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Intercultural "Marriages" and Their Refractions in W. B. Yeats's Work

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The relationship between England and Ireland and the historical premises for their "familial" interaction at the beginning of the twentieth century were a major concern to the Irish poet William Butler Yeats. The fantasy of the intercultural "marriage" between "masculine" England and "feminine" Ireland, which had been part of a wide variety of nineteenth-century texts, was interpreted by the poet from an aesthetic perspective. Basing his aesthetic vision on Celtic mythology, Yeats employs a variety of strategies of representation in his work to construct a Celtic(ized) image of Ireland. By alluding to its mythical and epic stature in the past, he aims at re-awakening it for a new life in the present. This article attempts an exploration of Yeats's strategies and practices of aestheticization and his mediation between past and present.
Keywords: William Butler Yeats**,** intercultural "marriage," centre and periphery, Celtic mythology, mythopoeia, aestheticization, mediation between past and present.

Literary scholars have devoted considerable attention to the relationship between literature and place.[1] While some critics have focused on the "cartographic consciousness … which informs a wide range of [Irish] literary texts" (Connolly 48), others have explored the complex relations between (self-styled) "centres" and their "peripheries" (see Kostova). "Peripheries" have traditionally been defined as "inferior" through hegemonic discourses of imperialist domination issuing from the "centre." At the same time, it has been repeatedly pointed out that in the case of Anglophone literary modernism, paradoxically, it was the colonized that inherited the literary domain (see Eagleton 1) insofar as certain leading modernists, such as James Joyce and William Butler Yeats, originated outside the English "centre."

The present article dwells on several specific relationships to power and multiple aesthetic practices and strategies of representation within the English and Irish contexts. Its focus, however, is on the *aestheticization* of the Irish context: an act whose importance is still to be properly evaluated from a critical perspective. The text further aims at disclosing some *intra-national* approaches to these issues and tracing them in the work of William Butler Yeats. The relationship between England and Ireland and the historical premises for their "familial" interaction, as they presented themselves to the poet at the beginning of the twentieth century, offered a wide range of dilemmas to be solved and puzzles to be revealed, and opened up new grounds for forging mythopoeic images, while simultaneously leaving space for the inevitable dethroning and reduction of the formerly powerful presence of received myths, socio-political and cultural alike. I start with Yeats's construction of a Celtic(ized) image of Ireland and end with the transformation of this image and its "living embodiment," the actress and revolutionary nationalist Maud Gonne, into a "universal," yet historicist, mythopoeic narrative about the shift of civilizations and the de-centring of "centres."

[1] For a definition of place and the distinction between space and place, see Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, pp. 1–14.

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Irrespective of whether literary scholars accept or reject Ireland's postcolonial status,[2] it is impossible to deny that Irish culture still has strong ties with that part of the English-language tradition which centred in London in the past. The interaction, then, between what the Empire perceived as a metropolitan "centre" and the Irish "periphery" became inevitable. "It seems undeniable," writes Robert Crawford, "that it was the un-English provinces and their traditions which contributed most to the crucially provincial phenomenon which we now know as Modernism" (217–218). On the other hand, the imperial city *par excellence*, the "heart of the world," as G. H. Wells called London (qtd. in Bradbury 172), could appear as a fruitful ground for the accommodation and domestication of "antitheticalities" such as the national and the transnational, the traditional and the innovative, the archaic and the contemporary, the linear and the cyclic, and the unitary and the fragmented.

It cannot be denied that, in the Irish case, there was a cultural accumulation of experience and mutually constructive interaction between "centre" and "periphery." At the same time, however, there was also mounting dissent on the part of the "periphery." In the case of Ireland, the resistance of the subaltern was countered by a specific myth of the so-called "primary other" (Valente, "The Myth" 194), constructed by the British Empire about Ireland. Respectively, the process of forging a national/cultural identity, by Irish intellectuals, through the pioneering of a cultural renaissance, was most violent. The construction of a cultural self-image was very closely linked to political and national conflicts in the early twentieth century and thus it shared some of the traits of the Irish struggle for national independence against British colonial and imperial domination.

Consequently, the discourse of anti-colonial politics acquired a double perspective: on the one hand, it was contingent on historical inevitabilities, while on the other, it was dependent on significant literary figures who were striving to establish a cultural synthesis through the active remaking and reshaping of the arts and reaching for new modes of writing, which sometimes relied heavily on national myths, derived from ancient folk traditions and beliefs. Even though he belonged by birth to the English "centre" rather than to one of the Celtic "peripheries," D. H. Lawrence managed to express the dilemma of the modern artist who wished to return to the primeval "roots" of the "tribe":

> To appreciate the pagan manner of thought, we have to drop our own manner of on-and-on-and-on, from a start to a finish, and allow the mind to move in cycles, or to flit here and there over a cluster of images. Our idea of time as a continuity in an eternal, straight line has crippled our consciousness cruelly. (qtd. in Bradbury 51)

However, the strategy of using images, myths, and archetypes proceeding from unconscious sources may acquire, as it often happens, an ideological perspective rather than a purely artistic one. In fact, certain Victorian public figures and writers used it as a weapon against "inferior" nations or "races" and in their discourse Ireland was gendered feminine and thus assigned an inferior role in a relationship of familial subordination with England. The following commentary by Valente sheds light on some of the key aspects of that relationship:

> The sexual inflection of socio-economic dominance was usually explicit in the case of Ireland. First of all, its hybrid status as a metropolitan colony left Ireland especially susceptible of familial metaphors. Long nicknamed the Sister Isle, Ireland was increasingly imaged in wifely terms as the century wore on, the implied connubial connection with England serving to naturalize that long-standing bone of contention, the Union. ("The Myth" 190)

It may be assumed that such a symbolic representation aimed at preventing the emergence of an Irish cultural consciousness and for this reason it shifted the focus from an Irish *nation* to an Irish *race*.

[2] On the application of the postcolonial paradigm to Ireland, see, for instance, Claire Connolly, "Postcolonial Ireland: Posing the Question." On Irish society as metrocolonial, see Joseph Valente, *Dracula's Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Question of Blood* (2002) and *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880–1922* (2011).

The masculine power of the Saxon *race* had to be set against, in Mathew Arnold's words, "the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, and feminine idiosyncrasy" (82). To do Matthew Arnold justice, he was not a Saxonist in the sense of envisioning the complete extinction of the Celtic race, as Thomas Carlyle had done earlier (see Leerssen 67). He even went so far as to admit that "the greatest achievements of English literature allowed a 'Celtic' sense of fancy and fantasy to leaven [the] 'Saxon' sense of pragmatic realism" (Leerssen 67), and "the chief poets of the English literary tradition [present] a felicitous merger between 'Saxon' and 'Celtic' sensibilities" (Leerssen 70). Nevertheless, Arnold confined Celtic culture to the past and "dismiss[ed] any claims for [its] survival or revival in the modern age" (Leerssen 68). His use of racial categories such as "Saxon" and "Celtic" may have been *metaphorical* rather than *literal*, as Joep Leerssen has ably demonstrated (69), but the "national characterology" that he employs as "a shorthand characterization" is still laden with the gendered and gendering meanings discussed above and for this reason perpetuates the distinction between *feminine/womanish* Celts and stolid and unimaginative but nonetheless strong and decidedly *masculine* Saxons.

The forces of cultural renaissance in Ireland had to translate the ubiquitous gender hierarchy, which was imposed on the "sister isle," into the urgency of forging an ethno-colonial counter-offensive. The terms of the "metropolitan marriage" had to be rejected by the postulation of a specific kind of Irish "masculinity" dissociated from the myth of "womanishness" constructed by the British Empire for the Irish and other Celtic races. The engineers of Ireland's cultural nationalism thus faced a dilemma: on the one hand, they had to reject imperial influence through their own myth, while, on the other, it appeared essential to sustain, as Valente rightly remarks, the "feminized idea of the Celt as the *differentiae* of their ethnic and cultural self-definition" ("The Myth" 193).

W. B. Yeats: Forging a Mythopoeic Archetype

Writing in a context characterized by mythologizing and counter-mythologizing, Yeats appears to have felt the need to make his mythopoeic personification of Ireland truly enduring. With this end in view, in *Crossways, The Celtic Twilight, The Wind among the Reeds, In the Seven Woods*, the plays *Cathleen-ni-Houlihan*, *Deirdre*, *On Baile's Strand,* and *The Only Jealousy of Emer* he resorts to images from Celtic mythology. For the poet that mythology appeared as part of what he called "*Anima Mundi*." In "*Per Amica Silentia Lunae*" he wrote: "I am persuaded that a logical process, or a series of related images, has body and period, and I think of Anima Mundi as a great pool or garden where it moves through its allotted growth like a great water plant or fragrantly branches in the air" (*The Major Works* 418). He went so far as to identify some of the Gaelic poets of the eighteenth century as his precursors. As Edward Hirsh points out, for Yeats such oral bards and wandering minstrels as "Raftery, to him the Irish Homer were not wholly isolated men because they were the inheritors of an ancient mythological tradition" (883).

One myth from this tradition, the Gaelic myth of sovereignty, gained through sexual transformation, came to be firmly rooted in Yeats's work. According to this myth, Queen Maeve, also known as "Medb," held the kingdom's sovereignty. As the warrior queen of Connacht, she had to resort to her own enormous sexual energy and military prowess in order to endow with a new identity the men who were to accede to the throne. No king could reign in Connacht unless he was married to Maeve. It was also said that "she never was without one man in the shadow of another" (Yeats, *The Major Works* 63). When sexually accosted, the potential sovereign acceded to the throne and simultaneously *Caillaic Beare* (*Cailleach Béara*, the Hag of Béara) or Queen Maeve was transfigured into a young beauty.

As a source of real creative power this myth likewise converges the image of Ireland and an image of idealized and highly desired femininity by way of an idiosyncratic archetype within an intra-national context yet transcending it to reach universal cosmopolitan meanings as well. With Yeats, the image of idealized femininity is usually traced back to Maud Gonne, often represented in his writing as "the living embodiment of the spirit of Erin" (Cullingford 11). As the poet's biographers attest, he was obsessed with her for most of his life. Because of her involvement with the Irish struggle for national independence she seemed a fitting emblem of Ireland. In conformity with an aesthetic vision derived from Celtic

mythology, specifically, from myths about *Cailleach Béara* or Queen Maeve, both identified by Cullingford as "the humanized version of the goddess of Sovereignty" (4), the emblematic figure is antithetically beautiful and ugly: she is a hag and a beautiful fairy, an old witch and a young beauty, at the same time. The following dialogue in Yeats' early play *Cathleen-ni-Houlihan* provides an example of Ireland's two states of being and of the metamorphic change from old age to youth and beauty:

> PETER. 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 goddess. (*The Major Works* 220)

However aestheticized, this "Celtic" pattern was meant to undermine relations of power. Maeve, possessing the sovereign right to determine who would rule the kingdom or to decide whom she would reject is a figure possessing both autonomy and authority. Valente elaborates the point in the following way:

> Her [Queen Maeve's] sexual aggressiveness is tantamount in the political register to a right of nomination, hence to a substantive measure of autonomy and agency, while the potential sovereign is limited to the more passive right of acceptance or refusal; of authorizing her choice or failing to do so, a failure which in this case would reflect only his own shortcomings not those of his suitor. On the other hand, she utterly depends upon his acquiescence in order to realize her hidden feminine perfection. ("The Myth" 195)

These *aisling* forms belonged, as Yeats himself suggested, to "a tradition of belief older than any European Church founded upon the experience of the world before the modern bias" (*Autobiographies* 265). Queen Maeve did not represent a socially mediated archetype of womanliness and caring maternity but was rather viewed as carrying the subtle threat of a "troublesome" eroticism and aggression. These traits, however, are not given a negative interpretation in the context of Yeats's writing. They seem to be part of an aesthetic, which, in his opinion, was characteristic of a "sublime race" that no longer existed during his lifetime. In his *Autobiographies* he wrote:

> Queen Maeve, the finest woman you ever saw … They [i. e. the representatives of the "sublime race"] are fine and dashing looking, like the men one sees riding their horses in two and threes on the slopes of the mountains with their swords swinging. There is no such race living now, none so finely proportioned. (266)
>
> **and**
>
> Today, with her great height and the unchangeable lineaments of her form, she looks like Sybil I would have played by Florence Farr, but in that day she seemed a classical impersonification of Spring, the Virgilian commendation. She walks like a Goddess …, but she vexed my father by praise of war, war for its own sake … as it were some virtue in excitement itself. (123)

The early Yeatsian postromantic image of a "pearl-pale," to use his own phrase from the poem "He Gives His Beloved Certain Rhymes," chastity worshipped by a chivalric masculinity is shifted to another plane: now we seem to experience the physical presence of a heathen goddess. This image then becomes an integral part of a complex of images portraying Maud Gonne, on the one hand, and such emblematic figures of female military prowess and leadership as Joan of Arc, on the other. Evidently, this convergence of heroines from different epochs and contexts appeared to be successful, for Maud Gonne became known all over Ireland as the Irish Joan of Arc. In this way the desired heroic image of Ireland and the idealized image of the beloved woman were joined together. It seems, as Harwood suggests, that "Maud Gonne met the requirements of Yeats's imagination, because she was engaged in acting the role of 'warrior queen'" (268).

If Maud Gonne from earlier periods and texts had been seen as the living paragon of an ideal Ireland evolved from Celtic mythology, in the later "Hellenic" poems she is intended to personify an Ireland of epic stature, reminiscent of the mythological stature of godlike figures such as Helen of Troy or Athena Pallas:

> What could have made her peaceful with a mind
> That nobleness made simple as a fire,
> With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
> That is not natural in an age like this,
> Being high and solitary and most stern?
> Why, what could she have done, being what she is
> Was there another Troy for her to burn? (*The Major Works* 42)
>
> **or**
>
> For she had fiery blood
> When I was young,
> And trod so sweetly proud
> As 'twere upon a cloud,
> A woman Homer sung
> That life and letters seem,
> But an heroic dream. (*The Major Works* 41)
>
> **or**
>
> She might, so noble from head
> To great shapely knees
> The long flowing line
> Have walked to the altar
> Through the holy images
> At Pallas Athena's side;
> Or been fit spoil for a Centaur,
> Drunk with the unmixed wine. (*Collected Poems* 153)

The legendary "monumental serenity," to use Winckelmann's famous phrase, of classical heroic goddesses was intended to become a constituent of a national myth, which, in Yeats's view, had to be forged out of different mythologies and levels of experience to achieve the effect required for the building of a prosperous nation. Some traits in the description of Maud Gonne as presented by Yeats in his "Homeric" poems (fiery blood, pride and arrogance) seem to be connected by way of the stereotypical imaging of Maud Gonne and Ireland to certain qualities of the Celtic "race" such as heroism and "praise of war." Therefore, it might be assumed that for Yeats the Celts and the ancient Greeks possessed certain features in common as regards the heroic quality of their nature and a specific kind of beauty. In "No Second Troy" he likens the latter to "a tightened bow" and assigns it to a heroic age in the remote past that is radically different from the unheroic present: "a kind/ That is not natural in an age like this" (*The Major Works* 42). The invocation of a classical literary genealogy is evidently intended to complement the national ideal that was once sought only in Celtic sources. But the effect that those Homeric poems achieve is quite the contrary, for the Irish political and social background (in the first poem) is *opposed* to the "sternness" of the spirit of classical beauty. Thus, the dramatic tension of a "tightened bow" springs from the contrast between the actual (as exemplified by "ignorant men") and the illusory. McKinsey further elaborates the point:

> "No Second Troy" simultaneously profiles the real (or "natural") Ireland that constitutes its opposite: If Helen-Gonne is "high," the latter must be low; if she is "solitary" (Yeats would later write of an "Anglo-Irish solitude"), it is populous; where she is "most stern" it, presumably, is "lax."

> … In a broader context of meaning Yeats's Homericism encodes the crisscrossing social and sectarian fracture lines that characterise a colonial society swiftly moving toward national self-sovereignty. (1;5)

As these poems resulted from the discrepancy between what Yeats hoped for and what he really found when he returned to the "periphery" from the metropolitan centre (see McKinsey 4). They seem to be gauging the past by both distancing us (as well as the poet himself) from his previous mythological *Celtic Twilight* and coupling it with Greek classicism that offered originals from a distant but distinct past. The effect achieved may be said to be one of multicultural multinationalism, which suggests that modernism in Ireland was a simultaneous mixture of parochial provincialism and an eclectic cosmopolitan universality, characteristic of a society seeking to establish its decolonized status and identity by challenging England's cultural dominion.

Femme Fatale – Idolatry or Superhuman Aestheticism? The Statue and Its Role in Mythmaking

It is a truism that late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers were obsessed with the *femme fatale,* a feminine figure seen as exerting deadly powers on the surrounding world. Statues representing classical goddesses were frequently envisaged as expressions of fatal femininity, producing a particularly powerful impact through their ambiguous and dangerous presence. The double aspect of the statue linked to death and primeval chaos, on the one hand, and to purity and unassailability, on the other, is elaborated by Michael North:

> The statue is both pure and unassailable, the most durable and eternal of the arts, and equivocal, disturbingly ambiguous, deathly. These two aspects of sculpture are at the heart of Baudelaire's "*La Beaute*" in which the statue inspires in the poet "*un amour /Eternel et muet ainsi que la matière.*" Sculpture despises "*mouvement qui déplace les lignes,*" and its uncompromising stillness is both the ideal and the despair of mortal artists. (383)

In many of Yeats's poems from 1910 onward the monumental suggestiveness displayed by the "high-foreheaded" Aphrodites, Helens of Troy, and other goddesses of supreme beauty overpowers his imagination and is inevitably associated with the living embodiment Maud Gonne. Here is Yeats's own comment in *Autobiographies* on the statuesque beauty of his beloved: "Her face like the face of some Greek statue, showed little thought, … as though a Scopas had measured and long calculated, consorted with Egyptian sages and mathematicians out of Babylon that he might face even Artemisia's sepulchral image with a living norm (364–5).

For Yeats the statues of Mausolus and Artemisia, which the poet had seen in the British Museum, and which served as a prototype for the poem "The Statues," appeared to accommodate a specific ambivalence: "These private, half animal, half divine figures," Yeats wrote, "became to me … images of an unpremeditated joyous energy, that neither I nor any other man racked by doubt and inquiry, can achieve" (*Autobiographies* 150). If we assume that the aspects which Yeats interpreted as "half animal" and "half divine" were the modern analogue to what the ancient Greeks perceived as *chthon* and *spirit*, or, alternatively, what the nineteenth-century German philosopher Nietzsche called the Dyonisiac and the Apollonic principles, then it appears easy to explain why Yeats chose these statues for his purpose: he shared the idea, apparently derived from Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, that great art might be produced only when both principles were held in a perfect equilibrium. And, logically enough, the statue was singled out by Yeats as a fitting emblem, for "she" could never allow either principle to gain the upper hand, aptly holding them in "petrified" balance. Michael North further elaborates the point:

> Yeats seemed to conflate two opposed aspects of sculpture. Winckelmann's benign and beautiful stature in the bedchamber, which seems to preside over the first two stanzas of "The Statues," and Moreau's statuesque woman who presides at the tomb. (395)

In other words, the statue was approached by Yeats with what Shelley might have called "alluring repellence," like the severed head of Medusa in his famous poem, attractive and repugnant at the same time. Irrespective of whether it was real or imaginary, an archetype or a historical figure such as Maud Gonne, the statue always had a double meaning for Yeats. The "image of stone," as Arthur Symons labels the statue (qtd. in North 384) may be assumed to enjoy a state of perfect stillness but may also hint at the possibility of a "wild" collision. This is "her" fatal meaning. North comments on the relationship between the statue and fatal femininity, and on "how often the Fatal Woman appears as a statue":

> In Mérimée's *Venus d'Ille*, …, in Heine's "Florentine Nights" … The figure of Salome is the type of the predatory woman and she is in all depictions influenced by Moreau, "heavy as lead, the image of an idol" …. Symons in fact calls Moreau's Helen "an image of stone" in his article on Moreau. … Corpse-like herself, she reduces the lover to a corpse by robbing him and immobilizing him in a dream world. (384)

Yeats's interest in the perfect measurement embodied by certain statues was derived from his preoccupation with Pythagoras's philosophy and, specifically, with that part of it that focused on the mythic quality of numbers. The "plummet-measured face" from the poem "The Statues" is explicitly related to Greek sculptors who relied on Pythagoras's "calculation, number, measurement" to make their statues "move in marble or in bronze."

As an admirer of the perfect proportions of the heroic body, the Irish poet incorporated the three mysteries of Pythagoras's mythical and proto-scientific theoretical studies, Evolution, Number, and Unity, into his poetry by creatively (mis)interpreting this knowledge in consonance with his own personal understanding. Yeats came to think of mathematics as a self-contained formative source for art, but he also admired the convergence of the intuitional concrete and mathematical abstract as a perfect model of measurement. Thus, in his view, "[n]umber alone is purely abstract, but number embodied in the human forms of art turns into ideal particularity" (qtd. in Adams 304). The statues from the eponymous poem, inspired by the exhibits of Artemisia and Mausolus in the British Museum, and the "statuesque" Maud Gonne seem to embody the poet's ideal of sexualized beauty as a mixture of number and passion, created by an imagination dwelling upon Greek proportions. He wrote:

> 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. Europe was not born when Greek galleys defeated the Persian hordes at Salamis [but] when the Doric studios set out those broad-backed marble statues against the multiform vague, expressive Asiatic sea, they gave to the sexual instinct of Europe its goal, its fixed type. In the warm sea of the French and Italian Riviera I can still see it. (qtd. in Adams 306)

In Yeats's view, this sexualized ideal, this "fixed type," should express the mythic quality of number (as he states in "The Statues," "Pythagoras planned it"), but should also be defined by the historical premises of its own evolution. In view of these double aspects connected with myth, Vivienne Koch offers "The Statues" and "The Second Coming" as examples of poems powerful enough to create a myth. In her opinion, "in 'The Statues' the creation of myth is indeed the pressing of live lips upon a plummet-measured face" (63). Yet, although Yeats emphasized the importance of "ideal particularity" as exemplified by "the pressing of live lips upon a plummet-measured face," this line alone, and in the context of the poem only, cannot function as a driving force in myth-making. "Ideal particularity" should not be associated so much with the simple fact of "pressing live lips upon a plummet-measured face" but, rather, with historically conspicuous events, as when one civilization replaces another:

> …. for the men
> That with a mallet or a chisel modelled these
> Calculations that look but casual flesh, put down

All Asiatic vague immensities,
And not the banks and oars that swam upon
The many-headed foam of Salamis.
Europe put off that foam when Phidias
Gave women dreams and dreams their looking-glass. (*The Major Works* 171)

Asia, identified with "vague immensities," is linked by Yeats to unbridled female sexuality and the nature principle.[3] The historical association in this excerpt is with the Athenians who defeated Persia in the Battle of Salamis and the emergence of myth should be linked to the crossing of multi-cultural layers (one civilization replacing another) in the creation of a unified symbol. Salamis seems to be viewed as a point of intersection in the rise and fall of civilizations. The idea here is that civilizations rise and fall but, as Heraclitus put it, "they live each other's life and die each other's death." Babylon had died out to resurrect in Egypt, Egypt handed down its testaments to Ancient Greece. Greece conquered the world not so much as a country of iron legions but as a state where art flourished and in which democratic freedom of personality was a primary concern. Although Rome conquered Greece, Greece outlived Rome through the power and beauty of its glorious spirit to be reborn as an idea in Byzantium. The Renaissance of the west would not have emerged without the influence of Byzantium. In this connection Yeats wrote:

> Each age unwinds the thread another age had wound, and it amuses one to remember that before Phidias, and his westward-moving art, Persia fell, and that when full moon came round again, amid eastward-moving thought and brought Byzantine glory, Rome fell; and that at the outset of our westward-moving Renaissance, Byzantium fell; all things "dying each other's life, living each other's death." (qtd. in Bloom 282)

Furthermore, it may be assumed that Yeats described those successive shifts of civilizations in the past to denote a similar change under way in the contemporary world in which he found himself: a change consisting in the distancing of "provincial peripheries" from the metropolitan "centre," thus altering the age-old relationship between "dominant" and "dominated." Therefore if "myth" in the classical sense of the word is extra-historical, in Yeats's poems it becomes a centripetal force which possesses a historical meaning.

Whatever eclectic, arbitrary, and flexible sense of history Yeats might have had, this sense was submitted to a coherent pattern of thought. Irrespective of whether he makes use of mythological (Celtic or Greek), poetic (personal), or substantialized (statuesque) emblems, he unites them by way of a living norm, identified as the Muse Maud Gonne, with whom he was obsessed for most of his life. That is how "the living embodiment" functions as an archetype in his poetry. She might have lived in Egypt or Greece, or she might have crossed the boundary between the living and the dead as a fairy from the Celtic world, or she might have been perceived as a petrified idol, a statue. In Harwood's words, "Yeats and Maud Gonne, as it were, joined forces to create a woman of legend [and] [n]o biographer has so far succeeded in disentangling image and reality" (268).

[3] This view, according to Koch, corresponds to the one expressed by Hegel who claimed that Asia was the principle of nature as well as the place where every civilization had been begotten. See Koch, *William Butler Yeats* 69.

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