attempting to offer a critique of the ideology of that culture, has been discussed in Chapter One. Adorno, as we noted, sees the necessity for both transcendent and immanent critiques, and suggests that only through their dialectical interaction can criticism hope to achieve a real perspective on the culture in question. As Adorno puts it, the dialectical critic of culture must ‘both participate in culture and not participate’ as only then does he ‘do justice to his object and to

himself' (Adorno: 1981; 33). Stephen Dedalus, in terms of his name and experience, embodies the Joycean concept of this dialectical interaction between an essentialist concept of identity and a negative one.

The attempt to practice both critiques dialectically, is obviously difficult. Yet, in the writings of Joyce, the immanent and the transcendent are brought into mutually defining interaction through the metaphor of emigration as a troping of an identity which is Irish and yet not fully Irish; an identity which valorizes itself in terms of a specific 'place' (Ireland) but which is not part of that place. Emigration creates a dialectical interaction between notions of belonging to a culture and notions of being separated from that culture. In Bakhtinian terms, a monological perspective becomes polylogical as 'Irishness' is disseminated into different identities, both politically and culturally. In Adorno's dialectical notion of cultural criticism, the emigrant while culturally rooted in Ireland, achieves a quasi-transcendent position with respect to Irishness through the spatial and temporal separations of the emigrant experience. Epistemologically, emigration allows for an Irishness that is at the same time different from itself, and from an ethical standpoint, notions of alterity are included within this negative definition of Irishness. Hence, ethically, emigration defines identity in terms of a community that is both present and absent; emigration allows for the irrepressible desire for a community to form 'but also for it to know its limit – and for its limit to be its *opening*' (Derrida: 1995; 355). Hence, the physical and existential opening to another country and another culture becomes an epistemological trope which actuates a negative definition of Irishness. Such an 'opening' allows for the essential difference that is fundamental to an ethics of identity, for, as Levinas puts it '[w]hat meaning can community take on in Difference without reducing Difference?' (Levinas: 1981b; 154). Joyce attempts to delimit the amount of such a reduction by stressing the voices of alterity against which Irishness needs to be defined negatively.

Stephen's name, associated with the 'fabulous artificer' Daedalus, is also emblematic of this opening to alterity. On the one hand, Daedalus was able to achieve transcendence by creating wings which allowed him to soar above the immanence of the island culture which held him captive. However his son, Icarus, who also attempts to transcend the same culture, is pulled back into the sea by the gravitational pull of the earth. Daedalus too, must come back to earth at some point, so this fable is mimetic of the dialectical interchange between immanence and transcendence that is central to Adorno's notion of cultural critique.²⁸

Both this gravitational pull, and the resistance offered by emigration as trope, are dramatized in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. We have already discussed the different views of identity enunciated by Davin and Stephen in Chapter One. In contradistinction to Davin's immanent perspective, which was armed against all things English 'in obedience to a password' (Joyce: 1993; 159), Stephen has decided to emigrate, making the telling comment that the 'shortest way to Tara was *via* Holyhead' (Joyce: 1993 216), a comment which gestures towards the epistemological position of emigration as trope.

Here, emigration is associated with the coming into being of a negative sense of Irish identity. By achieving a perspective that is outside the culture, he hopes to achieve a twofold aim: to distance himself from the 'nets' of 'nationality, language, religion' (Joyce: 1993; 177), and to give a voice to those aspects of his identity which are open to alterity. In this sense, he is distinguishing between 'an airtight, impermeable, homogeneous, self-identical identity' as against a 'porous and heterogeneous identity that differs with itself' (Caputo: 1977; 114).²⁹ Interestingly, he equates the 'nets' with being born in Ireland: '[w]hen the soul of a man is *born in this country...*' [*my italics*] (Joyce: 1993; 177), and would seem to be attempting to transform these fixed categories of identity through the experience of other cultures. Stephen, in attempting to define some sense of Irish

identity, feels that he can only achieve this by moving away from the fixed centrality of the Irishness of the revival, and instead, to attempt to create a *hauntological*, plural view of Irishness, which contrasts sharply with that of Davin. He is attempting to define the culture of Irishness in a way which is 'to be not identical to itself' but rather to be 'different *with itself*' (Derrida: 1992b; 9-10), in short, he is attempting to define Irishness *otherwise*.

In this context, and in the context of Adorno's dialectical criticism, the verbal construction of the *credo* 'I will fly by those nets' is ambiguous. 'By' can mean around or past, indicating a desire for the avoidance of the entrapping nets. However, 'by' can also mean 'by means of' or 'using as an aid', and in this sense, the term implies a dependence on, or an attachment to, such notions almost as a mode of articulation. I would suggest that the dialectical interaction of these two meanings acts as a further metaphor for the Joycean concept of identity. Bypassing the nets still involves taking them into consideration, just as the moving shadow of the sundial is still dependent upon the static pointer of the *gnomon*. Similarly, making use of the nets to achieve something beyond them also involves a dialectical progression. So, in both cases, the nets can never be totally destroyed or done away with; their function is to provide some limits in terms of self identity, but also to allow for the opening to alterity that is so necessary to the Joycean project. To be inside these nets is to be delimited by past concepts of nationality, language, and religion. To bypass them, or to use them to move on, is to be open to a future that will, while taking on board some of the baggage of the past, travel to new destinations, redefining itself in the process.

This is in stark contrast to Davin, who sees himself as 'an Irish nationalist first and foremost', and asks Stephen if he is 'Irish at all?' (Joyce, 176), before enunciating his view of Irishness: 'be one of us, said Davin. Why don't you learn Irish?' (Joyce, 176). Clearly this position valorized an essentialist form of

Irishness which meant speaking Irish and being anti-British, as evidenced by the ‘foreign enemy’ aspect of the quotation from Father Patrick Kavanagh, in Chapter Two. This centripetal strand in Irish republicanism (keeping in mind Davin’s membership of the Fenians, or Irish Republican Brotherhood), this hypostasized view of race, religion, and language as the sole criteria of Irish identity, is the one against which Joyce rebels. His attitude to history is different to that of Davin, he sees not a glorious Gaelic past, but the reality of linguistic metamorphosis which in turn led to cultural metamorphosis: ‘[m]y ancestors threw off their language and took on another....They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them’ (Joyce, 177). Between these personal pronouns – ‘my’ and ‘they’ – is the interstitial position, what Bhabha terms ‘liminal’ spaces (Bhabha: 1994; 4), which the trope of emigration offers Joyce. In this ‘in-between’ is the Derridean notion of an identity which, in the case of culture, person, nation, or language is ‘a self-differentiating identity, an identity different from itself, having an opening or gap within itself’ (Derrida: 1997b; 14). In his later books, especially *Finnegans Wake*, this gap is symbolized by a self-differentiating language, wherein meaning is never self-identical.

This is a seminal aspect of Joyce’s attitude to essentialist ideas. He stresses the point that the English language has been the vernacular in Ireland for a long time. The Gaelic, Celtic, Irish, Catholic nexus of Irish identity is a construct inasmuch as it is created by a selective reading of history, by a monological focus on key aspects of that tradition, and by the suasive use of literary devices in an attempt to achieve a *vraisemblablisation* (naturalization) of this construct, so that it appears to be the essence of Irishness. By a constant process of looking inwards towards this essentialized centre, one turns one’s back to any outside influences, a process which inhibits any progress towards new ideas and developments in terms of political and socio-cultural growth. Temporally, the focus on the past means that identity is constantly on the defensive against modernity and against developments that post-date the hypostasized centre. The

rhetoric of literature often serves as the cement which bonds these centripetal criteria together into a form of unity that is very difficult to unravel.

Hence Stephen's attempt to achieve a perspectival sea-change, by leaving Ireland so that he can better understand what Irishness actually is. This is a *locus classicus* of the centrifugal vector in the process of defining Irishness. The drive towards unity, fuelled by literature about Celtic heroes and *prosopopeic* female embodiments of Irishness (Erin, Cathleen Ni Houlihan, Banba, Mother Ireland, the Shan Van Vocht, the Poor Old Woman), tended to make Irishness monological and essentialist, and part of a politics of the *unum*, of oneness, which, as Derrida notes, can be 'a terrible catastrophe' in a state or a country (Derrida: 1977b; 15). However, as Mikhail Bakhtin has perceptively observed, language, especially in its literary incarnation, is a powerful tool in the deconstruction of such centralizing drives, as the 'uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward' alongside the language of 'verbal-ideological centralization and unification' (Bakhtin: 1981; 272).

Bakhtin is here foregrounding the spectral aspect of language, its ability to interrupt the monological gravitational pull of the centripetal perspective of identity. That literature is one of the major examples of this force of language is undeniable, so, just as literature is a vehicle for centralization and mythopoeia, so also can it serve as a vehicle for pluralization and rational interpretation of myth and history; just as it is a vehicle for the centripetal, so also is it a vehicle for the centrifugal. Joyce, by his placement of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* under the rubric of the Greek myth of Daedalus, and by his structuration of *Ulysses* in terms of Homer's *Odyssey*, attempts to place Irish identity within the broader, centrifugal concept of Western Europe, thereby eschewing the sterile Ireland/England binarism. The spectral presence of these documents of Western literature and civilization underlines the broader paradigm of identity wherein

Joyce places Irishness; they are the points of transcendence against which a negative notion of Irishness can be defined.

In the *persona* of Stephen, Joyce achieves the dialectical aim of Adorno's ideal of social criticism. He is Irish, but bent on turning away from a narrow centripetal definition of Irishness. His emigration will give him that dialectical perspective which the original Daedalus achieved through flight, on Irish identity, and what he terms the 'uncreated conscience' of his race. Literature is that genre which allows for such an intellectual redefinition of the centre. Literature is also the genre where ghostly presences can make an appearance without being subject to the rationalizations of science. In Chapter Four, just after he has been asked to join the priesthood, and just before his epiphany on the strand, Stephen hears his name called out in a manner which will foreground its differential status. The Greek source of his first name (reminiscent of the Yeatsian appeal to 'ancient Arcady' and to the culture of the Greeks) is emphasized through the call of his friends, as is the plural past of Dublin, itself a city of Danish occupation. This historical plurality, symbolized by the ghostly figure of the Dane, is fused with that of his own strange surname to create a negative image of his own, and by extension, his country's identity, through imagery of distance and of flight:

Stephanos Dedalos! Bous Stephanoumenos! Bous Stephaneforos!

Their banter was not new to him and now it flattered his mild proud sovereignty. Now, as never before, his strange name seemed to him a prophecy. So timeless seemed the grey warm air, so fluid and impersonal his own mood, that all ages were as one to him. A moment before the ghost of the ancient kingdom of the Danes had looked forth through the vesture of the hazewrapped City. Now, at the name of the fabulous artificer, he seemed to hear the noise of dim waves and to see a winged form flying above the waves and slowly climbing the air. What did it mean? Was it a quaint device opening a page of some medieval book of prophecies and symbols, a hawk-like man flying sunward above the sea, a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of

childhood and boyhood, a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being?

(Joyce: 1993; 149)

Here, it is a ghostly image of the Danish past of Ireland who leads Stephen, with his 'strange name', to his own destiny. This ghostly Dane, himself an emigrant, points towards the plurality of Ireland's history, as the Danes can be seen as among the first foreign invaders of Ireland. This spectral figure points towards the centrifugal future, in terms of what Stephen can become; it embodies in itself the necessary difference from the self that is the teleology of negative Irishness, as well as giving voice to the alterity that makes up what is now Irishness.

Ghosts can also symbolize a presence beyond that which is, they may orient themselves towards the non-material past, as well as the material. So, the centripetal vision of Irish-Ireland is haunted by the spectre of other enunciations of Irish identity. Surely what Stephen sees, towards the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, are ghosts. On April 16th, Stephen's entry speaks of the 'spell of arms and voices...the white arms of roads...the black arms of tall ships'. These voices call to him: 'Come.' They also tell him that they are his 'kinsmen' (Joyce: 1993; 218). Here, emigration is symbolized as almost a dematerialization of the body, as a preparation for the flight of the soul.

Here Joyce uses ghostly imagery to illustrate a different type of Irish identity, an identity that is shaped by centrifugal ghosts of the future. Literature, despite many vexed questions regarding its ontological and epistemological status, allows ideas, thoughts, and fictions to be given voice. In this sense, as well as being capable of creating the *Vorurteil* of centralization and aesthetic unity, it can also create an emancipatory notion of identity as a changing construct which refutes the essentialist centripetal drive, and instead allows for a pluralist notion of Irishness. Stephen's ghosts are figures of possibility, they call him to a new

vantage point which will allow him to define the ‘uncreated conscience’ of his race. Thus, Derrida’s discussion of *hauntology* demonstrates a similar spectral dimension of identity to that of Joyce, where the parallelogram is a haunting of the *gnomon*.

Thus, the definition of identity that is valorized by emigration is a deconstruction of the old notions of transcendental centrality. These notions are haunted by different arms and voices (and we note the disembodied plurality of these manifestations) which call attention to new forms of Irishness. The old identificatory certainties which decreed that to be Irish was to be Catholic, Gaelic, or nationalist never attempted to question this received ontology. Derrida, on the other hand, sees all discussions of ontology, of the nature of the being of anything, as imbricated in a *hauntology* of attendant traces, differences, and disseminations. The political implication of this is that such *hauntologies* allow for the introduction of the other, of other voices, other identities and other epistemological positions. As already observed, for Hegel, ghosts can symbolize the other recognized as the violation of oneself, and in Joyce’s epistemology of emigration, there is room for such spectral others, and they allow an openness to different forms of alterity. For Joyce, the very language he speaks comes to typify this openness to the other, and his treatment of that synecdoche of English language, literature and culture, William Shakespeare, will underscore this ethical imperative in his writing.

(iv) Patrick W. Shakespeare

In the *Cyclops* chapter of *Ulysses*, the absorptive tendencies of the advanced nationalist ideology are parodied mercilessly. The hyperbolic and surreal humour of the passage is obvious, but its epistemological import has received comparatively little attention. This passage comes as an interpolation in the opening of the chapter, where the citizen, an ultra-essentialist nationalist, is seen as a mythical Irish hero. The resonances with the Celtic and Gaelic revivals are obvious, as the urban, twentieth century Irishman is metamorphosed into a figure analogous to that of Cuchulain or Fionn or any of the Celtic heroes of the revival pantheon. The passage begins with a description of this heroic figure:

The figure seated on a large boulder at the foot of a round tower was that of a broadshouldered deepchested stronglimbed frankeyed redhaired freelyfreckled shaggybearded widemouthed largenosed longheaded deepvoiced barekneed brawnyhanded hairylegged ruddyfaced sinewyarmed hero.

(Joyce: 1989; 243)

The use of the adjective-noun construction lends an epic air to the description, combining an archaic word form with a hint of the Anglo-Saxon kenning, which created a descriptive picture in the form of an adjective-noun construction. The giant is then described in terms of his gigantic physical measurements, his clothing, oxhide, deerskin and ‘a girdle of plaited straw and rushes’ (Joyce: 1989; 243). From this girdle, hung ‘a row of seastones’ and on these were inscribed with ‘rude yet striking art the tribal images of many Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity’ (Joyce: 1989; 244).

Thus far, the imagery, diction and general tone are in keeping with a revivalist portrayal of heroic ur-Irishness, and one expects the ensuing list of ‘Irish heroes

and heroines' to resound with the names that were associated with the heroic tales of Standish O'Grady; however, the list in question defeats this expectation with a mixture of bathos and humour. It begins in the manner expected, detailing real and imaginary figures from the Celtic and Gaelic pantheons: 'Cuchulin, Conn of hundred battles, Niall of nine hostages, Brian of Kincora, the ardi Malachi, Art MacMurragh, Shane O'Neill, Father John Murphy, Owen Roe, Patrick Sarsfield, Red Hugh O'Donnell, Red Jim MacDermott, Soggarth Eoghan O'Growney, Michael Dwyer, Francy Higgins, Henry Joy M'Cracken' [*sic*] (Joyce: 1989; 244). So far, we would appear to be in the familiar generic territory of the revivalist project. A list of figures, both mythical and historical, is generated through their association with a particular vision of Ireland. It is from the next name on, that the essentialist appropriation of past history into an ethnocentric socio-cultural narrative is parodied in a manner which undercuts through hyperbole, the assimilative and absorptive tendencies of the Celtic and Gaelic revivalist ideologies:

Goliath, Horace Wheatley, Thomas Conneff, Peg Woffington, the Village Blacksmith, Captain Moonlight, Captain Boycott, Dante Alighieri, Christopher Columbus, S. Fursa, S. Brendan, Marshal MacMahon, Charlemagne, Theobald Wolfe Tone, the Mother of the Maccabees, the Last of the Mohicans, the Rose of Castile, the Man for Galway, The Man that Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo, The Man in the Gap, The Woman Who Didn't, Benjamin Franklin, Napoleon Bonaparte, John L. Sullivan, Cleopatra, Savourneen Deelish, Julius Caesar, Paracelsus, sir Thomas Lipton, William Tell, Michelangelo Hayes, Muhammad, the Bride of Lammermoor, Peter the Hermit, Peter the Packer, Dark Rosaleen, Patrick W. Shakespeare, Brian Confucius, Murtagh Gutenberg, Patricio Velasquez, Captain Nemo, Tristan and Isolde, the first Prince of Wales, Thomas Cook and Son, the Bold Soldier Boy, Arrah na Pogue, Dick Turpin, Ludwig Beethoven, the Colleen Bawn, Waddler Healy, Angus the Culdee, Dolly Mount, Sidney Parade, Ben Howth, Valentine Greatrakes, Adam and Eve, Arthur Wellesley, Boss Croker, Herodotus, Jack the Giantkiller, Gautama Buddha, Lady Godiva, The Lily of Killarney, Balor of the Evil Eye, the Queen of Sheba, Acky Nagle, Joe Nagle, Alessandro Volta, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, Don Philip O'Sullivan Beare.

(Joyce: 1989; 244)

This list of ‘*Irish* heroes and heroines of antiquity’ is an example of a specific form of writing: that of a ‘catalogue verse’ wherein a list of entities is used to show progression, generation or, in this case, commonality. The genre can be traced back to two of Western civilization’s canonical works: the genealogical list in the *Book of Genesis* and the list of Trojan War heroes in Homer’s *Iliad*. In *Ulysses*, this catalogue is placed in the *Cyclops* chapter wherein Irish nationalism, in the *persona* of the monocular ‘citizen’, and by extension, the essentialist nationalist ideology of Irish identity, is being placed under critique. That this critique is phrased in humorous terms in no way negates its power, in fact, I would argue that the impact is heightened through the ironic exfoliation of the ‘Irishness’ of the heroes and heroines involved.

Here, alterity breaks through such essentialism, as Joyce achieves a double purpose. Firstly, he is mocking the absorptive desire to subsume diverse historical and cultural patterns into a sameness of identity. In this sense, he is anticipating the thought of Levinas who asks ‘how can the opposition of the Same and the Other not lead to the triumph of the Same?’ (Levinas: 1996; 16). This sameness is very often constituted by the placement of the present within the frame, or *parergon* of the past. Such a notion is central to the politicized nationalism that derived from the Gaelic and Celtic revivals. The past, or at least a version of the past, is hypostasized, or reified so that it becomes the grounding moment for definitions. As a centre, an unmoved mover, it becomes a conduit for the duplication of sameness, at the expense of alterity. Given the complete lack of connection with any notion of Celticity in, for example Goliath, Velasquez, Captain Nemo, Napoleon Bonaparte, the first Prince of Wales, or Thomas Cook and Son, the motivated nature of these choices gradually exfoliates in the satire, as we are forced to expand our definition of the Irishness involved.

Secondly, Joyce is including alterity within sameness, he is creating an identity that is different from itself and also reconstructing the paradigms through which cultural nationalism was constituted. He is providing a classic example of what Derrida sees as the necessity for ‘opening, uncloseting, destabilizing foreclusionary structures so as to allow for the passage toward the other’ (Derrida: 1992a; 341). By placing people who are demonstrably *not* part of ‘tribal images of many Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity’, in this catalogue, Joyce is reinventing the definitions of Irishness, and by extension, of identity as we know it. He creates, through a protreptic discourse, an *Auseinandersetzung* which brings out the alterity that is central to a negative definition of Irishness as he hopes to express it. The very fact that the English language is being used as a form of expression demonstrates an alterity that inhabits the core of what is seen as essentialist rhetoric. It is through English that most Irish people have knowledge of these multi-cultural figures in the Joycean pantheon. Through this linguistic *protrepis*, Joyce is presaging a cultural one, wherein the English language is not seen as a colonial imposition, but rather, as an ethical imperative towards alterity which frees Irishness from the prison-house of sameness and monological essentialism.

As examples of this negative definition of identity, three figures from the above catalogue stand out, namely, ‘Patrick W. Shakespeare, Brian Confucius, Murtagh Gutenberg’. The identity that is encapsulated in these proper names allows for the expression of an Irishness that is plural, and certainly far from the sublating absorption that is part of the essentialist project. Thus, while such juxtapositions are quite comic in themselves, they do make a serious point. The whole nature of identification is oppositional, in that to be Irish is not to be English, or to be French is not to be German. Following logically on this thread is the desire to differentiate through language, culture *et al* so that it becomes clear on which side of a particular opposition the individual belongs. Over a period of time, such differentiations take root in the epistemology of the culture in question, and

become reified. Their differential status is etiolated, and instead there is a Heideggerian *Versammlung* (gathering) of such qualities in favour of an ethnocentric valorization which make the *Volk* the *Volk*.³⁰ This privileging of a form of reified sameness is, for Joyce as for Derrida, the very antithesis of what identity should be. Derrida, speaking at Villanova University in 1994, made the point that this privilege which is granted to ‘unity, to totality, to organic ensembles, to community as a homogenized whole’ can be seen as a ‘danger for responsibility, for decision, for ethics, for politics’ (Derrida: 1997b; 13). Making the point that cultural identity is not the ‘self-identity of a thing’, he goes on to say that ‘the identity of a culture is a way of being different from itself’, adding that a ‘culture is different from itself’ and that ‘language is different from itself’ (Derrida: 1997b; 13).

It is this ‘difference from itself’ that Joyce is foregrounding in his three emblematic figures, ‘Patrick W. Shakespeare, Brian Confucius’, and ‘Murtagh Gutenberg’. These names open up the centralities of Irishness by defining them, *gnomonically*, in terms of other cultures. All three perform this function, but given the historical antipathy between Ireland and England, perhaps the most significant of these is ‘Patrick W. Shakespeare’.

In terms of the exfoliation of English culture throughout the British empire, the teaching of the works of Shakespeare was of seminal importance; indeed, the proper name ‘William Shakespeare’ functions as a transcendental signifier, as synecdoche for all things English and cultural. The subtle political message that is to be found, especially in the tragedies, namely that those who upset the hierarchy of institutionalized power do so at their own and their societies’ peril, was not lost on colonized peoples. Macbeth, Claudius, Regan and Goneril, Oswald, politically, and Othello, racially, demonstrate the fate that befalls such resistance to the given socio-political order, both for the individual microcosm and the socio-political macrocosm.

However, here the trope of naming is used to create a different effect as ‘William Shakespeare’ becomes ‘Patrick W. Shakespeare’. Here, the bard is appropriated into a new cosmos of identification as name is transformed into trope, with a ‘turning away’ (the original meaning of ‘trope’) from colonial associations. That the proper name of Shakespeare undergoes a chiasmic transformation in the ongoing process of transcultural anglicization that has taken place in Ireland during British rule, is symbolic of Joyce’s project: namely the redefinition and pluralization of Irish identity. Joyce posits the notion of reciprocal interchange between cultures: just as Irish language and culture became Anglophone, so English, both the language and culture, was likewise altered by the interaction with Ireland. The *hauntological* imbrication of the two cultures is enacted in the name of ‘Patrick W. Shakespeare’, a name which will force a redefinition of both Irishness and Englishness as essences, standing outside the historical processes. In this name, the figures of *gnomon* and parallelogram, or pointer and shadow interfuse, so that it is hard to know which is which. Clearly such a process is analogous to negative dialectics in that it ‘reflects its own motion’ (Adorno: 1973; 141). For Joyce, the juxtaposition of Shakespeare, that classic synecdoche of Englishness, with ‘Patrick’ the classic nominal synecdoche of Irishness, is not a dialectical fusion, an *Aufhebung* in the Hegelian sense, or a *Versammlung* in the Heideggerian one; rather is its logic one of ‘disintegration’ (Adorno: 1973; 145). In fact, it is a perfect example of what we have termed protreptic discourse, in that this neologistic name embodies a ‘calling and answering while yet remaining preliminary to the circumstances of its fulfilment’ (Eisenstein: 1989; 275). Here, self and other exist mutually in terms of an identity that is complex and differential.

The transformation of ‘William’ to ‘Patrick W.’ could, at first be seen as a classic postcolonial reversal – the reappropriation of the synecdoche of Englishness through juxtaposition with a synecdoche of Irishness. However, the

other non-Irish names in the list of heroes would seem to undercut this reading. In fact, the catalogue verse in the *Cyclops* chapter functions as an *antiphrasis*,³¹ with the Irish and non-Irish heroes interrogating each other. This economy displaces the Irish/English and colonial/post-colonial binarisms, the central defining factors of Irish identity, and instead places the names of both nations in a broader world catalogue verse, where they *gnomonically* redefine each other. This catalogue emphasizes the emancipatory function of ‘Patrick W. Shakespeare’ with respect to essentialist notions of identity: this troped name will validate neither imperial Englishness nor nationalist Irishness; rather will it usher in reciprocity and plurality in terms of political identities.

Joyce sees the nominal troping of ‘Patrick W. Shakespeare’ as a liberation from that sterile essentialism of contemporary Irish and English political ideologies. In *Finnegans Wake*, he refers to Shakespeare as ‘Shikespower...Anonymoses’ (Joyce: 1975; 47, 19), and later in the telling line ‘all the rivals to allsea, shakeagain, O disaster! shakealose’ (Joyce: 1975; 143, 21-22). Here the name of Shakespeare is being invoked to empower the shaking loose (again) of the nets that Joyce feels Stephen must fly by, namely those of ‘nationality, language, religion’ (Joyce: 1993; 216). Through this classic microcosmic example of protreptic discourse, Joyce, like Stephen, will attempt to ‘fly by those nets’.

Ironically, Shakespeare, as the almost universal figure of Englishness would seem to be an unusual symbolic choice in this quest, but the ‘mirrorminded’ man of *Finnegans Wake* (Joyce: 1975; 576, 24) figures largely in Joyce’s work. The changed name of Shakespeare will allow Joyce to shake up, and shake lose the influences of Irish nationalism and British imperialism; in other words, the troped name of Shakespeare will introduce an ethical force into Joyce’s writing, a force which will liberate notions of Irish identity from the essentialist vision of the citizen, and instead introduce a European and world-based negative view (‘anonymoses’) of Irish identity. The composite name of ‘Patrick W.

Shakespeare’, an example of *Finnegans Wake*’s view of the bard’s ability, as ‘Great Shapisphere puns it’ (Joyce: 1975; 295, 4), allows him to reshape the sphere of national identity, and hence is a constituent factor in the political dimension of Joyce’s work. The cultural appropriation of Shakespeare is very much within the *Weltanschauung* of *Ulysses*, and of Joyce’s overall attitude towards identity.

In *Ulysses*, Stephen makes the point that history ‘is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake’ (Joyce: 1989; 28). I would argue that the particular ideology of history from which Stephen wishes to escape is the monocular one of the citizen, who sees Ireland as identical with Gaelic, Catholic, and nationalist viewpoints. This ideological position is stated a number of times in this chapter, with the following sardonic passage being a typical example. Here, in the parodic genre of newspaper reportage, the attitudes of the green wing of nationalism are given expression. The usual conflation of real and imaginary details are to be found, with the ‘panceltic’ Finn MacCool invoked to add a note of authenticity:

After an instructive discourse by the chairman, a magnificent oration eloquently and forcibly expressed, a most interesting and instructive discussion of the usual high standard of excellence ensued as to the desirability of the revivability of the ancient games and sports of our ancient Panceltic forefathers. The wellknown and highly respected worker in the cause of our old tongue, Mr Joseph M’Carthy Hynes, made an eloquent appeal for the resuscitation of the ancient Gaelic sports and pastimes, practised morning and evening by Finn MacCool, as calculated to revive the best traditions of manly strength and prowess handed down to us from ancient ages.

(Joyce: 1989; 260)

Here are all the familiar trappings of monological identity, predicated on the past and self-valorization, with no room for alterity. It is a process summarized by Levinas in his essay ‘Transcendence and Height’, as he notes that the ‘Same or the I surmounts diversity and the Non-I, which stands against it, by engaging in a

political and technical destiny' (Levinas: 1996; 15). Here, there can be no other course of action than the 'revivability' of ancient Irish games so as to endorse the sameness of identity.

In contradistinction to this neo-revivalist perspective, much of the rest of the book posits a negative notion of Irish identity; the book as a whole features Leopold Bloom, a Hungarian Jewish hero, Molly Bloom, a British heroine born in Gibraltar, and Stephen Dedalus, Irish, but whose name certainly betokens a pluralist vision of identity in itself, as we have seen. The organizing myth is Greek, and Bloom's comments on Irish Catholic rituals, themselves synecdoches of centripetal identity, are certainly those of a *spectator ab extra*;³² while the structural parallel with Homer's classical *Odyssey* foregrounds the identificatory perspective of Joyce. His book is paralleled with one of the first great books of Western civilization; he is placing Ireland, and the subject matter of Ireland squarely in the ambit of European culture, against which Irishness will be defined negatively. The troped name of 'Patrick W. Shakespeare' brings this ethical definition of identity as an openness to alterity into focus, but I would argue that this is not confined to this passage in *Ulysses*. In fact, the Shakespearean spectre is to be found haunting many different portions of Joyce's writings, and this imbrication of Shakespeare and Joyce will have the effect of transforming them both.

Some literary detective work will demonstrate the place of Shakespeare in the literary politics of Joyce, and this detective work begins with *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The name of 'Shakespeare' is not to be found anywhere in this novel. However, Don Gifford has detected a ghostly Shakespearean presence in the genesis of Stephen Dedalus's aesthetic theory. Stephen's aesthetic theory is underpinned by Victor Hugo's *Préface* to his play *Cromwell*. Hugo lays out a tripartite division of art in a manner similar to that of Stephen, in his aesthetic theory. In this theory, Stephen states:

These forms are: the lyrical form, the form wherein the artist presents his image in immediate relation to himself; the epical form, the form wherein he presents his image in mediate relation to himself and to others; the dramatic form, the form wherein he presents his image in immediate relation to others...[and where] he or she assumes a proper and intangible esthetic life... The esthetic image in the dramatic form is life purified in and reprojected from the human imagination. The mystery of esthetic, like that of material creation, is accomplished. The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.

(Joyce: 1993; 187)

Stephen's highest form – the dramatic where each person 'assumes a proper and intangible esthetic life' – is associated by Hugo with the poetry of 'Shakespeare, Dante and Milton' (Gifford: 1982; 254). This Shakespearean-inspired aesthetic is in direct opposition to the 'old man' in a mountain cabin met by John Alphonsus Mulrennan, who embodies insularity and reactionary nationalism: 'there must be terrible queer creatures at the latter end of the world'. The fact that this man speaks Irish is important: English, which can be seen as the symbol of colonial oppression, can, by a chiasmic twist, also be seen as a world language, and the gateway to European and world literature through translation. Indeed, translation is a possible name for the change from 'William Shakespeare' to 'Patrick W. Shakespeare'.

Here, Shakespeare as trope is a figure of hybridity and syncretization; he symbolizes an embrace of world literature and also the emancipatory aspects of the English language as spoken in Ireland. The poetry of Milton, and translations of the poetry of Dante, would not be so readily available to an Irish writer were it not for colonization, and the process of linguistic change that was coterminous with it. In this sense, Stephen's flight to Europe at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* can be seen as inspired by the ghostly presence of Shakespeare, or as he is significantly termed in *Finnegans Wake* 'that favourite

continental poet, Daunty, Gouty and Shopkeeper' (539.5-9). The troped name of 'Patrick W. Shakespeare' symbolizes the possibilities that arise between the transactional intersections of England and Ireland in terms of language and identity. It is important to note the transformative drive at work here. Shakespeare as British national bard has been transformed into what is beautifully termed in *Finnegans Wake* 'clasp shakers (the handtouch which is speech without words)' (Joyce: 1975; 174, 9-10). Here is the *hauntological* power of language that is pure speech, or in Levinasian terms, pure saying, as opposed to said. As he puts it, language as 'saying is ethical sincerity', it is 'an ethical openness to the other' (Levinas: 1981a; 193-194), and this speech without words in *Finnegans Wake*, especially in this Shakespearean context, makes the point that such an ethicity of language has not yet come into full being; Joyce is involved in creating such a language which is 'different from itself' (Derrida: 1997b; 13), and which creates the conditions for a negative notion of Irishness.

The name is the clasping of two cultures together, and the result of this clasping is to shake the essentialist notions of both cultures – 'Shikespower'. This troped name is both an image of implied potential and a ghostly figure redolent of the past. This ghostly Shakespearean presence in Joyce's *oeuvre* is further discussed in Stephen Dedalus's theory of Shakespeare in *Ulysses*. As Buck Mulligan observes: '[i]t's quite simple. He proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father' (Joyce: 1989; 15). That the Shakespearean presence in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is mediated through the theoretical comments of Hugo foregrounds the macrocosmic placement of Irish political identity in the Joycean aesthetic. It also refers proleptically to the catalogue verse at the beginning of this section where the list of 'Irish heroes and heroines' contains a macrocosmic definition of Irishness, with many of the works being available only through English translations, ghosts of the originals, analogous to the *hauntological* presence of Shakespeare in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Like the vision of the

artist in the final chapter, the presence of Shakespeare remains ‘within or behind or beyond or above’ the text ‘invisible, refined out of existence’, as a metonym of the *gnomonic* definition of Irishness which Joyce is expressing.

In terms of Shakespeare as a signifier of a plural form of identity, there is an interesting passage in the *Scylla and Charybdis* chapter of *Ulysses*, where there is reference to a French production of *Hamlet*. This reference raises yet more issues about identity and nationality:

Hamlet
ou
Le Distrait
Pièce de Shakespeare
He repeated to John Eglinton’s newgathered frown:
Pièce de Shakespeare, don’t you know. It’s so French. The French point of view. *Hamlet ou...*

(Joyce: 1989; 153-154)

Once again Shakespeare is mediated through a continental influence, this time Mallarmé, once more demonstrating the protean power of ‘Patrick W. Shakespeare’ as an avatar of a macrocosmic placement of Irish identity. The verb ‘*distraindre*’ has the following meanings: ‘to distract, amuse, separate, set aside’ with the added connotation of ‘absent minded’. The separation of Shakespeare from his position as national bard, the ‘setting aside’ of the criteria of essentialist identity, the distraction from Englishness, and the transformation into ‘Patrick W. Shakespeare’, spectral presence over Joyce’s pluralization of Irish identity, proceeds apace with that terminal ‘*ou*’ (‘or’) which leaves the way open for polysemic connotations in terms of meaning. The ghostly presence in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* has become a *hauntological* image of the transforming of essentialist notions of Englishness into polysemic and negative images of Irishness. Is Mallarmé’s *Hamlet* French or English; is Victor Hugo’s conception of Shakespeare French or English; are Irish performances of

Shakespeare English or Irish, what nationality is the Akira Kurisawa's Japanese production of *Macbeth*. For that matter, what is the language of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*?

Joyce's interrogation of essentialist attitudes to culture and nationality reaches a climactic point in Leopold Bloom's answer to the question asked in *Ulysses*, a question with strong echoes of a similar one which began this study. However, if the question is similar, then the answer is very different:

What is your nation if I may ask? says the citizen.
Ireland, says Bloom. I was born here. Ireland.

(Joyce: 1989; 272)

This is the ultimate emancipatory aim of the invocation of *Patrick W. Shakespeare*: the pluralization of identity which allows a Hungarian Jew to claim Irish identity as almost an accident of birth. The troped name allows the dissemination of the singular, colonial image of 'Shakespeare' into the polylinguistic and multi characterized image of pluralism and difference. When Mr Deasy in *Ulysses* asks '[b]ut what does Shakespeare say?' and then answers his own question, '[p]ut but money in thy purse', Stephen makes this very point by murmuring 'Iago' (Joyce: 1989; 25). There is not one Shakespeare but rather, as Joyce notes in *Finnegans Wake*, 'myriads of drifting minds' (Joyce: 1975; 159, 7), and these drifting minds, these polysemic characters, allow for a new politics of Irish identity, as epitomized by Leopold Bloom's assertion of Irishness. What is necessary here is that, if Bloom is to be Irish, then the definition of Irishness must be revised so as to include him. Any notion of a reified identity is now destroyed, and the future becomes a future determined by the synchronic present, as opposed to the diachronic past. The language of Joyce points towards the 'absolute future of what is coming' (Derrida: 1994; 90); while it does refer to the past, there is extensive mediation of that past so as to ensure that an

oversimplistic pseudomorphosis between a particular narrated past and the present and future cannot be created – indeed, for Adorno, a resistance to such a premature fusion is a point in common with both art and philosophy (Adorno: 1973; 15).

Bloom equates such pluralistic identity with a certain view of language, prefiguring the postnationalistic language of *Finnegans Wake*, and he again cites Shakespeare as a source of such a view: '[b]ut then Shakespeare has no rhymes: blank verse. The flow of the language it is' (183). This flow of language, inhabited by the spectral figure of 'Patrick W. Shakespeare', is dialectical in operation and ethical in direction, and is the precise opposite of what has been valorized in the name of 'Saxon' Shakespeare (Joyce: 1989; 152). This view of Shakespeare as some kind of monological transcendental figure embodying Englishness is the opposite side of the same coin from which was minted the Irish revival, and the image of the spectre, as negative trope of such identificatory fundamentalism, is further developed in terms of Stephen Dedalus's theory of Shakespeare, in *Ulysses*, where the spectrality of the bard is again discussed:

It is the ghost, the king, a king and no king, and the player is Shakespeare who has studied *Hamlet* all the years of his life which were not vanity in order to play the part of the spectre....Is it possible that that player Shakespeare, a ghost by absence, and in the vesture of buried Denmark, a ghost by death, speaking his own words to his own son's name (had Hamnet Shakespeare lived he would have been prince Hamlet's twin).

(Joyce: 1989; 155)

Here, Shakespeare as ghost symbolizes the power of literature as genre to undermine essentialism and provoke polysemy and heterogeneity. The blurring process whereby the author, his son, and his character all blend and merge is similar to that of the Joyce/Dedalus/Daedalus nominal chain which we discussed

at the beginning of this chapter. Both tend to foreground a negative aspect of personal, and by extension, societal identity.

This process of the spectralization of Shakespeare culminates in *Finnegans Wake*. Here Shakespeare functions as a database of the language which the Joycean virus will infect and then turn from text to hypertext. Each word becomes a jumping-off point for a linguistic voyage as signifier leads to signifier and meanings, like histories and identities, become plural in ‘a commodius vicus of recirculation’ (Joyce: 1975; 3, 2). This book cuts the umbilical chord between language and nationalistic insularity by freeing the Irish reader from the feelings of alienation in English experienced by Stephen in the funnel/tundish episode: ‘[h]is language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech’ (Joyce: 1993; 166). Given the ironic portrayal of Stephen in this book, one wonders how deeply Joyce himself felt such a sense of linguistic alienation in English? Hence, the book embodies the funeral wake of a nationalist linguistic ideology, and an awakening to the possibilities of language as a gateway to pluralism and heterogeneity: through narration from nation to internation and thence to international.

There are numerous exfoliations of the troped name of Shakespeare in *Finnegans Wake*, exfoliations in which spectral negative identity is constantly foregrounded through transactional signifiers. These transformations *hauntologically* embody his notion of Irish negative identity.³³ We see such transformations as ‘Shikespower’ (47,19);³⁴ ‘bacon or stable hand’ (141, 21); ‘shakeagain’ (143, 21); ‘shakealose’ (143, 22); ‘Chickspeer’ (145, 24); ‘Bragsppeer’ (152, 33); ‘shakespill and eggs’ (161, 31); ‘clasp shakers’ (174, 9); ‘slowspiers’ (174, 28); ‘Shakhisbeard’ (177, 32); ‘Shake hands’ (248, 23); ‘as Shakefork might pitch it’ (274, Left margin, note 4); ‘As great Shapesphere puns it’ (295, 3-4); ‘the curly bard’ (465, 28); ‘Shivering William’ (507, 35); the list goes on, reinforcing the epistemological foundation underlying both this list and the Joycean conception

of identity. This epistemology involves the *gnomonic* definition of Irishness against that of Europe, England, and the English language. The spectralization of Shakespeare throughout the Joycean *oeuvre* signifies this protreptic openness to the other which involves the shaking lose, and shaking again, of essentialist notions of the politics of Irish identity.

By placing the conception of Irishness *gnomonically* against all sorts of other cultures, and othernesses, Joyce is defining identity in terms of what Adorno, borrowing from Benjamin, would term a constellatory manner. His *hauntological* frame of reference places Irishness within a constellation wherein the essentialisms of the past are denuded of their reified ontology, and instead are spectralized in terms of the other. This alterity, and the whole Joycean project, is predicated towards the future, or more correctly, towards a future wherein there will be ‘absolute hospitality’, as embodied in the final affirmation of *Ulysses*. Molly’s famous cry of ‘yes I said yes I will Yes’ (Joyce: 1989; 644) points towards what Derrida, in *Specters of Marx*, calls ‘the “yes” to the *arrivant(e)*, the “come” to the future that cannot be anticipated’ (Derrida: 1994; 168). This notion of a future as defined negatively, in a constellatory manner, may seem, as Joyce puts it, ‘a strange wish for you, my friend, and it would poleax your sonson’s grandson utterly’ (Joyce: 1975; 53, 32-3); but this would only be true if the future generations held to the same essentialism that we have seen in some advanced nationalist and Gaelic revivalist ideological positions. Joyce sees a future where Irishness is a constellation of identities, and where the sonson’s grandson can say, as he does two lines later ‘[c]hee chee cheers for Upkingbilly’ (Joyce: 1975; 53, 36). Irishness as *gnomonic* constellation would be defined in terms of Adorno’s formulation that:

Cognition of the object in its constellation is cognition of the process stored in the object. As a constellation, theoretical thought circles the concept it would like to unseal, hoping that it may fly open like the lock of a well-

guarded safe-deposit box: in response, not to a single key or a single number, but to a combination of numbers.

(Adorno: 1973; 163)

In Joyce's case, much of his work can be seen as creating a constellation of Irish identity, and the circular thought proceeds to create a *Zentrum* of Irishness which is not defined logocentrically, or *ab initio*, by some kind of unmoved mover. Rather is it created through the *hauntological* negative dialectics of Joyce's epistemology of language, for, as Adorno has put it, by 'gathering around the object of cognition, the concepts potentially determine the object's interior' (Adorno: 1973; 162). I would suggest that this is precisely what Joyce has done in the passages that we have read in this chapter. He has refused essentialism and embraced a polyglossic negative definition of Irishness. Bloom's reply to the citizen argues for a redefinition of identity. Just as Shakespeare is transformed in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*, from a monological symbol of Englishness into a *hauntological* series of symbols of plurality and alterity, so Bloom's reply transforms the essentialism of MacMorris into the ethics of the future. His notion of Irishness is necessarily negative in that it must leave *gnomonic* space for an Irishness, like his own, which is to come. Such Irishness is indefinable as a set of fixed presences; rather is it a series of traces, traces like the spectre of Shakespeare in the writings of Joyce. The Joycean notion of a community is Levinasian in that at its centre is 'an empty place, the anarchy of an absence at the heart of a community' (Critchley: 1992; 228).³⁵ Such an emptiness is a negative form of identity which serves as a space within which alterity can be accommodated, and from which a new Irishness can be defined.

Such a definition is ethical in a very real sense; it is open to the differences from the self that are creative of a form of Irishness that embraces alterity. This ethical affirmation achieves its apotheosis in that famous soliloquy of Molly Bloom,

with the anaphoric use of ‘yes’ which serves as a mantra for the affirmation of alterity in Joyce. As Derrida has noted, the relationship of a ‘yes to the Other, of a *yes* to the other and of one *yes* to the other *yes*, must be such that the contamination of the two *yeses* remains inevitable’ (Derrida: 1992a; 304). Here affirmation involves a dialectical transaction of difference, which, while contaminating the edges, never fully blurs the two ‘yeses’ together. The relationship is *hauntological* and *gnomonic*, and it is a relationship that is embodied by the notion of emigration as trope.³⁶

Bloom, Molly, Daedalus and Stephen are all emigrants of one form or another. Joyce himself lived the majority of his life as an emigrant. *Finnegans Wake* could be seen as a language of emigration in that the safe and *Heimlich* shores of interpretation and reference are left behind in favour of an *Unheimlich* language of traces and alterity. ‘Patrick W. Shakespeare’ has been troped into an emigrant, a position which is analogous to that of the initial interrogator of this discussion, his character, MacMorris. MacMorris looked for transcendental categories of the political and national as he answered his own question; Joyce also looks towards a notion of transcendence, but in a manner analogous to that cited by Simon Critchley in his discussion of the writings of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy. Writing about their notion of the withdrawal of the political, by which he means any sense of the withdrawal of the transcendental perspective which has led to ‘immanentism’, Critchley points to the need to restore some form of transcendental perspective. He notes that:

The *retreat* of the political is the complete withdrawal of the transcendence or alterity of the political in an immanentist society, and the re-tracing of the political is therefore an attempt at a re-inscription of the transcendence of the political. However, this re-inscription does not aim at restoring transcendence by founding the political on the transcendental signified of God, man, history, or destiny; rather, it is necessary to rethink the political without nostalgia for a lost plenitude of presence.

(Critchley: 1992; 217)

Here we see the *aporia* facing those who would attempt to construct a sense of Irish identity. Without some level of transcendental perspective, as Adorno has pointed out, a community is immanent, and this immanence can result in a narrow *Weltanschauung* which reifies the central categories of identity and becomes hostile to alterity in any form which might interrogate its own immanent perspective. Here then, some notion of the transcendental can serve as a regulative guard against the worst excesses of essentialist nationalism which sees all subjects as either the same, or in need of transformation into that sense of sameness.

However, as our discussion of the Gaelic and Celtic revivals has shown, transcendental signifieds of identity can have a similar reifying and hypostasizing effects on identificatory constructions, valorizing one set of criteria at the expense of another, in search of this ‘lost plenitude of presence’. The effect can be the same, with alterity being absorbed or obliterated under such a hypostasized transcendental rubric. Critchley, aware of such a problematic, offers a different definition of the transcendental:

Thus, the task of re-tracing the transcendence of the political is not a matter of bringing the political out of its withdrawal or of founding the political in a new act of *instauratio*; it is rather a matter of focusing the question of the political precisely around this withdrawal, where the transcendence of the political is, it could be said, the alterity of an absence.

(Critchley; 1992; 217)

I would suggest that this is exactly the perspective adopted by Joyce in his notion of emigration as trope. Here, transcendence is predicated upon absence, it is a negative notion of Irishness, which allows space for alterity such as that of Leopold Bloom. For Bloom to be Irish, then Irishness must be redefinable in such a manner as to include him. In other words, the space in a *gnomon* that

looks to be filled in so as to make a parallelogram is the space that is left for alterity in Joyce's epistemology of language.

Notes

- 1 There is a fascinating account of the first meeting of Yeats and Joyce contained in *The Apprentice Mage*, pages 275-278. Yeats wrote, but did not publish, a fictionalized account of their meeting, where he has Joyce ask how old Yeats is, and then reply 'I thought as much. I have met you too late. You are too old'. For Joyce, the lofty generalizations that Yeats adduced in defence of folklore were not to be admired. As he put it '[g]eneralizations aren't made by poets; they are made by men of letters. They are no use'.
2. A discussion on the two surviving versions of the opening of *The Sisters* is to be found in Colin MacCabe's *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*, pages 32-34.
- 3 Ellmann cites a comment from Stanislaus Joyce that James was always ashamed of having published in what he termed 'the pigs' paper', *James Joyce*, page 170.
- 4 This use of a pseudonym is, in itself, an interesting example of a negative definition of self. Like Derrida's notion of *hauntology*, Stephen Dedalus will figure as an ironic complement and supplement to the *persona* of James Joyce himself, and will forever destabilize the ontological certainties that are attached to the proper name. For an interesting, if complex, discussion of the ontological and epistemological problems attached to issues of the proper name, see Jacques Derrida's *Signéponge/Signsponge*.
- 5 For a study of these opening lines, see Helen Cixous's: 'Joyce: The (r)use of Writing', in *Post-Structuralist Joyce: 'Essays from the French'*, pages 15-30.
- 6 The change in spelling, from 'Daedalus' to 'Dedalus' is explained by Ellmann as attempting to make the combination of the first Christian martyr 'Stephen' and the pagan artificer 'Daedalus' 'slightly less improbable', *James Joyce*, page 153. This study will point to other reasons for, and consequences of, such a graphological alteration.
- 7 A further point to be made here is that at a material level, it is clear that both Constantine Curran and H. F. Norman, the editor of the *Irish Homestead*, knew that 'S.D' or 'Stephen Daedalus' signified James Joyce, as the latter sent Joyce a sovereign on July 23rd in payment for his story, *James Joyce*, page 170.
- 8 In the edition of *Stephen Hero* edited by Theodore Spencer, and revised by John J. Slocum and Herbert Cahoon, the corrections from the original Joycean manuscript are indicated by placing the original word in brackets, with the amended version following.
- 9 While Irish spelling was not standardized at this period, the signifier 'Béarla' was by far the most common usage.

- 10 Phonetically, the initial ‘g’ is not pronounced, so the pronunciation ‘*no-mon*’, with the accentuation on the first syllable, makes the word a homophone of the Latin word for name ‘*nomon*’ and the Joycean term ‘nayman of Noland’ as used in *Finnegans Wake*.
- 11 There is an interesting discussion on the interaction of the different meanings of the term ‘*gnomon*’ in an article entitled ‘The Gnomonic Clue to James Joyce’s *Dubliners*’, by Gerhard Friedrich, *Modern Language Notes LXII* (1957), pages 421-424.
- 12 Visually, it is the shadow of the *gnomon*, the pointer, that indicates the time through its circular movement around the face of the sundial. The shadow, as a negative image of the pointer, further underscores the *hauntological* definition of identity as part of an economy of presence and absence.
- 13 Derrida discusses the issue of parergonality and Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* in *The Truth in Painting*.
- 14 Adorno discusses this point in the introduction to *Negative Dialectics* in a compressed argument from pages 31-40, with a section specifically entitled ‘Against relativism’ on pages 35-37.
- 15 Adorno discusses the concept, coined by his friend and fellow member of the Frankfurt School in *Negative Dialectics*, pages 162-166.
- 16 For a thorough discussion of the epistemological and ethical difficulties attached to the postmodern theories of Lyotard and Baudrillard, see Christopher Norris’s *What’s Wrong with Postmodernism: ‘Critical Theory and the Ends of Philosophy’, Uncritical Theory: ‘Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War’, and The Truth about Postmodernism*.
- 17 40 epiphanies survive, most of them written between 1902 end 1905. It seems that over 70 were originally written, in a mixture of narrative, lyrical, and dialogue forms. While generically, they are interesting in themselves, it is also worth mentioning that some 25 are fused into Joyce’s mature work: 13 in *Stephen Hero*; 12 in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; 4 in *Ulysses* and 1 in *Finnegans Wake*.
- 18 Oliver St John Gogarty recalls in his autobiography, *As I was Going Down Sackville Street*, that Joyce had a habit of slipping into the lavatories of public houses to record some of the sayings and remarks of friends for the purpose of later being turned into epiphanies, pages 294-295.
- 19 These ‘French Connections’ predated Joyce himself, as in July 1870, his father John Joyce, immediately after his twenty first birthday, set off to join the French forces in the Franco-Prussian war. Alas, this heroic gesture was foiled by his mother who intercepted him in London and brought him back to Cork. His son was luckier and lived in Paris from December 1902 to April 1903, and from 1920 to 1939. It was in Paris that he met the remarkable Sylvia Beach, whose bookshop, Shakespeare & Co. at 12 Rue de l’Odéon became a favourite haunt. It was she organized the publication of *Ulysses* in France on Joyce’s birthday, February 2nd, 1922. It was also in Paris that *Finnegans Wake* was written. Paris, as symbol of Europe, was the lens through which Joyce’s loving vision of Dublin was refracted.

- 20 For a visual interpretation of this *hauntological* constellatory epistemology of Joyce's epiphanies, the photographic work of the French artist, Fabienne Barre provides some evocative images wherein the imbrication of image and counterimage serves as a parallel for that of self and other.
- 21 There are many more references to the necessity of labour in *Dubliners*: the work girls in *Two Gallants*, page 46; Polly's housework in *The Boarding House*, page 52; Farrington's shirking of work, and his being taken to task for it by Mr Alleyne in *Counterparts*, page 75; Maria's working clothes in *Clay*, page 88; Duffy's dealings with the workers in the Irish Socialist Party in *A Painful Case*, page 96; the discussion of the rights of working men in *Ivy Day in the Committee Room*: 'What's the difference between a good honest bricklayer and a publican - eh? Hasn't the working-man as good a right to be in the Corporation as anyone else - ay, and a better right than those shoneens that are always hat in hand before any fellow with a handle to his name?', page 106; Mr Harford's loaning money to workmen at usurious interest in *Grace*, page 142, and finally the detail devoted to the housemaid in *The Dead*.
- 22 It is interesting to note that it was this same difficulty with the anachronistic politics that were attached to the Celtic revival that lay behind Yeats's critique of that movement in *Cuchulain Fights the Sea*.
- 23 In Ireland, Wrenboys are groups of people who dress up in comical costumes, usually depicting rural Irish images of the past, and go from house to house on Saint Stephen's Day, December 26th, entertaining people with song and dance, and usually requiring donations of food, drink, or money in return. As a cultural form it is now in decline.
- 24 The difference in spelling 'Houlihan' as opposed to 'Holohan' can be traced to transliterations of Gaelic Irish names by English civil servants, who transcribed them, using standard English orthography, as best they could.
- 25 Gifford glosses this term as meaning 'ripe or mature' Ireland, *Joyce Annotated*, page 96, but in Irish parlance, the term is associated with a vocative cry, as in a battle cry, and the generally associated meaning is an optative exhortation towards victory, as in 'may Ireland be triumphant'.
- 26 Needless to say, there are many further interpretations of these paired terms, and the list would increase exponentially in the syntagmatic context of these pairings, that of the quizzing promised at the end of section five, with these pairings appearing in the eleventh answer in a series of twelve. Tindall's discussion of these is probably still the clearest: *A Reader's Guide to Finnegans Wake*, pages 111-130.
- 27 There is an important distinction between the infinite, and the idea of the infinite, which is the articulation of this concept in language and thought. Levinas is stressing this articulation rather than the concept *per se*.

- 28 It is interesting to note that the name 'Icarus' does not appear in *'A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man'*. I think that his presence, while *hauntologically* suggestive of the dangers of the pull of gravity, is not overtly in the text, as it would point to a failure of the Joycean project.
- 29 This book, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, involves a roundtable discussion between Jacques Derrida and Walter Brogan, Thomas Busch, Denis Schmidt and John D. Caputo, from the University of Villanova philosophy department. I have cited this text in two different ways. The text of the interview itself, pages 3-28, is cited as 'Derrida: 1977b', while the commentary which follows, pages 31-200 are cited as 'Caputo: 1977'.
- 30 For a thorough discussion of Heidegger's use of this term, and of its philosophical and ethical implications, see *Specters of Marx*, pages 23-30.
- 31 The ironic use of a word to indicate the opposite of its lexical meaning.
- 32 The *Hades* chapter in *Ulysses* is a comic masterpiece of this type of commentary.
- 33 In terms of the spectralization of Shakespeare, it is interesting to note that Vincent Cheng has found some forty seven echoes in *Finnegans Wake* of the injunction of the ghost of Old Hamlet to his son to 'List, list O list', *Shakespeare and Joyce: 'A Study of Finnegans Wake'*, pages 202-203. This book features a comprehensive list of correspondences between Joyce's work and Shakespeare.
- 34 As all of the following are sourced from *Finnegans Wake*, for the purpose of brevity, the citations of each of these terms will refer to the page and line of the book.
- 35 Critchley, in this quotation, is actually speaking about the Levinasian notion of God, as opposed to my own discussion on identificatory categorizations. However, whether speaking about God, or nationality, the epistemological thrust is similar. Transcendence is not seen as a hovering presence, but rather as an absence within a grouping which leaves a place for alterity.
- 36 This notion of emigration has been further developed by Seamus Heaney, at the end of his book *North*, where, pulled by different notions of identity, he denies that he is either an 'internee' or an 'informer' he sees himself as an 'inner émigré, grown long-haired/And thoughtful', *North*, page 73 (Internment was a policy of imprisoning those who were known to have sympathies with terrorist organizations, both republican and loyalist, which was introduced into Northern Ireland on August 9th, 1971. 342 people were arrested, mostly republicans, and such a process loomed very large in the Catholic psyche at this time.) In this poem, *Exposure*, Heaney defines his vision of Irish identity as a form of inner emigration, with parallels to the generation of Russian *émigré's* who flooded Western Europe after the Russian revolution. There are strong affinities between Heaney's notion of Irishness, and those of Yeats and Joyce.
- 36 See *The Ethics of Deconstruction*, pages 200-218.

Conclusion: Towards an ethics of community

It has been the argument of this book that both Yeats and Joyce saw identity in terms that were radically different to those of the Gaelic and Celtic revivalists. Both asked huge questions of the identificatory certainties of green nationalism and Catholic, Gaelic essentialism. In this sense, their attitude to an Irish community was ethically driven in that they were determined to leave some space for alterity. Derrida has spoken about a community of the question (Derrida: 1978a; 80), wherein such questions must be kept open if a community is to develop. He has also made the point, in a different context, that language itself is ethical in that it begins as a response to the other (Critchley: 1992; 195).

Both Yeats and Joyce seek to define such Irishness negatively, refusing the reified essentialisms of the revivalist *mentalité* and instead, offering in their texts an attempt at some form of *Kraftfeldt* wherein the differing traditions in the country can achieve a protreptic dialectical interchange which will redefine both in an ongoing process. Such an attempt is predicated on the present and future. For Yeats, this is symbolized in the metaphor of ‘walking naked’ without the protective covering of a monological tradition, and leaving himself open to alterity. Derrida has made the point, in *Of Spirit*, that the origin of language is responsibility (Derrida: 1989; 132), and this is very evident in Yeats’s ethical definitions of community.

On May 28th, 1913, Yeats wrote to Gordon Craig that at the present time ‘Ireland is being made & this gives the few who have clear sight the determination to shape it’ (Foster: 1997; 482), and this determination resulted in a desire to embrace the alterity that was part of Ireland as he saw it. During *The Playboy of the Western World* controversy, Yeats made the following emblematic statement, speaking, as he put it, on behalf of a new generation who ‘wish again for individual sincerity, the eternal quest of truth, all that has been given up for so long that all might crouch upon the one roost and quack or cry in the one flock’ (Foster: 1997; 365). This truth took the form of a negative definition of Irishness which interrogated the pieties of essentialist nationalism, and paved the way for a more complex, and ethical notion of Irishness which would be defined by the Irish people who took on the responsibility for so doing. His work was very much part of this protreptic discourse, as he forced different strands of Irishness into contact and confrontation.

Similarly Joyce saw little value in the nets of nationality, language and religion. As he put it in *Finnegans Wake*, he hoped to ‘escape life’s high carnage of semperidentity by subsisting peasemeal upon variables’ (Joyce: 1975; 582, 15-16). These variables consist of *hauntological* and *gnomonic* definitions of Irishness, written in a language which itself is mimetic of a negative dialectics of signification, wherein the *hauntological* aspects of language constantly hover over its ontological dimension. Such variables produce a discourse which define Irishness in terms of the future, a future where:

down the gullies of the eras we may catch ourselves looking
forward to what will in no time be staring you larrikins on the
postface in that multimirror megaron of returningties, whirled
without end to end.

(Joyce: 1975; 582, 18-21)

This study has contended that the relationship between Irish identity, Irish history, and the writing of Yeats and Joyce has been ethically grounded in that the Irishness enunciated by both writers opens up a space for alterity, and for a notion of identity that is different from itself. As Derrida puts it, such a project, such a protreptic discourse:

starts something new, it also continues something, it is true to the memory of the past, to a heritage, to something we receive from the past, from our predecessors, from the culture. If an institution is to be an institution, it must to some extent break with the past, keep the memory of the past, while inaugurating something absolutely new.

(Derrida: 1977b; 6)

This newness is a notion of community that views political space as an ‘open, plural, opaque network of ethical relations which are non-totalizable’ (Critchley: 1992; 225). It also allows for a healthier relationship with the past in that it can be seen as past, and with no existence in the present. We can do no better than conclude with Seamus Heaney’s poem, *Traditions*, wherein he conflates the initial question of this study with Bloom’s resonant reply. Heaney is speaking about MacMorris who ‘whinged/to courtier and groundling: that famous question as to what was his nation:

And sensibly, though so much
Later, the wandering Bloom
Replied, ‘Ireland,’ said Bloom,
‘I was born here. Ireland.’

(Heaney: 1972; 32)

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