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CONSTRUCTING NATIONAL IDENTITY: W. B. YEATS' POETRY

Abstract

Yeats is the most prominent devotee and initiator of the Irish Literary Revival in the early 20th century. Irishness/Irish culture was a theme he handled since his early ages. His poetic themes ranging from love to the art of poetry are preoccupied with the theme of Irishness reinforced with images and stories from Irish/Celtic mythologies and present Irish sites. Yeats' praxis of mythic/past elements together with Irish sites in his poetic universe creates bondage between old and present Irishness. Hence his poetry is turned into a declaration of opinions and intentions on an idealized Irish culture. This study aims at presenting how Yeats is manifesting an ideology to fight for a heritage and national identity by visiting Irish and Celtic mythologies as well as current Irish sites, thus creating a performative discourse in his poetry that promotes conceptual and practical understanding of Irishness to be exercised.

Keywords: W. B. Yeats, National Identity, Irishness, Irish Mythology, Irish Sites.

ULUSAL KİMLİĞİN İNŞASI: W.B. YEATS'İN ŞİİRİ

Öz

Yeats, 20. yüzyılın başlarındaki İrlanda Edebi Uyanışı'na kendini adayan ve kuruluşunda yer alan önemli bir şahsiyettir. İrlandalılık veya İrlanda kültürü de erken yaşlarından itibaren ele aldığı hem ilk hem de geç temalardan biridir. Aşktan şiir sanatına kadar uzanan şiirsel temaları bile İrlanda/Kelt mitolojisi ve bugünkü İrlanda ile ilgili mekânsal imgeler ile yoğrulmuştur. Çelişkili görünse de Yeats'in mitolojik/tarihsel unsurları İrlanda'ya özgü bugünün mekanlarıyla birlikte kullanması, eski ve şimdiki İrlandalılık arasında bir bağ oluşturur. Böylelikle şiirleri, idealize edilmiş İrlanda kimliği üzerine fikirlerinin ve temennilerinin bir deklarasyonu haline gelir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Yeats'in İrlanda/Kelt mitolojilerinin yanı sıra İrlanda'ya özgü mekânsal öğeleri ele alarak bir miras ve kimlik için mücadele etme ideolojisini nasıl ortaya koyduğunu ve böylece şiirinde İrlandalılığın tatbik edilebileceği kavramsal ve pratiğe dönük bir anlayışı destekleyen performatif bir söylem yarattığını ortaya koymaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: W. B. Yeats, Ulusal Kimlik, İrlandalılık, İrlanda Mitolojisi**,** İrlanda Mekânları.

Introduction

Late 19th century was a dynamic period for the capital of the great empire, London, which was home to great manufacturers and booming industries, and hope for an ever-increasing flow of immigrants. This magnetic city was an attraction and inspiration for the artists and literary figures from all over the world. Yet for Yeats, London was the place of an exile. Away from his native land Ireland, more specifically Sligo where he would spend his summers with his mother's people as he states in his *Autobiograhies*, living in London made him feel like he was deprived of whatever he most cared for (Yeats, 1999: 59) as he "longed for a sod of earth from some field [he] knew, something of Sligo to hold in [his] hand" (58). Yeats' interest in Sligo and love for this place was sealed as the county became the primary fountain of his inspiration when he started to write. His works, particularly those in his earlier career, can be regarded as the paragon of his fascination with the landscape and the ancient history of Sligo, and of Ireland in general. In an attempt to reintroduce the myths and legends of his country and the common heritage of his nation, which was in some way part of the sectarian and ideological dispute, Yeats, like several other important literary men and women of his era, composed and edited books dealing with Irish folklore such as *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888), *Irish Fairy Tales* (1892) and more popular one *The Celtic Twilight* (1893). The last one was so favoured that it gave the Irish Literary Revival its popular alternative name which, in turn, shows the influence of Yeats in the movement (Pokorná, 2012: 17-18). In addition, Yeats with his friend Lady Gregory established the national Irish Literary Theatre through which he aimed "to bring into the town the memories and visions of the country and to spread everywhere the history and legends of medieval Ireland and to fill Ireland once more with sacred places" (Yeats, 1999: 438). Yeats attempted to create a distinct, authentic national literature that played a crucial role in the establishment and aesthetic development of the Irish Literary Revival by employing Celtic myths, natural pictures of Ireland, legends, and local stories. Such a stance was also a reaction to the dominant English pressure in all fields of life. Yeats' approach to literature, in this sense, was functional together with having an aesthetic agenda as it helped to revive a national consciousness and form the nation's cultural identity free from the influence of English culture and supremacy.

Beginning from the Anglo-Norman invasion of the country in the late 12th century, Ireland and the Irish nation had been exposed to the hegemony of English rule. Throughout the centuries, Irish people were treated as the inferior other and the contrasting image of the Anglo-Saxons while the rich natural resources of the land and the workforce of its native people were continually exploited to feed the English and enhance their imperial power (Diarmud, 2012: 409). However, history has shown that particularly the nineteenth century was a notable era since during this time, the effects of the British administrative policies in Ireland resulted in rather destructive outcomes such as the exploitation of Irish lands, the discrimination among people and a systematic manipulation and form of acculturation especially through the means of education. The establishment of the national schools in Ireland around the 1830s by the British government had a self-evident imposition on educational transformation. In his article titled "The National System of Education, 1831–2000", Tom Walsh summarises the despotism and ideological turn at the Irish schools where the new curriculum aimed to "imbue in children a sense of belonging to the Empire and to instil a sense of loyalty to colonial values and structures" and as a result, "any distinct reference to Irish culture or history was avoided" (2016: 28). The monolingual children (native speakers of Irish Gaelic) of Irish lands were excessively encouraged to learn English now. Any statement that seemed pernicious for its potentiality of arousing nationalistic sentiment in the Irish such as "This is my own, my native land," was taken out of reading books, and the new generation of Irish students "was taught to thank God for being 'a happy English child'" (Green, 1911: 247). Happiness, in fact, seemed quite far for the Irish, but particularly for the Irish peasantry in years to come. During the Great Famine, over one million Irish died either from acute starvation or from famine-related diseases, while, at the same time, a large number of food including herds of cattle worth millions of pounds continued to be exported from Ireland to England and other parts of the British Empire. Famine undeniably decreased the population of Ireland, especially the population in rural areas; however, death was not the only factor for such a decline. Emigration also led to crucial demographic change. A great number of people, around one million, which was more than ever before, left their home and looked for a living with better conditions in other countries, particularly in England and North America. The depopulation in the

country was then regarded - using the popular phrase in contemporary English economics – as the clearance of "the surplus population", "the overstock tenantry" (1911: 232-233). The influx of Irish immigrants into especially those countries led to a great deal of increase in the number of Irish population, which was regarded as high in rate. As one of the plausible out-turns of such a rapid demographic change, they were lacking many opportunities resulting in an increase in criminality among the Irish population. Roger Swift, an expert on Irish sociological history, comments that this crime rate, in turn, was interrelated with the growth of Hibernophobia, meaning anti-Irish sentiment. Distaste and animosity towards the Irish and their culture – which was also deeply rooted and effectively correlated with anti-Catholicism – became widespread among the British and their descendants, the Anglo-Americans (1997: 411). Although belonging to an Anglo-Irish Protestant family, William Butler Yeats nevertheless experienced the discrimination and antagonism directed particularly against the Catholic lower-class Irish. In his autobiography, he reminisces his school days, especially the mockery, assault, and harassment targeting him by the other schoolboys who often called him insulting names for being Irish (Yeats, 1999: 59). Political factors such as the independent movements, organisations, and insurrections of the Irish nationalists, together with the economic rivalry between the poverty-stricken Irish workers who were willing to work even for meagre wages and the workers of the host society contributed to the anti-Hibernian attitude (Swift, 1997: 411-412). In such an atmosphere, Irish people continued to hold on to their identity and resisted full assimilation. In Ireland, the nationalist spirit was ever growing. For instance, in the voluntary colleges, the Irish child was learning the seclusive language, his history and the music of his country which was an important part of an authentic Irish culture. Following the efforts of nationalist organisations, notably the Gaelic League, which sought a revival of the Irish language - then associated with poverty and a range of other pejorative adjectives - that made language and nationalism seem inseparable, a new spirit of self-awareness, perception and public duty emerged and, in some ways, brought together the "Catholic and Protestant, landlord and peasant. And through all creeds and classes a desire has quickened men to serve their country in its social and industrial life" (Green, 1991: 248). For Yeats it was through literature – more precisely through a passionate look at the past and present – that the inherent distinct identity and unity Ireland once possessed could be re-established. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to portray Yeats' sense of nationalism and his use of romantic Irish elements, namely Ireland's ancient past and natural landscape in an attempt to create a unique Irish literature. He was well-aware that such an enterprise was only possible by setting role models for the Irish people and thus displaying the grandiosity of Irish heritage. Borrowing John L. Austin's term "performative" (1962: 6), Yeats tried to create for Irish people a performative world where they could believe that it was possible to act and prove that they existed. This study will take 'performativity' as its definitive beginning (rather than presenting a detailed account of it) and illustrate how Yeats tries to transform the Irish self-perception through his poetry by portraying national role models. Apart from that, the theory of "place-identity" developed by Proshansky et al. will be employed to demonstrate how Yeats' creation of ideal places upgraded the sense of self-identity to national identity.

1. Yeats' Mythic Poetry: Construction of an Identity

Performativity is the discursive and linguistic practice that creates social relations. Austin calls it "performative utterances" and states that "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action" (1962: 6). There is a strong relationship between the word and action, which reveals that words are more than linguistic entities and hence are social actions themselves. "Performativity is the power of language to effect change in the world: language does not simply describe the world but may instead (or also) function as a form of social action" writes Jillian R. Cavanaugh, the professor of anthropology[1]. Similarly, mythology has such an effect, and Yeats emphasized the crucial role of myths and legends in developing a distinct national identity by asking this question: "Have not all races had their first unity from a mythology that marries them to rock and hill?" (2018:

[1] "Performativity". In *obo* in Anthropology. 10 Nov. 2020. <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-9780199766567-0114.xml>.

167). Accordingly, he turns in his poetry to the ancient past of his homeland, taking the material for many of his works from the legends and myths of Celtic origin, thus bringing mythical times into the present to encourage his people to claim an identity. The poem "Cuchulain's Fight With the Sea" is one of those works which, in a narrative form, retells the story of Cuchulain, the legendary great Irish warrior of the Ulster cycle. According to the ancient Irish saga, Cuchulain unwittingly kills his son only learning at the last moment that it was his son with whom he was actually fighting and against whom he struck the fatal blow as Yeats' poem puts it:

> Again the fighting sped,
> But now the war-rage in Cuchulain woke,
> And through that new blade's guard the old blade broke,
> And pierced him. 'Speak before your breath is done.'
> 'Cuchulain I, mighty Cuchulain's son.' (1989: 30)

With no other hero to match him, Cuchulain was the strongest and most renowned warrior of the Irish saga who is best known for his solo defence of his homeland Ulster against the enemy forces of a great number. He was a hero and had the determination to meet death bold upright tying himself to a rock in his last moments of life so that he could die standing up, facing his enemies. This legendary hero of mythical past served as an inspiration for Yeats – and for many literary figures such J. M. Synge and Seán O'Casey during the Irish Revival – in composing various poems and plays. Even just a couple of weeks before his death, when Yeats' health was deteriorating steadily and when he was quite aware of the fact that his time was running short, Cuchulain continued to inspire Yeats and stimulated him to compose a play called *The Death of Cuchulain* and a poem, "Cuchulain Comforted", which was inspired by the same hero (Schuchard, 1998: 348).

The heroic deeds of Cuchulain, which was popularized through many works, most particularly through the nineteenth-century literary outputs, secured the place of the greatest hero of the Ulster cycle as the most idealized figure in all Irish legends once again. Cuchulain was "the most complete ideal of Gaelic chivalry" who helped revive the dignity of the Irish nation (qtd. in Pokorná, 2012: 35). As mentioned before, discrimination, disequilibrium, and enmity towards the Irish were common during the nineteenth century. The Irish, especially the Irish poor, criminality, and the disorder in England and North America were regarded widely as synonyms. Such association was sociologically natural and self-evident. For this very reason, the Irish came to be the convenient whipping boy for the social ills. This kind of enmity, or to put it in another word, racism, unsurprisingly "formed an integral component of the negative side of the Irish stereotype" (Swift, 1997: 399). The introduction and illustration of the Irish in the whole spheres of life were derogatory. Kerry Soper, a well-known critic of art, explicates this inclination in his article. The application of anti-Catholic ideological propaganda, the theory of social Darwinism, the study of physiognomy and phrenology, the anthropological claims of the African roots of the Irish Celts, and the firm belief in the superiority of "white" race and culture helped create the ungracious, iconic Irish stereotypes which were commonly illustrated in the English and American cartoons during particularly the late nineteenth century. For instance, in the English *Punch*, an Irish man was depicted as having an ape-like face and posture, a sign of primitiveness and evolutionary backwardness. In addition, the dehumanized Irish was often portrayed as drunk, garrulous, lazy, aggressive, and stupid (2005: 263-265). Yeats was fighting against the newly established prejudices. Against the inferiority ascribed to the Irish ethnic group by the English and their American counterparts, Yeats' works asserted the glory and greatness of Irish identity and heritage. The great heroes belonging to the ancient Irish history such as Cuchulain helped Irish people to take pride in their origin. Moreover, in a time of struggle for freedom, the heroes of legendary Irish past, most particularly Cuchulain, the greatest knight of the Red Branch, served as a model for many Irish nationalists thanks to Yeats. The characteristic features of the Cuchulain, that is, his bravery, determination, and self-sacrifice became the standard to which Irish revolutionaries adhered. One of the most enthusiastic rebels was Padraig Pearse. A nationalist leader, writer, and poet himself, Pearse admired Yeats' works, particularly the ones which featured Cuchulain. Captivated by the valiant qualities of this warrior of his country's legendary history, Pearse embraced the idea of a 'modern chivalry'. He championed the gentle defender ready to die for everything he loves, especially his country. This could clearly be seen in his poem "Renunciation", first published under the title "Ideal" in which the speaker refuses to attend to his physical needs:

I blinded my eyes,
and my ears I shut,
And I closed my ears/
I hardened my heart
[…….]
I set my face
To the road here before me,
To the work that I see,
To the death that I shall meet (Van 1929: 1197)

Pearse, like the English authorities, knew the importance of cultural symbols in education. St. Edna's School, established by Pearse, was an experimental institution where the Irish 'cultural deposit' tried to be preserved in terms of the curriculum giving comprehensive coverage to the artistic and dramatic performances aiming to re-establish Celtic cults. Together with the teaching material, Pearse even commissions a mural at the school entrance, portraying Cuchulain preparing himself to fight (Pittock, 1999: 81). Cuchulain, who was regarded as "an invisible but important member of the staff" (81) at the school, was identified with the heroes of the Easter Rising, with Pearse and other rebels whose bravery and self-sacrifice resembled the heroic characteristics of Cuchulain, and which, eventually, helped bring the freedom that the Irish nation desired for such a long time. An active member of the Gaelic League and a fervent, central figure of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, Pearse lost his life in the struggle for his country's independence as he was one of the leaders in the Easter Rising of 1916. He was later executed by the British forces after the quell of the insurrection. Literature has always been one of the apparatus to brandish the image of fearless warriors in times of crisis. In several of his works, Yeats salutes this national figure who gave his life for the cause of his country. Especially his poem "The Statues" in which he immortalizes these rebels, especially Pearse, has a significant place in his literary career:

When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side.
What stalked through the post Office?
What intellect, What calculation, number, measurement, replied?
We Irish, born into that ancient sect
But thrown upon this filthy modern tide
And by its formless spawning fury wrecked,
Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace
The lineaments of a plummet-measured face. (1989: 337)

Although Pearse's idea of sacrifice was fed, to some extent, by his fanatic and violent ambitions, Yeats never supported or encouraged such acts through depictions of Celtic heroes (Mulcahey, 2000: 23). However, still Yeats presents an idealization of a nationalistic act by drawing a parallel between Pearse and Cuchulain, referring to the General Post Office in Dublin which served as the headquarters for the nationalist rebels during the Easter Rising. The post office, destroyed by fire from the British army, was eventually rebuilt by the Irish Free State, and the statue of Cuchulain erected in the building, representing the dying hero binding himself to a rock so that he could die upright, facing the enemy. Today the statue is also one of the main tourist attractions in Dublin. Considering the erection and the interest in the statue, there is no doubt that this is a political and symbolic act that speaks for itself. Yeats' literature dealing with the ancient times, particularly the heroes and legends of Ireland, aroused the feelings of self-respect and confidence in the Irish, which were tried to lower down for hundreds of years In a time of struggle for independence, Yeats strengthened the sense of unity and cultural as well as national identity with his poems. The Irish historian Alice Stopford Green states that "under English influence, the map of Ireland has been rolled up, and silence has fallen on her heroes" (1991: 247-248). However, through his poetry, Yeats broke this silence not only about the heroes of ancient times but also about the heroes of contemporary Ireland.

Yeats touches on a variety of themes to construct a distinct identity for the Irish nation, particularly through the "mystification" of various everyday themes such as love, friendship, etc. Such mystifications can also be seen as modes of rupture and transformation from traditional treatment of myth and narrative to the "architecture" of a new cultural formation. For example, "The Song of Wandering Aengus" is not only a poem that refers to Éire's mythical past; it also hints at Yeats' personal longings. In the poem, the speaker is Aengus, as a mouthpiece for Yeats, who tells of his desire to find the girl he once saw while fishing by a stream:

Though I am old with wandering

Through hollow lads and hilly lands.
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun. (1989: 60)

By choosing a Celtic god falling in love, Yeats attempted to elevate Irish mythology with symbolic meaning. Basically, at the beginning of the poem, Aengus wistfully remembers the past. He reminisces how he first came to see the girl he fell in love with. While fishing in the stream one day, he finally catches a silver trout that suddenly turns into a beautiful girl calling his name before suddenly disappearing; "It had become a glimmering girl / With apple blossom in her hair / Who called me by my name and ran / And faded through the brightening air" (60). The image of the "glimmering girl" who Aengus nostalgically remembers and romanticises can be regarded as Yeats' romanticisation of ancient Ireland. Aengus' desire to find the girl and his dreams with her in the future can be read as Yeats' desire to see his native land "glimmering" and authentic as she once was. His interest in Irish mythology operates with his wish to transform a world present, which at the end proves itself as an amalgam of distinct themes in his poetry. In "Fergus and the Druid", another poem in which Yeats turned to Ireland's mythical past, the central character is Fergus, one of the greatest heroes in Irish mythology possessing great strength. He was the king of Ulster but somehow deceived and dismissed from his throne by the people of the Ulster. His wife Ness, the daughter of the deceased king, accepted his marriage proposal on the condition that her son rules for one year. However, at the end of the one-year cycle, Fergus is held back from the throne by nobles of the Ulster. The poem is basically a dialogue between Fergus and one of the Druids who are known to be seers, counsellors, or priests. Fergus recounts to the Druid how he gave up his throne to young Conchubar:

Young subtle Conchubar sat close by me
When I gave judgment, and his words were wise,
And what to me was burden without end,
To him seemed easy, So I laid the crown
Upon his head to cast away my sorrow. (Yeats, 1989: 32)

Afterwards, he tells the Druid that he desires to be as wise as him. However, Druid warns him, by indicating that such wisdom brings just more sorrow into one's life: "Look on my thin grey hair and hollow cheeks / And on these hands that may not lift the sword, / This body trembling like a wind-blown reed. No woman's loved me, no man sought my help" (32). This conversation revives the very well-known talk between King Oedipus and the blind-seer Tiresias. In fact, years later, Yeats would write a prose adaptation of Sophocles' King Oedipus[2] to be staged at the Abbey Theatre.[3] By referring to the themes of ancient Irish culture and the legendary characters of the Irish saga with allusions to the ancient tragedies, it can be concluded that Yeats introduces the glory and significance of his country's ancient history, which in turn was an attempt to regenerate the spirit of his own nation. Contrary to Europeans' literary lineage to the ancient Greek literature, "the true Irish were the remnants of an unbroken line that provided a direct link to the ancient and pagan Ireland that was, most importantly, prior to England's political influence" (O'Kelly, 2004: 510). Yeats tried to demonstrate that there was no break in or no diversion of Irish cultural authentic heritage. Historically that was the case as well. It should be noted that while Romans invaded much of Europe, including present-day England, Ireland managed to retain its independence until the end of the twelfth century (Rolleston, 1911: 23). Returning to the days of freedom from foreign political and cultural interference was thus crucial for Yeats to develop a distinct Irish identity. Yeats believed that everyone, especially members of the upper classes, needed to know and understand the folklore, legends, myths and rural past of their country, Ireland, because "more knowledge, more spirituality meant more 'identity' and, to some extent, more intellectual independence from the imperialist and colonialist British world" (Armao, 2016: 121). Therefore, through such literature, Yeats declared the originality and glory of Irish culture and heritage.

[2] Yeats, W. B. (1928). *Sophocles' King Oedipus: A Version for the Modern Stage*. London: H. Milford.
[3] http://www.irishplayography.com/company.aspx?companyid=30042. Retrieved on 07.12.2020

2. Yeats and Spatial Politics of Identity

Yeats not only cultivated Irish identity by referring to the country's ancient past, but also used the Irish sites that fascinated him for this purpose. The modern theoretical invention "place identity" can explain the relationship between the depictions of towns, cities, lakes, mountains etc. and identity. The concept of place identity usually refers to the perception of personal identity in relation to one's surroundings as an argumentative topic in the fields of mainly geography, psychology and sociology. In their guiding article, "Place-identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self", Proshansky et al. define it as "state of a person's sense of self […] characterized by growth and change in response to a changing physical and social world" (1983: 59); "one level of meaning attributed to a physical setting" (68) and finally "clusters of positively and negatively valenced cognitions of physical settings" (74). While the relation between human cognition and physical settings determines the sense of the present self, the role of the past also assumes a constructive function:

> [place-identity] is a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived, cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives. These cognitions represent memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings, and conceptions of behavior and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings that define the day-to-day existence of every human being. At the core of such physical environment-related cognitions is the 'environmental past' of the person; a past consisting of places, spaces and their properties which have served instrumentally in the satisfaction of the person's biological, psychological, social, and cultural needs. (59)

Yeatsian construction of the Irish identity is mostly based on places or place-related descriptions and images, sometimes even blended with mythology. To give an example, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree", one of his most famous poems, is about a real place in Ireland. In his autobiography, Yeats recounts the incident which is relatively new in planning and inspired him to write the poem. His account details that one day in London in 1890, he is walking on a street, feeling quite homesick for Ireland, particularly for Sligo, and then he suddenly hears "a little tinkle of water" which immediately transports him to that particular place, small island on the lake Lough Gill called the Lake Isle of Innisfree in Sligo (Yeats, 1999: 139). The poem reflects Yeats' longing to be in that certain place:

> I will arise and go now, for always night and day
> I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
> While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
> I hear it in the deep heart's core. (Yeats, 1989: 34)

Moreover, the poem highlights Yeats' childhood memories, for as a young boy, he had plans to live in a small cottage on that tiny island someday, just as Thoreau did in Walden. Moved by Thoreau's experience, the beauty of the island, and by a certain folk tale he had heard about the place, Yeats spent some time alone in the woods of this island (Yeats, 1999: 85). The poem clearly delivers this memory:

> I will arise and go now and go to Innisfree,
> And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
> Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,
> And live alone in the bee-loud glade. (Yeats, 1989: 34)

Here and in the rest of the poem, the wild, untouched natural beauty of Ireland is depicted. Sligo particularly moved Yeats even when he was a young boy. Though polemical, it can be said that Sligo was his first love: the pure, unforgettable, naive in nature. Here once again the sub-category of the self-identity, namely place-identity, is under great pressure due to the social or political change of the physical environment. "Demographic and ecological changes in a community, themselves the result of economic, political, and social impacts, may have important consequences for the place-identity of the person" (Proshansky et al., 1983: 65). The adolescent attachment to a certain place can be best acquired in a familiar setting and as in the case of Yeats' experience in London, the difference between the new and old settings reinvigorates the sense of belonging not to the new but to the old places. And he clearly wanted to instil the love he had for the landscapes of his homeland into the hearts of his readers, especially into the hearts of Irish people, which was more of a political intent than a romantic attitude due to the association of wildlife and wilderness with Irish people. Jacob Bender states that Yeats was aware of the connection between landscape and power. He regarded wild land as a free, liberated land. Thus, as a nationalist, he "re-naturalized" his native land

to restore her wilderness once again, which meant that Yeats did not find a difference between "reclamation of wilderness and reclamation of national sovereignty" (Bender, 2017: 39-40). Therefore, Yeats' idealization of a thematic content, namely the Irish landscape, was more than an artistic and aesthetic exclamation; rather, it was a political act and an epitomic manifestation. However, Yeats' effort to make every inch of Irish lands known by the common reader was not exclusive to only the Irish population. There were many resonances in the opposite English spectrum. "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" became so well-known that during the Great War, an English soldier named William Oliphant Down who was also trying his hand on poetry wrote a parody of the poem. He titled it "Picardy Parody No.2 (W.B.Y..ts)":

I will arise and go now, and go to Picardy,
And a new trench-line hold there, of clay and shell-holes made,
No dug-outs shall I have there, nor a hive for the Lewis G.,
But live on top in the b. loud glade.
[…]
I will arise and go now, though always night and day
I'll feel dark waters lapping with low sounds by the store,
Where all our bombs grow rusty and countless S.A.A.;
I'll feel it in the trench-feet sore. (qtd. in Allison, 2006: 207)

Through this parody, Down successfully juxtaposed the beautiful imagery and pleasant feeling created by "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" with the horrendous conditions of the First World War. However, contrary to the Yeats' tremendous heroes of victories in fierce battles and clashes, Down portrays an inept character deprived of any enthusiasm and motivation to fight back. In her article "War, Passive Suffering and the Poet", Jonathan Allison states that Yeats was not happy with such war poems as the speakers were too passive compared to his own ideal warriors (2006: 208). Despite its being a war parody, it is clear that Down antithetically draws a figure who relinquishes responsibility against a Yeatsian practitioner of private dreams relocating a romantic projection in the midst of a political goal. Therefore, Down's selecting such a poem by Yeats to write a parody on is no coincidence considering its effect on the audience/reader.

"Down by the Sally Gardens" again manifests Yeats' concentration on the romantic Irish subjects which in turn asserts his sense of nationalism. In this poem, the poet once more calls up familiar places in Sligo. This time it is the Sally Gardens which is situated on the banks of the Garavogue River at Ballisodare village in Sligo. In the prefatory notes, Yeats informs the readers that this poem was originally entitled "An Old Song Re-sung" and is a reconstruction of an Irish ballad sung by an old woman from the village of Ballisodare (qtd. in Jeffares 14).

Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree. (Yeats, 1989: 18)

By reconstructing an old ballad of Irish origin, Yeats not only tried to escalate the beauty of the landscape of Éire but also rejuvenate the authentic cultural elements of his country. "Down by the Sally Gardens" became so popular that it was adapted to music by a great number of musicians touching the souls of many Irish people. One of Yeats' letters to Dorothy Wellesley notes that a song version of the poem was even used by the Irish Free State army when they marched to a tune of the same name (Jeffares, 1968: 14). Yeats emphasizes that the march was "first published with words of mine, words that are now folklore" (qtd. in Jeffares, 1968: 14). This case once again validates that the cultural reservoir re-moulded by Yeats developed into the performed and accredited Irish cultural repository through the glorification of Irish sites.

In another poem, "The Fiddler of Dooney", Yeats' choices of places once more re-vitalize the sense of Irishness by referring to the Irish sites again in Sligo:

When I play on my fiddle in Dooney.
Folk dance like a wave of the sea;
My cousin is priest in Kilvarnet,
My brother in Mocharabuiee. (Yeats, 1989: 68)

Yeats' inclusion of these sites is no mere spatial reference but performs a constitutive function. Through family relations for each Irish site, he reconsolidates an awareness of national unity. Thus, the micro bond grows into a consensus. Kilvarnet and Mocharabuiee are townlands in Sligo, while

Dooney (full name Dooney Rock) is a natural rocky formation situated around the freshwater lake Lough Gill, again part of County Sligo. Yeats himself says that he spent many pleasant times at the Dooney Rock "and in gratitude called [his] fiddler by its name" (qtd. in Grene, 2008: 82). The practice of naming his fiddler should be seen as a performative utterance, putting a theory into action. Even in his very private life, Irishness can be regarded as an actualization of ideals that can also set a role model for Irish people. Moreover, the incarnation of the memories into a physical thing of the present testifies the construction of national identity based on places. As Proshansky et al. define, "[p]lace-identity as a cognitive sub-structure of self-identity consists of an endless variety of cognitions related to the past, present, and anticipated physical settings that define and circumscribe the day-to-day existence of the person" (1983: 62). The association of his childhood past with his present life through especially a property is another indication of the formation of place-identity.

Yeats makes use of romantic elements in crafting his verse, which can be interpreted as Yeats' nostalgia for an Ireland once having unity and cultural uniqueness before the foreign 'invasion'. Such a retrospective handling also affixes a seal on his national poetry. The quotation by Proshansky et al. given above will be of use here: "the person's actual experience is modified by the cognitive process of memory and interpretation and such others as fantasy and imagination" (1983: 62). As an exemplary case for this, "The Stolen Child" addresses once again the beauties of the Emerald Isle together with the folktales that stirred Yeats' imagination. In his autobiography, Yeats reminisces his memories at Rosses Point, a sea-faring village with outstanding scenery at the entrance of Sligo Bay where he would spend some of his days with his mother's people and listen to many folklores about faeries and supernatural beings which would arouse his curiosity for such stories (Yeats, 1999: 47). Clearly influenced by the myths and scenery, Yeats makes use of faeries and the landscape of Rosses Point by referring to the place: "Where the wave of moonlight glosses / The dim grey sands with light, / Far off by furthest Rosses / We foot it all the night" (Yeats, 1989: 16). It should be noted that, by taking the subject matter from the fairy traditions for many of his works, Yeats played a great role in the popularization of these supernatural beings of Celtic folklore (Koch, 2006: 730). And this poem is basically about a faerie who tries to lure a child into the faerie realm since the real world is full of sorrow. It goes as: "Come away, O human child! / To the waters and the wild / With a faery, hand in hand, / For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand" (Yeats, 1989: 16). To put a finer point on it, for Yeats "Drumcliff and Rosses were, are, and ever shall be, please Heaven! places of unearthly resort" (Yeats, 2018: 68). The depiction of Irish sites together with natural beings such as roses for Yeats was not only a propagation of a national and social invitation but was more a philosophy infusing identity and a divine task. Yeats reviews this point: "[T]his philosophy would find its manuals of devotion in all imaginative literature and set before Irishmen for special manual an Irish literature which, though made by many minds, would seem the work of a single mind, and turn our places of beauty or legendary association into holy symbols" (1999: 204-205).

Proshansky et al. claim that a person's experience of his or her environment on both a conscious and unconscious level determines his identity through places (1983: 62). They outline such an operation as follows:

> But there is also the process by which the experience of a physical setting moves from the stage of 'now going on' to the stage of 'being remembered'. Through this process, the person's actual experience is modified by the cognitive process of memory and interpretation and such others as fantasy and imagination. We not only experience the physical realities, for example, of the particular neighbourhood we grew up in, but also the social meanings and beliefs attached to it by those who live outside of it as well as its residents. All of these 'cognitions' define the person's place-identity. (62)

In the case of Yeats, his engagement with his environment transcends the boundaries of the self-identity and develops into a body of beliefs, meanings, mythologies, fantasies for the establishment of a national identity, which in general exhibits the notable place of Yeats in the Irish literary canon. There is a long list of his commemorative poems revealing such a phase from self-identity to national identity through playing with spatial images. In "Towards Break of Day", he recollects the beautiful landscapes of Sligo. The Glencar Waterfall located at the foot of the prodigious rock formation called Ben Bulben offers an alluring scenery for which the poet says, "That all my childhood counted dear; / Were I to travel far and wide / I could not find a thing so dear" (Yeats, 1989: 184). It should be noted that Ben Bulben is one of the most recursing Irish places that Yeats mentions in his works. In "The Tower", to cite another example, the speaker reminisces his

boyhood when he "climbed Ben Bulben's back / And had the livelong summer day to spend" (194). This unique and conspicuous spectacle of the great rock formation attracted Yeats. The grandeur of this distinctive "Table Mountain" of County Sligo, Ben Bulben, springs not only from its ravishing appearance and landscape but also from its prominent status in Irish myths and legends. In the Irish folk belief, as Victoria Brooks sketches out, Ben Bulben is one of the places where faeries dwell. Generally regarded as the deities of the ancient Gaelic Ireland, these supernatural beings reside in the hills and mounds called Sídhe; thus, they are also described as the people of Sídhe. Moreover, the two terms Sídhe and faerie are even commonly used as synonyms. According to the legend, the faeries ride on the wind through the country and one of the stories concerning Ben Bulben holds that at the side of the mountain there is a magical gate from which these spirits leave on horseback (2000: 256). To exemplify even further, his poem "The Hosting of the Sidhe" should not be forgotten. This time "The host is riding from Knocknarea / And over the grave of Clooth-na-Bare" (Yeats, 1983: 49). In his prefatory note, Yeats makes clear that Knocknarea is a great hill located in Sligo Bay, and according to the legend, it is on this hill that the grave of fairy queen Maeve (originally Medb) is situated. The grave mentioned in the poem, however, belongs to another faerie called Clooth-na-Bare (Cailleach Bhéirre). Tired of her immortality, Clooth-na-Bare searches for the deepest lake so that she could drown herself. She sets a cairn of stones and when she finds the deepest water in Lough Ia in County Sligo, she finally drowns herself (Yeats, 2017: 160). Similarly, in the "Alternative Song for the Severed Head in 'The King of the Great Clock Tower'", Sidhe, the tragic character as Yeats defines, comes "Out of Ben Bulben and Knocknarea"; rides on horseback through the country but "turn from Rosses' crawling tide / The meet's upon the mountain-side" (Yeats, 1989: 295-296). In a similar vein, the most iconic poem "Under Ben Bulben" draws a clear image of the 'Fair Folk' that features frequently and holds a prominent place in Irish folklore. By the same token, it proves the powerful impact of such stories on the poet and also on the degree of Yeats' appreciation and recognition of such places in shaping national identity. In the first section of the poem, the motivation is clear:

> Swear by those horsemen, by those women
> Complexion and form prove superhuman,
> That pale, long-visaged company
> That air in immortality
> Completeness of their passions won;
> Now they ride the wintry dawn
> Where Ben Bulben sets the scene (Yeats, 1989: 362)

It should be pointed out that "Under Ben Bulben" was one of the last poems Yeats wrote at the final stage of his life. For this very reason, it is easy to say that the location and the folklore associated with it never ceased to lose their influence on the poet and their function for the Irish identity. Moreover, although Yeats died in the south of France, his body was finally brought to Ireland and put into his final resting place in Drumcliff because his will to his wife Georgie was to "dig [him] up and plant [him] in Sligo" (qtd. in Phillips, 2004: 141). In his *The Celtic Twilight*, Yeats notes that "Drumcliff is a wide green valley, lying at the foot of Ben Bulben, the mountain in whose side the square white door swings open at nightfall to loose the faery riders on the world" (2018: 68). Considering the fact that Yeats finished writing the final version of "Under Ben Bulben" just a couple of days before his death, it would not be wrong to assume that his desire to return to his roots when he dies was actually manifested in the last section of the poem as it goes, "Under bare Ben Bulben's head / In Drumcliff churchyard Yeats is laid" (Yeats, 1989: 365). Furthermore, the last three lines of the poem "Cast a cold eye / On life, on death. / Horseman, pass by!" (365) are written as an epitaph on the gravestone of the poet who, like his ancestor, rests on the Drumcliff churchyard. As the critic Jon Stallworthy puts it, the horseman addressed in this part can well be one of the riders of Sídhe. What brings about such inference is that Yeats excluded the earlier line 'Draw rein, draw breath' from this section in the final version . Since only a living being draws breath, it is not difficult to infer that Yeats had a spiritual horseman in mind when composing the last lines, or at least he wanted to be ambiguous and enhance the mystery (Stallworthy and Yeats, 1966: 50). Yet, what is not ambiguous is that he was deeply attached to and enchanted by his country. Especially the places in Sligo touched his soul throughout his life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, believing that he could help strengthen a sense of unity through his works, Yeats turned back to his people's history, legends, folklore, myths, and of course, to the natural landscape of his native land that not only made him proud but also became an inspiration for his powerful verse. Although Yeats was against militant nationalism, his works nevertheless played an important role in influencing the rebels in a time of struggle for Irish independence, which also reveals the performative power of his verse. Since his young age, he had felt a great love for his country. Particularly Sligo was the place of his primary interest fascinating him. His imagination was triggered by the landscape, folktales, legends, and his own experiences in the county. By calling Sligo 'The Land of Heart's Desire', he showed his love for this county. Although he lived in many other European countries, he wanted his final resting place to be Sligo, which presents the performative side of this love as well. Sligo, for him, was undoubtedly a land of mystery and childhood memories that attached him to the ancient Irish history through which he constructed national identity.

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