

**UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA
DEPARTAMENTO DE LÍNGUA E LITERATURA
ESTRANGEIRAS
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM INGLÊS: ESTUDOS
LINGUÍSTICOS E LITERÁRIOS**

Leide Daiane de Almeida Oliveira

**“I AM OF IRELAND”:
HISTORY AND POLITICS IN THE POETRY OF WILLIAM
BUTLER YEATS**

Dissertação submetida ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina para a obtenção do Grau de Mestre em Letras.

Orientadora: Prof.^a Dr.^a Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins

Coorientadora: Prof.^a Dr.^a Maria Rita Drumond Viana

Florianópolis

2016

Ficha de identificação da obra elaborada pelo autor,
através do Programa de Geração Automática da Biblioteca Universitária da UFSC.

Oliveira, Leide Daiane de Almeida
"I am of Ireland" : History and politics in the poetry of
William Butler Yeats / Leide Daiane de Almeida Oliveira ;
orientadora, Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins ; coorientadora,
Maria Rita Drumond Viana. - Florianópolis, SC, 2016.
83 p.

Dissertação (mestrado) - Universidade Federal de Santa
Catarina, Centro de Comunicação e Expressão. Programa de Pós
Graduação em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários.

Inclui referências

1. Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários. 2. Poetry.
3. Politics. 4. History. 5. Yeats. I. Martins, Maria Lúcia
Milléo. II. Viana, Maria Rita Drumond. III. Universidade
Federal de Santa Catarina. Programa de Pós-Graduação em
Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários. IV. Título.

Leide Daiane de Almeida Oliveira

**“I AM OF IRELAND”:
HISTORY AND POLITICS IN THE POETRY OF WILLIAM
BUTLER YEATS**

Esta Dissertação foi julgada adequada para obtenção do Título de Mestre em Letras, e aprovada em sua forma final pelo Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários.

Florianópolis, 19 de fevereiro de 2016.

Prof.^a Dr.^a Anelise Reich Corseuil
Coordenadora do Curso

Banca Examinadora:

Prof.^a Dr.^a Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins,
Orientadora e Presidente
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)

Prof.^a Dr.^a Maria Rita Drumond Viana,
Coorientadora
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)

Prof.^a Dr.^a Alinne Balduino P. Fernandes,
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)

Prof.^a Dr.^a Beatriz Kopschitz Xavier Bastos,
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)

Prof.^a Dr.^a Neide Garcia Pinheiro,
Universidade Estadual do Centro-Oeste (UNICENTRO)

For my mother.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone that has contributed directly and indirectly to the development of this research. In special, I thank my advisor, professor Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins, for accepting my research project and for all the valuable contributions. My co-advisor, professor Maria Rita Drumond Viana, for providing me with many books and indispensable assistance. Magali Sperlig Beck for reading the first draft of my project and for all commentaries. Professor José Roberto O'Shea for possessing an admirable intellectual generosity and helping me in many ways since the very beginning of this research. I also thank him for putting me in touch with professor Beatriz Kopschitz Bastos for whom I express my gratitude for all the books she brought from Sao Paulo and all the references and enlightening talks. Professor Joe Lee, Irish historian, for the nice talk and for the kindness of answering my e-mails and helping me with references. Professor Emanuel Nonato for the support and enthusiasm. Vincent Reinbold for being so wonderful. Denise Oliveira, Davi Alves Oliveira, Roberto Bueno, Lourdes Modesto, Neila Ramos, Caila Almeida and a long list of other friends and members of my family who are wonderful and supportive. I also thank all my professors and colleagues, CAPES for the scholarship that made this project possible, PPGI, and all the members of the committee.

Poetry is knowledge, salvation, power, abandonment. An operation capable of changing the world, poetic activity is revolutionary by nature; a spiritual exercise, it is a means of interior liberation. Poetry reveals this world; it creates another. Bread of the chosen; accursed food. It isolates; it unites. Invitation to the journey; return to the homeland. Inspiration, respiration, muscular exercise. Prayer to the void, dialogue with absence: tedium, anguish, and despair nourish it. Prayer, litany, epiphany, presence. Exorcism, conjuration, magic. Sublimation, compensation, condensation of the unconscious. Historic expression of races, nations, classes. . . .

(Octavio Paz, 1956)

ABSTRACT

The present thesis aimed at investigating modern Irish poetry and its relation to the historical and political context in which it is inserted. More specifically, the poetry of William Butler Yeats, who was one of the major organizers of the Irish Literary Revival. A movement that had the objective of revitalizing the national identity of Ireland after the process of colonization. The corpus was composed of seven poems from different books. They were: “To Ireland in the Coming Times” (1892), “September 1913” (1913), “The Fisherman” (1916), “Easter, 1916” (1916), “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen”, (1921), “Come Gather Around me, Parnellites”(1937), “Politics”(1939). The chronological order of publication of the poems was followed in order to investigate changes in relation to the political positioning of the poet. This study was grounded on the presupposition that the political poems written by Yeats were important to the process of decolonization of Ireland and that history and politics can present other possibilities when they are discussed by means of poetry.

Keywords: Poetry. Politics. History. Yeats.

RESUMO

A presente dissertação teve como objetivo investigar a poesia irlandesa moderna e sua relação com o contexto histórico e político no qual está inserida. Mais especificamente, a poesia de William Butler Yeats, um dos principais organizadores do Irish Literary Revival. Um movimento que teve o objetivo de revitalizar a identidade nacional da Irlanda após o processo de colonização. O corpus foi composto por sete poemas de diferentes livros. Foram eles: “To Ireland in the Coming Times” (1892), “September 1913” (1913), “The Fisherman” (1916), “Easter, 1916”(1916), “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen”, (1921), “Come Gather Around me, Parnellites”(1937), “Politics”(1939). A ordem cronológica de publicação dos poemas foi seguida a fim de investigar as mudanças em relação ao posicionamento político do poeta. Este estudo baseou-se no pressuposto de que os poemas políticos escritos por Yeats foram importantes para o processo de descolonização da Irlanda e que a história e a política podem apresentar outras possibilidades quando eles são discutidos por meio da poesia.

Palavras-chave: Poesia. Política. História. Yeats.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 1 | INTRODUCTION | 17 |
| 2 | POLITICS, HISTORY, POETRY, AND Their INTERRELATIONS | 23 |
| 3 | CASTING AN EYE ON THE HISTORY OF A NATION: FROM ARMED TO LITERARY REVOLUTION | 31 |
| 3.1 | HISTORY AND POLITICS IN IRELAND..... | 31 |
| 3.2 | WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS: FROM THE IRISH REVIVAL TO POST WAR PESSIMISM..... | 41 |
| 4 | “IRELAND SHALL GET HER FREEDOM”: YEATS’S POETRY AND THE IRISH QUESTION | 49 |
| 5 | CONCLUSION | 73 |
| | REFERENCES | 77 |

1 INTRODUCTION

Irish literary production and criticism are generally interwoven with the history of Ireland, especially concerning the conflicts that started in the seventeenth century and went on until recent years. Irish Studies, as remarked by Edna Longley, “have inherited two broad modes of enquiry. One, derived from the Enlightenment. . . . But this approach can never be wholly detached from another tradition: the discursive tradition of ‘talking about Ireland’ which grew up with nineteenth-century Nationalism and is, indeed, politics by other means” (68). Thus, this study is permeated by many historical accounts. They seem indispensable because of the close relation between history and politics, and their connection with the corpus of this research.

The history of Ireland, especially after the establishment of the Protestant Ascendancy in the seventeenth century, was marked by political, economic and social domination once the power was restricted to English, Irish and Scottish Protestants. England had started its march toward imperialism. With the presence of the imperial force in Ireland, Catholic Irish people had most of their rights suppressed. The new settlers, Protestant English and Scottish people, took possession of the land and interfered in the lives of the Catholic Irish. Soon after the arrival of the British in Ireland a new code of laws was created. It was known as the Penal Laws and it was based on sectarian principles. It was with the establishment of those laws, with which Protestants had their social rights guaranteed and Catholics had theirs suppressed, that the political issue of Ireland becomes more explicitly interwoven with religion.

In a broader view, this study addresses the theme of politics and history in Ireland in its relation to the poetry of William Butler Yeats. For a general understanding of the history of Ireland, since the first settlements to recent conflicts, the books entitled *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* by Roy Foster, *History of Ireland: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, by Edward Alfred D’Alton, and *The Story of Ireland* by Neil Hegarty, are used as the main sources for historical background. The latter was written to accompany a BBC documentary with the same title, which is also used to support the historical portion of this research. Going through such materials we are informed that Ireland had a great number of different peoples and, consequently, different religions along its history. Around the fifth century Christianity, in its Catholic version,

came to Ireland and it remained to be dominant until the sixteenth century.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century, England starts its endeavor towards an imperialistic expansion. Since imperialism was the trigger for what came next in Ireland, some elaboration on this concept seems necessary. Edward Said defines imperialism as being “an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control” (77). Historical backgrounds inform that until the reign of James I of England, which started in 1603, the only territory of England was the British Isles. Almost a hundred years later the first colonies were settled in North America and British imperialism also expanded to many other continents. As Linda Colley remarks: “by the 1700s the British state and the major trading companies associated with it, claimed authority over more than half a million of white settlers, as well as hundreds of thousands of free and enslaved non-whites scattered over four or five continents of the world” (4). Such crusade for domination and exploitation continued and, as Linda Collins observes, “By the 1820s British domination had dramatically expanded to encompass a fifth of the population of the globe” (4). British imperialism reached great dimensions and exerted dramatic changes in many regions of the world, and Ireland was included in that fraction. Concerning the damages provoked by it, Said says that: “For the native, the history of his or her colonial servitude is inaugurated by the loss to an outsider of the local place, whose concrete geographical identity must thereafter be searched for and somehow restored” (77). The loss to the outsider started to take place in Ireland and such loss gradually started to modify its dynamics.

It is precisely in the seventeenth century that radical changes occur in Ireland, changes which have influenced the following conflicts up until recent years. It was with the Plantation system that took place in 1603 that Protestantism came to Ireland. Before that, Ireland was a massively Catholic country. It is mainly from this point in history that the historical context of this thesis will focus on. The history of Ireland after the arrival of the British is marked by a series of conflicts leading to the Irish struggle for independence. Irish literary productions have felt the effect of such conflicts and Irish literary writers, in many ways, have approached the theme of history and politics in their work.

Thus, in the perspective of understanding the effect of the political questions in some literary production in Ireland, this investigation addresses the poetry of William Butler Yeats with regards to the historical and political scenarios in which and about which he

wrote. The first poem that composes the corpus is “To Ireland in the Coming Times” from the *The Rose* which became a section when the first Collected Poems was published in 1892. In this poem, Yeats demonstrates his wish to see the culture of Ireland reestablished. He cites some important names that collaborated in the struggle to set Ireland free and emphasizes that he, with his poems, could also be helpful to the process of cultural awakening of Ireland. The second poem is “September 1913”, from *Responsibilities*, first published in the Irish Times on the 8th of September, 1913, then in *Poems Written in Discouragement*, 1913, and The Cuala Press volume which is called *Responsibilities: Poems and a Play* published in 1914. In this poem, a gloomy tone is perceived in relation to the previous romantic tone devoted to Ireland. He seems to be angry with the shift of values of Irish society. Nationalism seemed to be fading away. The nationalists that he cites in this poem are all gone with “Romantic Ireland.”

The third poem is “The Fisherman” from *The Wild Swans at Coole*, first published in *Poetry*, February 1916, then published by The Cuala Press in 1917. In this poem, Yeats uses the figure of the fisherman to illustrate what he considered the ideal audience for his poetry. He praises the appearance of such a humble man but at the same time he recognizes that the ideal Irishman no longer exists or never did, and what is left is an Irishman with whom he is not pleased at all. The fourth poem selected for this research is “Easter, 1916”, from *Michael Robarts and the Dancer*, first published in 1920. This poem, as the title suggests, was written after the Easter Rising, a rebellion that took place in Ireland in 1916. It was an attempt to put into question the British domain in Ireland but, similarly to the Irish rebellion of 1798, it was suppressed by England; the nationalists surrendered and were killed. “Easter, 1916” is a long poem in which Yeats talks about the sacrifice made by Irish rebels and wonders if it was worth it. He brings to his poetry the name of the nationalists that were killed, immortalizing this historical event in his poem.

The fifth poem that will be part of the corpus is “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen”, first published in 1921 and then incorporated to *The Tower*, published in 1928. It discusses mainly about the violence in the Anglo-Irish War (1919-1921). The sixth poem, “Come Gather Around me, Parnellites”, first published as a broadside in January 1937, then in a book of essays, before being published by the Cuala Press in 1938. This poem was chosen due to its strong political appeal that is already present in the title. The word Parnellites refers to the supporters of Charles Stewart Parnell, a nationalist and political leader. The poem

acclaims Parnell's struggle – he is represented as the savior of Ireland. The last poem of this selection is "Politics" from *Last Poems and Two Plays* (1939). In the first three lines, Yeats discusses the impossibility of paying attention to a subject such as politics when there are other important things in life. He seems to be longing for his youth and looking back in his life of political struggle and wondering if it was worth spending so much time on that complex subject.

This research discusses how Yeats explores history and politics, the implications of them in his poetry as well as the impact of them in the perspective of critics. In this study, the speaker of the poems is associated with the function of the public figure of "the national poet" that is assumed by Yeats. In order to conduct this research, it seemed important to expose Yeats's political positioning, as well as to discuss how it is manifested in his work. Thus, possible answers should be withdrawn from the following questions: How are the historical and political issues of Ireland portrayed in Yeats's poetry? What is Yeats's positioning in relation to history and politics in Ireland? Taking into consideration that the aim of this study is to analyze Yeats's poetry in the political context of Ireland, mainly concerning history and politics, this investigation will be based on historians', theorists' and critics' views. That is, the different perceptions they present about the political and historical context in which Ireland is inserted.

In addition to historians such as R. F. Foster, Edward D'Alton and Neil Hegarty, Declan Kiberd is part of the critical framework, which brings an account of the history of modern Irish literary production as well as the political background of it. Kiberd manages to outline the forms taken by colonialism in Ireland in the following way: "Political rule from London through the medium of Dublin Castle; economic expropriation by planters who came in various waves of settlement; and an accompanying psychology of self-doubt and dependence among the Irish, linked to the loss of economic and political power but also the decline of the native language and culture" (6). He also relates all the changes that took place by means of colonialism to the debate of national identity, which later, gave birth to the Irish Revival of which Yeats was one of the major organizers.

Edna Longley is also part of the critical framework. Longley is a revisionist literary critic and she is aware of what the term revisionism means. The term is discussed in more details in the first chapter of this thesis. The term nationalism is also a target of many definitions and encompasses a series of other terms since there are different features of nationalism. Eugene O'Brien, in his book entitled *Examining Irish*

Nationalism in the Context of Literature, Culture and Religion: a study of the epistemological structure of nationalism, scrutinizes the term, comparing definitions brought by other critics. At some point he suggest that maybe: “the roots of nationalism lie in racial, territorial, linguistic and ideological homogeneity, a homogeneity expressed and solidified by linguistic, cultural and religious practices, and by the exclusion of any other racial input” (11). The discussion about nationalism goes beyond fixed definitions, what is important at this point is to know that literary criticism may be defined as belonging to a revisionist or a nationalist bias.

Edward Said is also of great importance in this study, mainly his article that addresses Yeats’s role in the process of decolonization of Ireland. In spite of Said’s authority on themes related to imperialism and colonialism, some critics may put into question the inclusion of Ireland in the list of colonial countries. For this reason, Said’s view on the theme is, at times, juxtaposed with some other critics’ views.

Bearing in mind the close relation between the events that took place in Ireland after the arrival of the British, more specifically the changes that happened in that process, and the poems written by Yeats, it is possible to notice the intimate connection between his poetry and history. Thus, in this study, the basis for the discussion about the relation of poetry and history is Octavio Paz’s book, *The Bow and the Lyre*, more specifically the chapter entitled “Poetry and History.” This research also includes some key concepts of the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. Concepts such as dialogism, contextual meaning and polyphony which are especially relevant to the analytical chapter.

2 POLITICS, HISTORY, POETRY, AND THEIR INTERRELATIONS

In order to carry out this research, some concepts need to be scrutinized. Firstly, it is important to define the word “politics” and its implications to then discuss it in the context of Ireland. In the field of politics, it is worth analyzing the terms “nationalism” and “revisionism”; key concepts in a piece of research that intends to take the historical background of a country as one of the basis for the literary analysis. From this perspective, the relation between history and poetry are discussed. Besides that, some other concepts such as dialogism, contextual meaning and polyphony are also presented since they are used to support the analytical chapter.

The word politics may have a variety of definitions, from general conceptions to some of its particularities and uses in society. It can be understood as defined by Andrew Heywood in *Politics* (2013). He says that: “Politics, in its broadest sense, is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live. Although politics is also an academic subject, it is then clearly the study of this activity. Politics is thus inextricably linked to the phenomena of conflict and cooperation” (2). This definition provides a general understanding of politics which can be applied to different forms of political organization.

Politics in Ireland, however, presents some peculiarities, especially in relation to Irish politics after the establishment of British rule. The oppression operated by it provoked many violent reactions of Irish people. All the attempts to resist dominance were suppressed. The Irish nationalism was the fuel to make the hope and struggle for independence a constant presence. Due to the central role of nationalism in Ireland, it seems necessary to scrutinize the such term, however, to isolate and define it has been a difficult task, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy puts it as following: “The term ‘nationalism’ is generally used to describe two phenomena: (1) the attitude that the members of a nation have when they care about their national identity, and (2) the actions that the members of a nation take when seeking to achieve (or sustain) self-determination.” Patrizia Albanese makes a list of the main definitions in her book *Mothers of the Nation* (2006), in which she says that part of the difficulty with the term is because it is defined as “an ideology (Anderson, 1991), a theory of political legitimacy (Gellner,

1983), a mass-sentiment (Kohn, 1962), faith (Hayes, 1960), e a political principal (Gellner, 1983) among other things” (9). These broad definitions are relevant to understand the concept as a whole but it still lacks some specificity when narrowing down to the case of Ireland.

John Coakley and Michael Gallagher discuss politics in Ireland in *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* (2006) for them “a powerful nationalist interpretation of Irish history was able to make full use of these events in constructing an image of unrelenting resistance to English rule” (4). It seems necessary to establish some differences in relation to nationalism applied to a moment in history, that is, nationalism as a number of actions directed to conquer independence and to repair the changes concerning identity; and nationalism as a positioning in relation to the way one retells history and analyzes literary production. The latter is considered to be opposed to revisionism. The presence of these two ways to interpret and write about history is probably due to the considerable intricacy of Irish historiography.

Steven G. Ellis writes about the complexity of this matter in his article, “Historiographical debate: Representations of the past in Ireland: whose past and whose present?” He introduces the issue showing the complication that involves the history of Ireland. “In modern history there are few countries which present the historian with the kind of interpretative challenge offered by Ireland. The general outlines of the problem are well known the impact on the island of successive waves of colonization; the endemic unrest, religious strife, and political instability” (289). Ellis argues that all the particularities of Ireland’s experience should be taken into consideration if it is assumed that Ireland’s historical experience cannot be understood in isolation.

In the midst of such complexity, two attempts to obtain accuracy in the process of retelling Irish History can be found: Revisionism and Nationalism. R.F. Foster, in the essay “We Are All Revisionists Now” says that “to the scholars, it is quite simply a desire to eliminate as much as possible of the retrospectively ‘Whig’ view of history which sees every event and process in the light of what followed it rather than what went before: the effort to get behind hindsight” (2). Longley defines it as a “shorthand and quasi-abusive term for historical studies held to be at odds with the founding ideology of the Irish Free State (Republic of Ireland since 1948)” (10). The criticism in relation to revisionism is associated to the claim that revisionists undermine the significance of the facts that are being retold. In Irish literary criticism, revisionism might be placed in opposition to nationalism. As Longley defines her

approach to history and literature as being revisionist, she also criticizes the *modus operandi* of the nationalists. She points to the constant criticism performed by the nationalists towards revisionists. Longley states that “Nationalist history, resistant to the democracy of ‘intertextual antagonism’, desires to cast ‘revisionism’ in its own monolithic mould” (37).

The nationalist approach on history and literature, however, seems to be, to a certain extent, more taken for granted by some critics. Foster, who at a certain point was “accused” of revisionism, is quoted in an article by Andrew Brown in *The Guardian*. Foster says that “the Irish nationalist myth was energizing and in many ways necessary for a couple of generations after independence and the necessary reappraisals in the last generations have not taken away from that.” If on the one hand revisionism is criticized for minimizing the damage caused by the process of colonization in Ireland, on the other hand, nationalism is criticized for increasing such damage. Despite it all, the proposal of this work is to dialogue with both approaches in history and criticism.

In relation to the nationalism that took place during the process of colonization, as it is mentioned by Foster, to be a nationalist was an attempt to obtain some changes in the already established colony. Edward Said sees nationalism as a powerful defense against colonial force wherever it took place. He writes:

A great deal, but by no means all, of the resistance to imperialism was conducted in the name of nationalism. Nationalism is a word that has been used in all sorts of sloppy and undifferentiated ways, but it still serves quite adequately to identify the mobilizing force that coalesced into resistance against an alien and occupying empire on the part of people possessing a common history, religion, and language. (74)

On account of the necessity of resistance, nationalism was used by Irish people to fight against the imposing presence of the colonizer in Ireland. Thus, many writers, including Yeats, saw in a nationalist positioning the possibility to rescue some traits of the Irish identity using literature. Other writers and poets, besides writing, picked up weapons in the name of a nationalist ideology, as was the case of most leaders of the Easter Rising.

Seamus Deane in the introduction to *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* argues that:

All nationalisms have a metaphysical dimension, for they are all driven by an ambition to realize their intrinsic essence in some specific and tangible form. The form may be a political structure or a literary tradition. Although the problems created by such an ambition are sufficiently intractable in themselves, they are intensified to the point of absurdity when a nationalist self-conception imagines itself to be the ideal model to which all others should conform (8).

Deane points to the danger of transforming nationalism into an absolute set of practices because such a thing disregards diversity. That is true particularly in the case of Ireland, in which at some point it was important to consider the question of diversity of political positioning. Eric Hobsbawm, in *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1992), also talks about the case of nationalism in Ireland. After defining and discussing the concepts of nation and nationalism in many countries he directs his attention to Ireland and states that: “A more serious divergence between definition and reality emerged in Ireland. In spite of Emmet and Wolfe Tone, the majority communities in the six counties of Ulster refused to see themselves as ‘Irish’ in the manner of the bulk of the inhabitants of the twenty-six counties” (135). So, the idea of the unity of nation and nationalism in Ireland, although important in many ways, as was seen in the revolutions and in literary movements, was also a sort of myth as argued by Foster and Hobsbawm. On the process of the mythologizing of such concepts, Hobsbawm complements:

The assumption that a single Irish nation existed within a single Ireland or rather that all inhabitants of the island shared the aspiration of a single, united and independent Fenian Ireland proved mistaken, and while, for fifty years after the establishment of the Irish Free State (and later Republic), Fenians and their sympathizers could dismiss the division of the country as a British imperial plot and the Ulster Unionists as misguided dupes led by British agents, the past

twenty years have made it clear that the roots of a divided Ireland are not to be found in London. (135)

This discussion is relevant because it demonstrates the level of complexity that permeates history and politics in Ireland; It also demonstrating the risk of taking ideological sides. For this reason, in this research, revisionist and nationalist historians as well as literary critics are brought to present their points of view on the subject. In the particular context of Ireland, Hobsbawm suggests that it is possible to investigate Irish history avoiding closed ideologies. He says: “Historians are potentially obliged not to get it wrong, or at least to make an effort not to. To be Irish and proudly attached to Ireland – even to be proudly Catholic-Irish or Ulster-Protestant Irish – is not in itself incompatible with the serious study of Irish history” (13). It is relying on such impartiality that this thesis intends to bring different critical views.

Concerning history, it is important to analyze what its relation to poetry is since poetry is the focus of this research. Octavio Paz manages to present the high degree of interdependence between poetry and history. He says that “without history—without men, who are the origin, the substance and the end of history—the poem could not be born, or incarnated, and without the poem there could not be history either, because there would be no origin or beginning” (170). In another excerpt of *The Bow and the Lyre* in which Paz traces the relation between poetry and history, he elaborates on a broader sense of such relation. He says that:

Like all human creations, the poem is a historical product, fruit of a time and a place; but it is also something that transcends the historical and is situated in a time prior to all history, at the beginning of the beginning. Before history, but not outside it. Before, because it is an archetypal reality, impossible to date, absolute beginning, total and self-sufficient time (170).

Paz’s considerations on the relation between poetry and history are applied to poetry in a general sense; this study, however, intends to use them as a support but also to go a little further due to the specificities of Yeats’s work, that is, besides being inserted in history as argued by Paz, Yeats uses history, more specifically Irish historical

events in his poems. In this sense, The relation of Yeats's poetry to history is twofold. Paz also adds that:

Seen from the outside, the relation between a poem and history do not present any fissure: the poem is a social product. Even when discord reigns between society and poetry – as happens in our times – and the former condemns the latter to exile, the poem does not escape from history: in its very solitude, it continues to be a historical testimony. (170)

It is precisely the historical testimony produced by Yeats's poetry that requires an attentive analysis. In this sense, to understand the role of the poet and the importance to cast an eye on history through poetry is paramount. George Santayana is able to indicate part of such incumbency: "The poet, studying the world, will construct it for us, out of the material of his observations. He will involve us in a scene which lie beyond the narrow lane of our daily plodding; he will place us in the presence of important events, that we may feel our spirit rise momentarily to the height of his great argument" (280). Santayana talks about the potential of poetry to "place us in the presence" of history, and touch our sensibility. Other elements are put together to make the experience with a poem of a different nature. Paz highlights the importance of the relation between the poet and the reader. He says that "the poet's language is that of his community, whatever the latter may be. Between the two is established a reciprocal play of influences, a system of communicating vessels" (29). Paz manages to highlight the importance of the reader in another passage: "The poem is an original and unique creation, but it is also reading and recitation: participation. The poet creates it; the people, by recitation, re-create it. Poet and reader are two moments of a single reality. Alternating in a manner that may aptly be called cyclical, their rotation engenders the spark: poetry" (28). In poetry, elements such as irony, ambiguity, choice of words, conciseness, among others, are put together in a way that creates a whole different experience in relation to the way one gets in touch with the subject that is being presented in the poem.

Other important elements that can be applied to poetry are developed by Mikhail Bakhtin. They are: dialogism, polyphony, and contextual meaning. Bakhtin develops and applies those concepts to the novel, once he considers poetry "illuminated by one unitary and

undisputable discourse” (286). The idea of a unitary discourse of poetry presents itself in opposition to Paz’s idea which says that “the poet’s language is that of his community.” As poetry presents itself as multiple discourses rather than a unitary one, the concepts developed by Bakhtin are also applied to poetry in this thesis. Dialogism is defined in the online glossary of literary theory by Greig E. Henderson and Christopher Brown as: “A term used by Mikhail Bakhtin to describe how a literary work may incorporate a rich variety and multiplicity of voices, styles, and points of view. The dialogical text allows for a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices”(n.pag.).

The concept of dialogism is important especially in relation to the continuous process of contextual meaning. About that, Bakhtin says:

Contextual meaning is potentially infinite, but it can only be actualized when accompanied by another (other’s) meaning, if only by a question in the inner speech of the one who understands. Each time it must be accompanied by another contextual meaning in order to reveal new aspects of its own infinite nature (just as the word reveals its meanings only in context) (145).

Thus, it is through context, both the context of the reader and the writer that meaning is produced. The concept of polyphony which is developed in Bakhtin’s *Problems of Dostoyevsky’s poetic*, published in 1984, is defined as “the unification of highly heterogeneous and incompatible material—with the plurality of consciousness-centers not reduced to a single ideological common denominator” (17). Literally the term polyphony refers to a diversity of voices. The ability to bring different voices is largely present in some poets’ works and the one written by Yeats is an example of it. When Yeats exposes his desire for a free Ireland, when he laments the murder of nationalists, when he wants to recuperate the cultural features of his nation through a literary movement, he is also bringing the voices of thousands of Irish people to his poetry.

This brief discussion of the main concepts, firstly related to politics and history and then poetry and history, serves as basis for the discussion that follows. Both nationalist and revisionist historians and critics are included in the attempt to retell parts of the history of Ireland. It is important to bear in mind that the idea is to contextualize, in

general terms, what happened in Ireland, in the field of politics and history, to then be able to understand the implications of such issues in the literary production of Ireland, mainly concerning the poetry of Yeats.

3 CASTING AN EYE ON THE HISTORY OF A NATION: FROM ARMED TO LITERARY REVOLUTION

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first one is about history and politics in Ireland. Therefore, important historical events will be discussed in light of some views of historians and critics. The accounts on such subject will be related to the first influences of the Protestant ascendancy on the dynamics of the Irish people's lives. Protestant ascendancy, according to W. J. McCormack, "refers to the social élite predominant in Ireland after the battle of the Boyne (1690)" (161). As the term is open to different interpretations, R.F. Foster goes to the core of the matter in *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* and discusses it in more details. He says that "the foundation of Ascendancy rested on the penalization of Catholics; but to understand this operation it is necessary to note the position of Irish Catholics before the Protestant victory" (153). Some definition of the term seemed necessary although the Ascendancy serves more as a starting point to the historical accounts on the first part of the discussion. The second section focuses on what was discussed by critics in relation to what Yeats's work and engagement meant to the political and cultural scenario of Ireland.

3.1 HISTORY AND POLITICS IN IRELAND

The history of Ireland is pervaded by a succession of conflicts. In ancient times, most of the conflicts were the result of invasions as the ones by the Vikings and the Normans. In the seventeenth century, a new "invasion" took place in Ireland, this time by the British, who aimed to colonize and exploit the country. Thus, the historical frame of this research starts from the arrival of the British people in Ireland, who, by the time, were composed of Protestants.

As mentioned in the introduction, the severe problems faced by the Irish people, which started in the seventeenth century, were a result of English imperialism. The installation of the system of Plantation in the north of Ireland was the starting point of many social problems. Inherent to this kind of colonization, many natives had their lands confiscated and had to go to other areas of the country. In the beginning of the establishment of the Plantation systems, it was supposed to be experimental and only in a few regions of Ireland, but later it became

more aggressive, and huge areas of land were taken from the Irish and given to the British. Thus, it was from this moment in the history of Ireland that a ruthless oppression began and, as a response, the struggle of Irish people to get rid of the subjugation they were under. During this period the “Penal Laws” were created, and this was a watershed in the history of conflicts and politics in Ireland. After the implantation of Penal Laws, Catholics were prohibited to buy land and have access to education, for example. Apparently, the main intention was to force the Catholics to become Protestants, but the nature of such laws led to terrible consequences. In *Inventing Ireland*, Declan Kiberd says that “under Penal Laws in Ireland a son, simply by converting to Protestantism, could usurp his father’s prerogatives, or a wife her husband’s, and this Burke¹ saw as a blueprint for revolution” (17). Many restrictions concerning land acquisition or permission such as those mentioned by Kiberd were removed in 1778, as Foster reminds us. Nevertheless, Foster adds that “by then the Penal laws had done all they could. Catholics were 75 per cent of the total population, and over 90 per cent in certain ecclesiastical provinces; yet, Arthur Young calculated in 1776, they held only 5 per cent of the land” (211). That disproportional division of land, along with some other aggravating circumstances led to many conflicts.

In 1798 a rebellion took place. It was one of the bloodiest uprisings in the history of Ireland. The rebels were fighting against all the abuses brought with the installation of the Penal Laws back in 1691. The rebellion lasted three months and was violently suppressed. Many rebels were caught and executed under British orders. This rebellion had its final aftermath in the Act of Union in 1800. The Union took place but the Penal Laws continued to be applied. The situation of the Irish people only started to change with the struggle of an active politician named Daniel O’Connell. As observed by Kiberd, “this proudly Catholic leader had secured emancipation for his co-religionists: the penal laws against them were finally broken” (20). It was a considerable accomplishment to the Irish people on one hand, but on the other, things would remain the same, since Ireland had a small number of representatives in the parliament. The Act of Union was approved but little change operated for the Irish. It became a guarantee of protection to the Protestant Ascendancy and besides that, as Foster remarks: “It formed the rhetorical issue of Irish Politics: the thing to be for or

¹ Edmund Burke was an Irish political theorist and philosopher who fought for many causes, among them, to denounce the abuses of Penal Laws in Ireland.

against, the simple reason for everything. It also came to symbolize the confessional divide that remained the structural reality of Irish Politics” (290).

In this unfavorable context, Daniel O’Connell (1775-1984) starts a new struggle against the Act of Union and towards the emancipation of Ireland. His dismay at the aftermath of the Act of Union was perceived soon after it. Edward Alfred D’Alton in his book about the history of Ireland brings an excerpt of Daniel O’Connell’s first public speech at a meeting after the Act of Union in which O’Connell declares: “we would rather trust to the Protestant fellow-countryman than lay our country at the feet of foreigners, and that if a Union was to be the alternative of the re-enactment of the penal laws, we would prefer the re-enactment of the penal laws” (96). At first it might seem a radical positioning but, after the Act of Union, what the Irish people had was the same bad situation as before but with the illusion that something had changed for better. Thomas O’Connor, professor of the National University of Ireland, comments in the BBC documentary *The Story of Ireland* that if the emancipation had been granted as planned, as part of the Act of Union deal, Catholicism in Ireland would not have taken the direction it did. He also says that it would not have become so associated with politics and later on with nationalism.

The situation of Catholics after the Act of Union continued to be unfavorable. The amount of land Catholics could possess kept diminishing. In 1823 O’Connell brought the Catholic Church directly into Irish politics. By doing so, he started the campaign for emancipation which united thousands of Catholics to the cause. In 1828 he was elected to be a representative in the parliament. It was an important moment for Catholics because for more than a hundred years they had not had any representative in the parliament. As stated by Foster in the BBC documentary: “Catholic emancipation enables and empowers a whole world of Irish Catholics, who previously, over the traumatic first twenty years of the Union, have not seen any element of power open to them.” Nevertheless, with the strength of O’Connell and the hope of Irish Catholics, came also the Protestants’ fear of losing their stability and their privileged position in society. For the Protestants, the connection with England guaranteed the advantages they had over Catholics, and it was exactly this connection that O’Connell wanted to break. Consequently, he started a campaign to repeal the Act of Union and towards an independent Kingdom of Ireland. England and most of the Protestants in Ireland were not pleased with such possible change, three months after the beginning of the

campaign, Daniel O'Connell was caught and imprisoned, and thus, the Catholics' dream for emancipation had to be postponed.

In 1845 a terrible happening changes dramatically the history of Ireland. Because of the complications imposed by the process of colonization, which led to extreme poverty, impediment of land acquisition and access to education, Irish Catholics had to rely heavily on one means of subsistence: the cultivation of potatoes. In 1845, though, the plague of potatoes known as blight, which had already caused damages to other European countries, comes to Ireland. It provoked five years of starvation, and it is estimated that over a million people died due to inanition and other diseases related to starvation. More than another million migrated, mainly to the United States. In Christine Kinealy's book about the Irish famine, she says that "there is a willingness to engage with issues such as excess mortality, all too often deaths are reduced to a statistic (usually a million dead and two million emigrated), thus giving no sense of personal bereavement, especially for the survivors who had seen loved ones die" (14). So, the number of deaths as well as the way such happening is narrated might change according to different ideological inclinations.

During the years of the famine, Daniel O'Connell, who had already left prison, engaged in the struggle to get help from England to his fellow countrymen. In the midst of all this, he got sick and died in 1847. About his death Edward D'Alton lists a series of reasons that might have aggravated his disease, such as the failure of the repeal movement, his imprisonment, disagreement with fellows, among others, but D'Alton remarks one event as crucial: "It was the famine above all which struck him the most crushing blow. To see those whom he loved so well and for whom he had laboured so long perishing by thousands, and to feel unable to save them was more than he could bear" (204). The help from England came only at the beginning of the famine, later, it was decided by the prime minister of England that the Irish people had to manage the situation by themselves. This decision of England was faced by some Irish people almost as genocide. It served as fuel to the future actions towards independence.

By 1850, when the famine was officially over, some regions of Ireland were emptied, and historians often say that there were more Irish people living in New York than in Dublin. The immigrants that arrived in the United States were extremely poor, but they had a great sense of organization. Joe Lee, from New York University, comments on the BBC documentary about Ireland that the Irish people brought with them "something intangible, and that is a capacity for political organization,

which they have acquired under the tutorship of Daniel O’Connell over the previous thirty years.” And he adds that “no other people were able to organize themselves at so lower social level and within a decade of arriving, they have become the driving force of New York Politics.” Thus, it is from this context that a new strength to fight for the Irish cause is reborn. The Fenian Brotherhood, founded in 1858, which had been defeated in a previous revolution for independence, was inclined to fight again. They were able to mobilize thousands of people in the United States to help with donations that were sent to the poor Irish Catholics that remained in Ireland. But they wanted more than money; they were eager for a revolution that could grant independence to Ireland. When questioned about the Fenian Brotherhood, Lee says that “they were essentially a cry for revenge for the famine.”

In order to be part of the Fenian Brotherhood, it was necessary to make an oath in which, among other things, the member repudiated England, and everything that was related to it. D’Alton writes that it was not difficult to find thousands of people that were willing to do the oath. He exposes some of them in a passage that is worth citing here because, besides informing, it brings some account of the emotional atmosphere that surrounded the organization of the Fenian Brotherhood:

Amid the rush and bustle of American cities, on American farms and railroads, in the lonely log-cabin in American woods, down in the depths of American mines were Irish exiles who thought of England only with a curse. Their fathers had told them of the horror of the famine days, and they themselves had seen the crowbar brigade at work, the house levelled in which they were born, the fire quenched round which they have gathered to pray at their mother’s knee. They had known England law only by its oppressions, and Government only as an instrument of terror. (246)

This passage demonstrates what has made the adhesion of so many people to the Fenian Brotherhood something easy to be achieved. It was the pain they shared and the wish for revenge that moved the Irish people in America towards a new struggle that could accomplish something more effective; at least the method would be different from the pacific politics of Daniel O’Connell. Destruction of buildings and bloodshed would be included in their actions. The brotherhood had great care with its organization and it worked in a way that prevented

treachery. So, as explained by D'Alton, the society was "organized into circles, each under a centre, all authorities converged through higher centres commending many circles, towards the head centre, Stephens, who was in supreme commend.[...] John O'Mahony was supreme in America; John O'Leary, Tomas Clarke Luby, Charles Kickhen in Ireland"(245). Yeats had a great admiration for John O'Leary. Yeats was very young when he met him and attributes to him the inspiration for his writings. In "A General Introduction for my Work", from 1937, Yeats makes it explicit when he says:

It was through the old Fenian leader John O'Leary I found my theme. His long imprisonment, his banishment, his magnificent head, his scholarship, pride, his integrity, all that aristocratic dream nourished amid little shops and little farms, had drawn around him a group of young men; I was but eighteen or nineteen and had already, under the influence of *The Faerie Queene* and *The Sad Shepherd*, written a pastoral play, and under that of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, two plays, one staged somewhere in the Caucasus, the other in a crater of the moon; and I knew myself to be vague and incoherent.(5)

Yeats comments in his essay that O'Leary collaborated to the improvement of his writing. Other great collaboration of O'Leary was in the Fenian Brotherhood. Besides the separatist attempts, they also created the *Irish people*, a newspaper that aimed to discuss issues related to the cause of Ireland. In 1865, however, the organization was found out by the government and its members arrested. O'Leary was sentenced to twenty years in prison. In 1867 the first acts of terrorism took place in England, the participants were caught and killed, but they became martyrs to subsequent actions. The Fenian rebellion in Ireland did not succeed, but the organization provoked a great social awakening.

In 1878 the potato blight strikes again and a movement to protect the people against a new episode of famine was organized. This movement had two leaders: Michael Davitt (1846-1906), of peasant origin, who was born in County Mayo and emigrated to Lancashire with his family due to the problems of eviction in Ireland, joined the Fenian Brotherhood in 1865, and returned to Ireland after seven years of imprisonment in England for his participation in the such organization;

and Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891), an aristocrat and protestant man whose family had lost almost everything in the first strike of the famine back in 1845. They differ from each other in many ways, from background to political outlook, but they join for the cause of Ireland, which in that period was mainly concerning land. Irish people were not allowed to buy land since the implantation of Penal Laws, and there was also the danger of eviction that many people were going through. Yeats mentions both politicians in his poetry, in fact, there are a couple of poems in which Parnell is a central figure. Poems like: “Three Songs to the Same Tune,” “Parnell,” “Three Marching Songs,” “Parnell’s Funeral,” “Come Gather Round me, Parnellites,” among others.

Parnell was one of the major figures of the nationalistic movement. He was deeply involved in the struggle for the implantation on Home Rule in Ireland. By means of negotiation, Parnell gets the support of William Gladstone, a conservative British politician who also engaged in the project of Home Rule. However, a scandal involving Parnell and a married woman, Catherine O’Shea, was able to destabilize the struggle for independence. Many people delegitimized the leadership of Parnell due to the particularities of his personal life. Gladstone was one of those that declared that he could not continue to support Ireland’s struggle for Home Rule if Parnell continued to be the leader of the movement. The whole situation was devastating for such a passionate politician as Parnell. A year after the scandal he passed away and a huge crowd was gathered in his funeral. The unexpected fall as a powerful politician and subsequent death of Parnell generated a variety of feelings. Many literary writers included this episode of the Irish history in their work. James Joyce brings the discussion about Parnell to almost all his novels. Yeats also writes about Parnell, although he started including him in his poetry a little late. In the fourth stanza of the first part of Yeats’s poem, “Parnell’s Funeral”, Yeats writes:

Come, fix upon me that accusing eye.
 I thirst for accusation. All that was sung,
 All that was said in Ireland is a lie
 Bred out of the contagion of the throng,
 Saving the rhyme rats hear before they die.
 Leave nothing but the nothings that belong
 To this bare soul, let all men judge that can
 Whether it be an animal or a man. (159)

In this stanza, Yeats brings the voice of Parnell to show the atmosphere that remained after his death. Many of the people who supported and admired him were the same who, after the scandal concerning his personal life, judged him. A fraction of the crowd that attended his funeral was also part of those that did not accept him to continue as a leader of the Home Rule movement. After the downfall of Parnell, no other political leader ascended to fight for Home Rule. Foster states that “there is a tendency to see the twenty-five years between Parnell’s death in 1891 and the Easter Rising of 1916 as a vacuum in politics: political ‘energy’ being diverted mystically (and mechanically) into the channels of ‘culture’”(431). According to Foster it was a theory put forward by Yeats in a passage that became widely known: “The modern literature of Ireland, and indeed all that stir of thought which prepared for the Anglo-Irish war, began when Parnell fell down from power in 1891. A disillusioned and embittered Ireland turned from parliamentary politics; an event was conceived; and the race began, as I think, to be troubled by that event’s long gestation” (431). To some degree, Foster tends to see it as a sort of fiction. He argues that “the radical avant-garde of cultural nationalism were a small minority round the turn of the century” (432). Be that as it may, the small minority managed to accomplish some changes in the literary and cultural scenarios of Ireland.

Due to the many years of English presence in Ireland and consequently all the changes such presence promoted, a sense of inferiority started to be associated with everything that was Irish, including the Irish language that, at a certain point, was heavily associated to poverty and lack of instruction. Before this reality, a movement to rescue the pride for Irish identity gains strength in Ireland. Founded in 1893 by Eoin MacNeill and with Douglas Hyde as president, the Gaelic League, an organization without political interest, at least not in its outset, had as main objective to revitalize Irish identity. As described on the online page of the National Library of Ireland, “the organization was non-political and nonsectarian and aimed at involving people of different religious and political loyalties in a common cultural effort. Its objective was the revival of the Irish language and the preservation of Irish literature, music and traditional culture.” Later, the cultural revival became what set the tone for new struggles for independence in the beginning of the twentieth century.

In 1912 the Liberal Government of the United Kingdom of Britain and Ireland was in negotiation to approve the Home Rule bill. That was the beginning of the most severe conflicts between Protestants

and Catholics in Ireland. With the eminence of the change, the Unionists feared to lose their stability and be governed by Dublin. Thus, a militia, the Ulster Volunteers, was created to fight against that decision. In the following year, the nationalists also create their militia, the Irish Volunteers, to protect Home Rule. In 1914 a great number of guns and ammunition arrived in Ulster, but when the Irish Volunteers attempted to do the same in the following years, they were prohibited. These two different ways in which the government dealt with these two groups led to a more radical posture of the nationalists. The hope for the Home Rule bill was strong in 1914, however, due to the beginning of the World War I, Home Rule became a secondary matter.

In 1916 an uprising, known as the Easter Rising, took place in Ireland. It was planned by the Irish Volunteers and also members of Sinn Fein, a political party founded in 1905. The intention of the rising was to declare Ireland's independence. The participants seized strategic buildings and started the rising on Easter Monday. In *The Insurrection in Dublin*, a book by James Stevens, it is possible to get closer to the happenings at that time. Stevens published the book one month after the Rising and narrated the event from the perspective of a citizen who woke up in the morning, went to work and suddenly found out that the insurrection was occurring. Stephens states in the forward of his book that: "If freedom is to come to Ireland—as I believe it is—then the Easter Insurrection was the only thing that could have happened"(8). After detailed description of each day of the Rising and its aftermath, Stephens comes to the core of the question of Ireland and argues that there are two of them: "The first is international, and can be stated shortly. It is the desire of Ireland to assume control of her national life . . .". "The second question might plausibly be called a religious one" (112). Stephens disagrees about the second question of Ireland and he argues that the religious question is absolutely political but constructed in a way that made the population believe that it was linked to religion.

The Easter Rising was indubitably connected to the first question of Ireland stated by Stephens. It was a new attempt to fight for independence. During the insurrection, the proclamation of the independence of Ireland was written and signed by the seven leaders. John F. Boyle, in *The Irish Rebellion of 1916*, discusses the implication of the insurrection and also brings the document of the Proclamation of the Republic of Ireland. In the third paragraph of the proclamation the insurgents wrote: "We hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a sovereign independent state, and we pledge our lives, and the lives of comrades in arms, to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its

exaltation amongst the nations” (53). The rising lasted a few days before the leaders were forced to surrender. They were judged and most of them executed. Yeats felt the impact of the executions, and in his poem about the Rising he wrote: “MacDonagh and MacBride/ And Connolly and Pearse / Now and in time to be, / Wherever green is worn, / Are changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born”. The deaths were able to provoke a great commotion, and many people joined the cause. The Easter Rising is considered to be one of the events that led to the Irish War of Independence.

A series of happenings are considered relevant to build the motivation to the Irish War of Independence. They include events such as the aftermath of the Easter Rising in 1916, the victory of the Sinn Féin party in the elections of 1918, which culminated in the declaration of independence of Ireland, provoking a reaction of England against it. The war had its official outset in 1919, when members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), a paramilitary army which had Michael Collins as a leader, killed two members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), the armed police force of the United Kingdom in Ireland. Some other acts of violence followed the first year of war, but it was in 1920 that the violence became more intense and there was a succession of attacks by the IRA to barracks of the RIC. That situation alarmed the United Kingdom, which sent a group of World War I veterans called Black and Tans to Ireland. They were supposed to stop the IRA attacks, but they also inflicted violence against civilians. In response to an attack of the IRA to members of the British intelligence, the Black and Tans and the RIC opened fire at a football match in Croke Park, Dublin, killing fourteen people. That episode known as the first Bloody Sunday shocked the population and the IRA gained more support from the citizens. After that, violence was intensified and for each attack from one side, there was retaliation from the other side.

By the end of 1921, both sides decided to negotiate a treaty. Thus, Michael Collins traveled to England and after the negotiation he accepted a treaty in which Ireland was divided. In the partition, twenty-six counties of southern Ireland became the Irish Free State, which was still attached to England in many ways; and the other six mostly Protestant states of the north became a new state within the United Kingdom. The Treaty did not please Éamon de Valera, who argued that Collins accepted the treaty without his consent and abandoned the main objective of previous struggle that was to make Ireland a republic. It is worth mentioning that de Valera was the leader in the 1916 Easter Rising which proclaimed the Irish republic, was a candidate of the Sinn

Fain party, and subsequently the president of the Irish Parliament (Dail Eireann), When The Treaty was accepted by Michael Collins, de Valera resigned as president and started to resist violently against it. Kiberd brings some details about the aftermath of such disagreement: “A bitter election was fought on the issue in June 1922. . . . A civil war of unparalleled bitterness then ensued, in which brother fought brother and men who had recently been comrades against a foreign enemy now killed and executed former friends” (194). Both sides, those supporting the treaty and those against it committed atrocities. By the end of 1922 Michael Collins was killed by members of the IRA, of which he had been a leader in the past. After the end of the Irish Civil War problems still remained in Ireland. Many political reforms were established. In 1949 Ireland finally became a Republic. Nonetheless, the sectarianism continued both in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland.

From the perspective that the cultural identity of the Irish people had been damaged by the process of colonization, changes seemed necessary to the cultural scenario of Ireland. Kiberd states that “it would be left to Yeats, Hyde and a later generation to restore culture to its central importance in the liberation of a people” (22). Based on these considerations, it is worth investigating what was the role of Yeats’s literary production, especially his poetry, in the attempt to revitalize the cultural identity of Ireland.

3.2 WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS: FROM THE IRISH REVIVAL TO POST WAR PESSIMISM

Considered one of the most prominent writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, William Butler Yeats (1865—1939) was born in Sandymount, County Dublin, Ireland. However, as he spent great part of his childhood in county Sligo, much of what he wrote about his childhood has Sligo as the main scenario. Yeats wrote about a variety of themes during his literary career, but there are some particular aspects in his writings that stand out. Regarding his involvement with Irish politics, Yeats’s interest in nationalism seems to have part of its root in his relation with the old Fenian leader John O’Leary. In “A General Introduction for my Work”, Yeats mentions that it was through the old Fenian leader John O’Leary that he found the theme for his writings. Yeats also mentions O’Leary by name in at least three of his poems.

Yeats, as many other writers and citizens, embraced the cause of Ireland. Besides the attempt to obtain liberation from British rule, it was also necessary to rescue Irish identity. Ireland went through a process of colonization in which many features of its culture were left behind due to the imposition of elements of the culture of the colonizer. It was in this context that the Irish Revival was constructed. The Irish Revival is a broad term that must be defined so that it may be possible to analyze some particularities of this movement. According to Anne Fogarty, “the Irish literary revival was a protean phenomenon. It united numerous different cultural, political and economic initiatives, all of which shared the aim of reawakening national self-interest and spearheading the quest for independence from British rule” (129). A similar definition is given by Gregory Castle, “the terms Revivalism and Revival (when capitalized) refer to a critical disposition or attitude toward culture and history expressed in multiple movements and a broad spectrum of modes (popular, academic, literary, journalistic, political) and ideologies (advanced nationalism, cultural nationalism, Home Rule, Fenian Unionism)” (292). It is also worth checking Seamus Deane’s definition:

The revival, like the rebellion and the war of independence, the treaty of 1922 (which partitioned Ireland into its present form), and the subsequent civil war, were simultaneously causes and consequences of the concerted effort to renovate the idea of national character and the national destiny. It was only when the Celt was seen by the English as a necessary supplement to the national character that the Irish were able to extend the idea of supplementarity to that of radical difference. (13)

Yeats was one of the main figures involved in the Literary Revival. He himself admitted to be doing something for the nationalist endeavor. About this literary movement, Horatio Krans says that it was after the awareness of the state of things that took place in Ireland that “a company of young man sprung up, resolved to hold fast to the noblest traits of Irish life and character, and to present them to Ireland and to the world in a worthy literary form” (10). Among those young man, Yeats was a remarkable presence. Krans brings an excerpt of Yeats’s writing about the Irish Revival in which Yeats said that: “A true literary consciousness – national to the centre – seems gradually to be forming out of all this disguising and prettifying, this penumbra of half

culture. We are preparing likely enough for a new Irish literary movement – like that of '48 that will show itself in the first lull in politics" (10). That was said in the outset of the movement and what has been reached later is worth investigating.

Declan Kiberd also talks about the Irish revival and Yeats's role in such literary movement. Differently from Krans, he highlights what has been accomplished when looking back to that cultural movement. Kiberd states:

That enterprise achieved nothing less than a renovation of Irish consciousness and a new understanding of politics, economics, philosophy, sport, language and culture in its widest sense. It was the grand destiny of Yeats's generation to make Ireland once again interesting to the Irish, after centuries of enforced provincialism following the collapse of the Gaelic order in 1601. (3)

Although the Irish Revival had such an important impact on the cultural scenario of Ireland, it also had some aspects to be criticized. This nationalist literary movement was composed mostly by Protestants who belonged to a more privileged social class. Another important aspects of the Irish Revival is that as their members considered important to rescue some traits of the past; the movement was also seen as backward due to its close connection to the past. About this situation Kiberd declares that:

In theory, two kinds of freedom were available to the Irish: the return to a past, pre-colonial Gaelic identity, still yearning for expression if long-denied, or the reconstruction of a national identity, beginning from first principals all over again. The first discounted much that had happen, for good as well as ill, during the centuries of occupation; the second was even more exacting, since it urged people to ignore other aspects of their past too. The first eventually took the form of nationalism; as sponsored by Michael Collins, Éamon de Valera and the political élites; the second offered liberation, and was largely the invention of writers and artists. (286)

The reconstruction of such Gaelic identity and other aspects that were part of the Irish nationalism were supported by Yeats, at least in great part of his writing. It can be seen in the Irish mythical background that was retaken in Yeats's poems. As regards the second kind of freedom mentioned by Kiberd, i.e., how "liberation" could have been opposed to the literary path traveled by Yeats, Eamon Grennan observes that it seems a denial of the historical present. Grennan adds that "Yeats seems to want to dominate the Irish literary future as he had dominated that much of its past for which he himself had been virtually responsible" (134). In the sequence of his writing, Grennan talks about the nature of the kind of poetry Yeats claims, and he argues that "in its willful collapsing of temporality, its elimination of the fluent vulgarities of the present, the passage attempts to ground an aesthetic in a personally fruitful cultural myth" (134). Yeats tried that formula of returning to the mythical past in many of his poems. Nevertheless, in the course of his literary career, he not only tried to return to the past, but he has raised the issue of politics critically and engaging himself with the present.

The Irish Literary Theatre and other societies were planned as early as 1887 and in 1903, Yeats, Lady Gregory, Sean O'Casey and John Synge found the Abbey Theatre. It was part of this project for the Irish Revival. Many plays were written involving the goal of the Revival. In the book, *The Irish Literary Revival*, Cornelius Weygandt remarks on some important aspects in relation to the endeavor of the Revival. He comments that Yeats has said that "it was the fall of Parnell, in 1890, that turned the attention of intellectual Ireland from politics to letters and made possible the Revival that was witnessed". (425) He also mentions that "the plays of Mr. Yeats alone make a list whose naming brings a realization of the possibilities for drama in the changing moods of Irish life: "The Countess Kathleen," "The Land of Heart Desire," "The Shadowy Waters," "On Baile's Strand," "The Hourglass," "A pot of Broth," "The King of Threshold", and "Where There is Nothing" (430). The plays had been an important brick in the construction of the Revival and it is important to remember that poetry also had a fundamental role on it. Weygandt is emphatic in relation to it when he says that the greatest work of the Revival has been done in Poetry (426).

Yeats's role in the Irish Revival in the field of poetry was also prolific. He was involved with nationalism and his work reflects his political positioning. A remarkable feature of his political poems is the presence of real characters, such as politicians, poets and writers. Yeats uses their real names; some of these people are present in a great

number of different poems, as it is the case of O'Leary and Parnell. Besides talking about these important figures to the history of Ireland, Yeats also gives them voice in his poems. An example can be seen in his poem entitled "Parnell" in which Yeats writes: "Parnell came down the road, he said to a cheering man: / 'Ireland shall get her freedom and you still break stone'" (177).

Quinn dedicates a great deal of attention to the Irish Literary Revival and to the contribution of Yeats's literary production to the Irish literary scenario as a whole. Quinn points out the implications of politics in the work of Yeats:

The profound political changes that Ireland underwent from the turn of the century to the establishment of the Free State are linked in complex ways to Yeats's development; his work engaged with these and to an extent created them. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, he was ever careful to avoid militant issues, but this changed in the twentieth century, as his poems intervened directly in political matters. (60)

Yeats's work which is considered the watershed in relation to his stronger relations with current political matters is *The Tower* (1928). It is marked by his impressions on the atrocities of the Irish wars and more than that, it is a pillar in the process of decolonization according to Edward Said:

The Tower is, as far as decolonization is concerned, how to reconcile the inevitable violence of the colonial conflict with the everyday politics of an ongoing national struggle, and also with the power of each of the various parties in the colonial conflict, with the discourse of reason, of persuasion, of organization, with the requirements of poetry. Yeats's prophetic perception that at some point violence cannot be enough and that the strategies of politics and reason must come into play is, to my knowledge, the first important announcement in the context of decolonization of the need to balance violent force with an exigent political and organized process. (91)

Said is one of the critics who consider that Ireland was a victim of English imperialism as a colony and acknowledges Yeats's work as an agent in the process of decolonization in Ireland. Said says that: "It is not wrong to interpret Yeats as in his poetry setting a trajectory in common with other poets of decolonization, like Neruda and Darwish"(89). Besides Yeats's poetry, an example of action that would promote the decolonization of Ireland was the Irish Literary Revival. Yeats had a foundational role in it. Anne Fogarty writes about the participation of Yeats in the Irish Revival: "Yeats's involvement in revivalism was as variegated, far-reaching and vexed as his contribution to modernism. But, crucially, his engagement with Irish cultural and political disputes shaped his evolving sense of his role as a poet and fuelled his ruminations and pronouncements about the requisite aesthetic for a burgeoning nation" (129). The Irish Revival was an important movement to promote a cultural awakening in Ireland, however, severe criticism was directed to its core. One of the reasons was the use of the word Irish to refer to a literary production written primarily in English. To the critics of that literary movement, it seemed contradictory to resist the colonizer using their own language. Moreover, as Gregory Castle points out, "too often, however, we find advanced-nationalist critics, like Arthur Griffith and Maud Gonne, attacking Anglo-Irish intellectuals for cultural elitism and, in the case of Synge, for maliciously misrecognizing the character of Ireland and its people" (293). Much criticism was often directed to literary revivalists who happened to be the founders of the Abbey Theatre. Castle also adds that:

To be sure, the Literary Revivalists did constitute (and extravagantly so at times) a cultural elite and they did use themes, genres and techniques of fieldwork similar to what were emerging in folklore studies, anthropology and ethnography; to this limited extent, they were influenced by colonial discourse. But that influence was, by and large, dialectically transformed in the aesthetic project of building a national literature and a national theater, the oft-stated goals of the Literary Revivalists. Synge's plays, together with the dramatic productions of Yeats and Gregory, got Irish audiences involved in the process and made possible the creation of a major literature, even a foundational one. (293)

Even though the Irish Literary Revival was criticized for some of its flaws, its relevance to some important changes in the Irish literary scenario is undeniable. After the long process of colonization, it was a wise decision of those writers to start thinking about a movement to revitalize the cultural and political Ireland.

4 “IRELAND SHALL GET HER FREEDOM”: YEATS’S POETRY AND THE IRISH QUESTION

The analytical chapter of this thesis follows the chronological order in which the poems were published. As in the case of Yeats’s work, publication does not always equal composition, and a specific poem can appear in different editions, changing thus the date of publication. For this reason, the date of the first publication of each poem is mentioned before informing the dates of some other editions. The decision to analyze them following this pattern is an attempt to identify changes concerning Yeats’s political positioning. Seven poems were selected to be part of this research. The first poem that composes this corpus was published in 1892 and the last one in 1939. It makes a time span of forty-six years. During this period, as discussed in the chapter two, a series of events took place in Ireland, from literary movements to wars.

Yeats had the custom to organize his poetry books according to a chosen theme. In *The Rose*, a later arrangement of earlier poems published in 1892, he celebrates the mythical Ireland. In this collection, the mythical characters, such as Cuchulain, Fergus and the Druid reenact a far and enchanted past. The opening poem of *The Rose* is “To the Rose upon the Rood of Time”, which sets the tone of the whole collection. Both the mythical figures and the longing for the past are perceived. Matthew Bell writes that “the reasons and motivations for Yeats’s use of Celtic themes can be understood in terms of the authors’ own sense of nationalism as well as an overriding personal interest in mythology and the oral traditions of folklore” (n.pag.). In the last three lines of this poem, Yeats writes: “Come near; I would, before my time to go, / Sing of old Eire and the ancient ways: / Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days” (22-24). Yeats indicates that his endeavor in most of the poems that compose *The Rose* is to praise the past and to seek relief from the dull present that Ireland was going through. It is not by chance that the name of the country is written in the Irish language in this poem. It signals the nationalist feeling regarding the Irish language that was being replaced by the language of the colonizer.

“To Ireland in the Coming Times” is the first poem to be analyzed in this chapter and the last one in the sequence of the twenty two poems that compose *The Rose*. In the first three lines of the first stanza, Yeats seems to bring a justification to his return to mythical Ireland. He writes: “Know, that I would accounted be / True brother of a

company / That sang, to sweeten Ireland's wrong" (1-3). He is aware of the political situation of Ireland and would engage, as in fact he did, to help rebuilding the national identity that was replaced by the imposition of the British presence. Yeats envisions changes that would go far beyond the rescue of the Irish identity. Justin Quinn remarks that Yeats intends to promote a change in history through the use of myth. He says that "common sense sees history as the hard facts that would upset the good stories of myth. But Yeats goes further and reminds himself how myth can change those facts and influence the course of history" (72). In the sequence of this poem, Yeats writes:

Ballad and story, rann and song;
 Nor be I any less of them,
 Because the red-rose-bordered hem
 Of her, whose history began
 Before God made the angelic clan,
 Trails all about the written page.
 When Time began to rant and rage
 The measure of her flying feet
 Made Ireland's heart begin to beat; (3-11)

The nationalist appeal permeates the entire poem. The importance of Ireland is constantly being reinforced. Towards the end of the first stanza Yeats writes: "And Time bade all his candles flare / To light a measure here and there; / And may the thoughts of Ireland brood / Upon a measured quietude" (13-16). Yeats brings collective desire for peace to his poem.

In the second stanza Yeats makes direct references to other Irish writers: "Nor may I less be counted one / With Davis, Mangan, Ferguson, / Because, to him who ponders well, / My rhymes more than their rhyming tell / Of things discovered in the deep, / Where only body's laid asleep" (17-20). Yeats mentions Thomas Davis, who was the main figure in the creation of the culture of modern nationalism, James Mangan, an Irish poet whose political engagement had its outset in his poems only after the Famine, and Samuel Ferguson, who had a great interest in Irish mythology and history and who is considered to be the forerunner of Yeats's work in what concerns nationalism. Yeats places himself side by side with these poets, recognizing their importance and also the importance of his own rhymes to "sweeten Ireland's wrong". Edward Said comments that: "The efforts of Mangan, Ferguson and Davis did in the field of nationalism, Yeats does after

them in another, more challenging way. He rises from the level of personal experience to that of national archetype, without losing the immediacy of the former or the stature of the latter” (92). At first glance Yeats’s line seemed to be a little pretentious but as he continues the stanza, there is an indication that the supposed superiority of his rhymes is attributed to a mystical phenomenon: “For the elemental creatures go / About my table to and fro, / That hurry from unmeasured mind / To rant and rage in flood and wind; / Yet he who treads in measured ways / May surely barter gaze for gaze. / Man ever journeys on with them / After the red-rose-bordered hem. Ah, faeries, dancing under the moon, / A Druid land, a Druid tune!” (23-32). When he comments that the mythical creatures appear on his table, supposedly when he is writing, that creates a strong image. Yeats seems to emphasize the mystical nature, not only of the past but also of his writing.

In the last stanza of “To Ireland in the Coming Times,” Yeats writes in a passionate manner. Besides the inspiration taken from the mythical past, Yeats was inspired by Maud Gonne, a revolutionary nationalist with whom he had a tumultuous relation. Yeats proposed to her a couple of times in different moments of his life but Gonne turned down his proposals. In the last four verses of the last stanza of “To Ireland in the Coming Times” either Ireland or Maud Gonne could be the lover Yeats mentions: “I cast my heart into my rhymes, / That you, in the dim coming times, / May know how my heart went with them / After the red-rose-bordered hem” (45-48). The presence of Maud Gonne is perceived in many other poems written by Yeats. He used to write in a fashion that was hard to say if he was taking about Ireland or Maud Gonne, for this reason some critics assume that one is often used as a metaphor for the other. Justin Quinn, comments that “Yeats’s passion for her would prove crucial to his poetry over the next thirty years. Through Gonne, Yeats came to write love poetry that had national resonance” (63). Although there is dubiety in relation to whom Yeats is making reference to in his poems, Ireland or Gonne, in fact, both can share the realm of idealization interchangeably. Gonne seemed to represent the embodiment of much of what Yeats had interest in. Her activism as a nationalist and interest for mysticism are examples of elements that united them. The Gonne Yeats constructed in his imagination, full of qualities and impossible to reach in the way he wanted, as his wife, can be put in parallel with the Ireland he admired, which could not be rescued from the past.

The second poem that composes the corpus of this research is “September 1913”. It is part of *Responsibilities* (1914), a book of poems

that is considered to be a turning point in Yeats's literary career. In *The Later Yeats* written by Mary M. Colum, there is an accurate description of the changes that took place in Yeats's work. Colum points out that *Responsibilities* differs from Yeats's early works in "vocabulary, and in any impassioned directness of expression acquired through years of working for the theater. It is an attempt to get nearer to ordinary things of life, an attempt to grapple with common and topical interest city councils, political intrigues, music hall dancers, etc" (258). Yeats's approach on the subjects that are present in *Responsibilities*, on the one hand, were able to engage him in the present, but on the other hand, the detachment from mythical Ireland also provoked dissatisfaction on him. Colum adds that: "the nearer he gets to these things the more tragic and personal does he become, so that the joyousness, as of a man out on a great adventure, which characterized the work of his youth, is all gone, but in its stead there is the virility of one who has come onto his strength" (258). The strength that Colum mentions is filled with criticism towards the middle class society of his time. That can be perceived in the long question in the opening lines of "September 1913". He writes:

What need you, being come to sense,
 But fumble in a greasy till
 And add the halfpence to the pence
 And prayer to shivering prayer, until
 You have dried the marrow from the bone?
 For men were born to pray and save:
 Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
 It's with O'Leary in the grave. (1-8)

He is addressing the changes that occurred in the Irish society, that is, the changes of behavior of the citizens before the slightly improvement in relation to the rights, gradually and painfully, granted to them. For Yeats, the middle class Irish people had become too attached to money acquisition. Yeats's disapproval in relation to this new reality can be perceived when he writes: "But fumble in a greasy till / And add the halfpence to the pence." The use of the word "greasy" to talk about the till is able to produce the sense of unpleasantness in relation to the Irish modern middle class society. Besides that, there is a strong sense of hopelessness when he mentions that "romantic Ireland is dead and gone / It's with O'Leary in the grave." These sad lines are used as the

refrain at end of the four stanzas of the poem, emphasizing the tone of lamentation and hopelessness.

In the second stanza of “September 1913”, Yeats alludes to the people that, in many ways, were responsible for keeping the dream of a free Ireland alive through their writing and also by means of their political positioning that, in many cases, led them to face severe punishment. Yeats suggests that these people no longer exist:

Yet they were of a different kind,
The names that stilled your childish play,
They have gone about the world like wind,
But little time had they to pray
For whom the hangman’s rope was spun,
And what, God help us, could they save?
Romantic Ireland’s dead and gone
It’s with O’Leary in the grave. (9-16)

Yeats expresses his lament towards the fact that romantic Ireland, at least his version of it, no longer exists; his contemporaries were too worried adding “the halfpence to the pence”, yet, most of those who had fought for Ireland had died. In the third stanza, Yeats keeps questioning and lamenting for the deaths that, put in retrospective, seemed to be useless before the reality he was witnessing: “Was it for this the wild geese spread / The grey wing upon every tide; For this that all that blood was shed, For this Edward Fitzgerald died, And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone, All that delirium of the brave?”(17-24). Yeats mentions the names of important politicians who fought for Ireland. The first he cites is Edward Fitzgerald, an important figure in the Irish Rebellion of 1798. According to Thomas Moore: “When Ireland, after a long sleep of exhaustion and degradation to which a code of tyranny unexampled in history had doomed her, was again beginning to exhibit some stirrings of national spirit, again was the noble name of Fitzgerald found foremost among her defenders” (8). At the age of thirty-four Fitzgerald, who was taking part in the Rebellion of 1798, was found in his hiding place. He was wounded and taken to prison and, as no treatment was granted to him, he passed away.

The second man cited by Yeats in the poem is Robert Emmet, an Irish nationalist who also fought in the Irish Rebellion of 1798 and who was the leader of the rebellion against British rule in 1803. The rebellion failed and Emmet was captured and condemned for high treason. He died even younger than Fitzgerald, being executed at the age of twenty-

five. Before his execution he gave a speech, which is in full in O'Donnell's book, *Emmet and the Rising of 1803*. In his speech he announces: "I have but one request to ask at my departure from this world: it is the charity of its silence. Let no man write my epitaph. . . . When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then, let my epitaph be written" (159). This passage exemplifies the strength of Emmet's nationalism, which in some degree is similar to the thought of many other nationalists including Yeats.

The last nationalist who Yeats pays homage to is Wolfe Tone. He is considered to be the founder of the Irish Republicanism. Tone also took part in the revolution of 1798 and was captured and executed by the British. Yeats evokes Tone and Fitzgerald again in "Sixteen Dead Men", from *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), also published as a volume in *The Collected Poems* in 1933. It is a poem about the Easter Rising which also makes reference to Fitzgerald and Tone. In the last stanza of "Sixteen Dead Men", Yeats writes: "How could you dream they'd listen / That have an ear alone / For those new comrades they have found, / Lord Edward and Wolfe Tone, / Or meddle with our give and take / That converse bone to bone?" (13-18). Once more he reminds the reader about the deaths of those men in the past and those other sixteen in connection with the Easter Rising. The tone of the stanza is skeptical in relation to the effectiveness of a dialogue with the British. As it is implied, they would not listen to the Irish people demands. Maybe it is the skepticism in the method used by those men Yeats mentions in poem that motivated him and some other writers to "fight for Ireland" using a different approach.

One of the efforts to change the course of things could be perceived in the endeavor to open a theater in which Irish plays would be staged. Roy Foster remarks that "the ambition of the Yeats circle to found an Irish National Theatre was vitiated to their particular commitment to realism and modernism (which imposed its own distortions), in the process they discovered a new 'language' in the cadences, rhythms and speech patterns of the inexhaustible west: a language made for drama and poetry" (452). The manifesto of the Irish National Theatre was signed by Yeats and brings the specific goals of such endeavor; the document is explicit regarding its nationalist agenda. Roy Foster quotes the document from *Our Irish Theater* written by Lady Augusta Gregory which is worth quoting here because it brings the specific objectives and expectations that were directed towards it:

We propose to have performed in Dublin in the spring of every year certain Celtic and Irish plays, which whatever be their degree of excellence will be written with a high ambition, and so build up a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature. We hope to find in Ireland an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by its passion for oratory, and believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome, and that freedom to experiment which is not found in theatres of England, and without which no new movement in art or literature can succeed. We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism. We are confident of the support of the Irish people, who are weary of misrepresentation, in carrying out a work that is outside all the political questions that divide us. (452)

Yeats's expectations in finding an "uncorrupted and imaginative" audience to the plays staged in that theater were frustrated in 1907 when Synge's play, "The Playboy of the Western World," was staged. The bad reaction of the public to the play and Yeats's disapproval to that reaction gave birth to the next poem to be analyzed in this study: "The Fisherman."

"The Fisherman" is part of the collection of poems for *The Wild Swans at Coole*, published in 1919. James O' Brien in the article entitled: "Yeats's Discoveries of Self in The Wild Swans at Coole", writes that: "In 'The Wild Swans at Coole', Yeats emerges as a map-maker of the self; he restores to modern man a discipline for reviving the powers of the self" (13). O'Brien also adds that Yeats "has penetrated the mystery of the opposing forces of consciousness and can capitalize on his understanding of the warfare of subjective and objective forces" (13). It is indeed a book that brings many intricate questions regarding the self. In the last four lines of "An Irish Airman Foresees his Death", Yeats writes: "I balanced all, brought all to mind, / The years to come seemed waste of breath, / A waste of breath the years behind / In balance with this life, this death" (13-16). Both the perspective of awareness of the projected self and the nationalist agenda are present in this book.

“The Fisherman” was selected from *The Wild Swans at Coole* for its close relation to Yeats’s idea of what would be an ideal audience. Such idealization has its root, among other things, in the bad reaction of the public in relation to a play staged at the Abbey Theatre. The audience that attended the play was not the one idealized by Yeats. Thus, in “The Fisherman”, Yeats manages to describe it. Yeats writes: “Although I can see him still / The freckled man who goes / To a grey place on a hill / In grey Connemara clothes / At dawn to cast his flies, / It’s long since I began / To call up to the eyes / This wise and simple man” (1-8). The way Yeats starts the poem, with a subordinating conjunction, is able to demonstrate that the man he is about to describe, no longer exists or never existed. His description is possibly an attempt to contrast the Irishman he describes with those who attended Synge’s play and rioted against it. “All day I’d looked in the face / What I had hoped ’twould be / To write for my own race / And the reality; The living men that I hate, / The dead man that I loved, / The craven man in his seat, / The insolent unreprieved” (9-16). His anger and criticism to the reception, not only Synge’s play, but also of his work is striking in this passage. The men for whom he would live to write to, is probably long gone in a fantasized past. “The Fisherman” is, in some ways, in consonance with some ideas brought in “September 1913”. The most remarkable one seems to be the criticism towards the society of his time. Edward Said argues that it is precisely this figure evoked by The Fisherman, “who in his strength and loneliness is also a mute expression of the people; . . . that inspires the poet in his work” (88). As much as Yeats had an inclination to rely on the past as source of inspiration and relief from the problems present in his time, he also seems to indicate an ideal audience for his work, and this ideal reader is represented by the fisherman.

In the following lines of the same stanza, Yeats, probably still addressing the audience of the play in the Abbey Theatre, is even more severe in his criticism: “And no knave brought to book / Who has won a drunken cheer, / The witty man and his joke / Aimed at the commonest ear, The clever man who cries / The catch-cries of the clown, / The beating down of the wise And great Art beaten down” (17-24). Yeats’s anger is perceived in his juxtaposition of adjectives. Synge, the witty and clever man, could not be understood by that “shallow” audience. In “The Fisherman”, Yeats acknowledges his dislike for a section of contemporary Ireland. In the second stanza Yeats recognizes that the fisherman was imagined as a response for the riot episode regarding Synge’s play. He writes:

Maybe a twelvemonth since
 Suddenly I began,
 In scorn of this audience,
 Imagining a man,
 And his sun-freckled face,
 And grey Connemara cloth,
 Climbing up to a place
 Where stone is dark under froth,
 And the down-turn of his wrist
 When the flies drop in the stream;
 A man who does not exist,
 A man who is but a dream;
 And cried, 'Before I am old
 I shall have written him one
 Poem maybe as cold
 And passionate as the dawn.' (25-40)

Yeats reiterates that the idealization of such a man was necessary: "In scorn of this audience." So, he returns to a similar diction to the one present in the beginning of the poem. He seems to restore a feeling of peace towards the end of the last stanza. He continues to describe such figure and suddenly he utters that such man does not exist, it was only a projection of his aspiration.

After the publication of *The Wild Swans at Coole* in 1919, the next book of poetry of Yeats was *Michael Robarts and the Dancer*, published in 1921. There are important political poems in this collection such as: "The Rose Tree", "Sixteen Dead Men", "The Second Coming", "A Meditation in Time of War" and also the next poem that was selected to be part of the corpus of this research: "Easter 1916." In this collection he did not follow a strict pattern of keeping the same theme for the whole book, such as the case of *The Rose* or *The Wind Among the Reeds*. Besides containing the political poems covering the happenings of 1916, it also covers some unrelated topics. According to Edna Longley in the article entitled "Michael Robartes and the Dancer: Helicon and ni Houlihan": "*Michael Robartes and the Dancer* is an odd combination of ballad-history and epithalamion" (119). She manages to bring other critics opinion about the book: "Harold Bloom finds a single unifying theme in the collection: "hatred, sexual and political". Elizabeth Butler-Cullingford divides this into "two central preoccupations: sexuality and politics". She also suggests another one: "I would like to add a third tier: aesthetics: or the tension between

aesthetics and politics” (120). Although the choices in the composition of the book might be controversial, to some extent, the political poems, more specifically, “Easter 1916” is the one to be examined.

“Easter 1916” is about the Easter Rising that took place in the Easter week of 1916. Among the myriad of details regarding its organization and implications, Roy Foster states that: “Any theoretical contradictions present in the 1916 rising, however, were obscured by the fact that its rhetoric was poetic. Several poets took part, and the most famous reaction to it was a poem: Yeats’s ‘Easter 1916’, written between May and September and strategically published during the Anglo-Irish war four years later.” (479) The Rising, as discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, had as one of its goals to proclaim the independence of Ireland. After other failed attempts to fight against the British domination, most of them performed by means of negotiation, some revolutionary figures decided to grab guns and fight for freedom from the British Empire. Yeats’s poem about it starts with a description of his relation with such revolutionaries. The first stanza, which maybe not by chance contains sixteen lines, brings the following:

I have met them at close of day
 Coming with vivid faces
 From counter or desk among grey
 Eighteenth-century houses.
 I have passed with a nod of the head
 Or polite meaningless words,
 Or have lingered awhile and said
 Polite meaningless words,
 And thought before I had done
 Of a mocking tale or a gibe
 To please a companion
 Around the fire at the club,
 Being certain that they and I
 But lived where motley is worn:
 All changed, changed utterly:
 A terrible beauty is born. (1-16)

In the first lines of the poem, Yeats constructs a sort of detachment between him and the participants of the Easter Rising. They do not seem to maintain a warm relation, or maybe even what he says or writes may seem “meaningless” to them. Nevertheless, towards the end of the stanza, Yeats recognizes that at least for one reason they are united, they share the same country: “Being certain that they and I / But

lived where motley is worn". Besides that, both he and they were supposed to face the changes operated by the Easter Rising. The change was beautiful because it was a move towards freedom; terrible because the change shed blood. According to Edna Longley:

Primarily, the poem sets forth Yeats's intuition that a world has been swept away: "All changed, changed utterly". But it inhabits that moment of change without leaving the present tense. And "A terrible beauty is born" hardly provides the hoped-for closure of Young Ireland balladry. In 'Easter, 1916' Yeats offers his verse (not art) as a medium for unfolding history. At the same time, he distinguishes his singular voice, his "personal style" from the Young Ireland solidarity of first-person plurals. The first stanza features I and them, they and I. (131)

In "Easter 1916" Yeats writes, in a broad fashion, about the subject related to the Rising. He tries to encompass all that is part of or affected by that happening. If in the first stanza the revolutionaries are presented in general terms, in the second stanza he gives indications of who he is talking about. Yeats starts the second stanza referring to one of the people that took part in the Rising. "That woman" who Yeats refers to was Constance Markievicz, one of the leaders of the Easter Rebellion. She was born in a wealthy family in Lissadell in county Sligo, Ireland. Her engagement in Irish nationalism arose in a curious way. Tomás O'Riordan writes about it in the multitext project in Irish history available online: "In 1906 she rented a cottage at Ballally, Co. Dublin, and came across a number of old copies of the revolutionary publications the Peasant and Sinn Féin left by a previous tenant, the poet Pádraig Colum. After reading these, Markievicz knew she had found a cause to inspire her life. Her interest in the struggle for freedom was aroused". O'Riordan also brings some information about Markievicz trajectory after her engagement in the Irish struggle for independence. "In 1908 she joined Sinn Féin and Maud Gonne's women group, *Inghinidhe na hÉireann* (Daughters of Ireland). She also became a regular contributor to *Bean na hÉireann* (Women of Ireland), Ireland's first women's nationalist journal and the United Irishman". In John Boyle's *The Irish Rebellion of 1916: A Brief History of the Revolt & its Suppression*, he talks about her participation in the Easter Rising week: "her headquarters were at the Royal College of Surgeons of Stephen's

Green, where she was in command of 120 insurgents, who remained in possession of the building from the start of the revolt right to the very finish” (106).

Yeats’s lines about Constance Markievicz contain more criticism than praise, he writes: “That woman’s days were spent / In ignorant good-will, / Her nights in argument / Until her voice grew shrill. / What voice more sweet than hers / When, young and beautiful, / She rode to harriers?” (17-23). Yeats recognizes Markievicz’s good will to engage in some of the nationalist actions, but he suggests that she is not aware of what she is taking part in. Yeats’s criticism towards her seems to have its root in their political disagreement. Yeats was a kind of nationalist that relied on pacific manners to make the changes come true in Ireland. The members of the Rising had a different outlook. Edna Longley discusses about Markievicz’s presence in Yeats’s verses, and writes that: “Perhaps Markievicz, whose actions were more extreme than Donne’s, might less disturbingly represent much that Yeats has come to deplore” (127). Markievicz, was arrested as most of the other leaders at the end of the Rising but differently from the others she was not sentenced to death. The reason was simply because she was a woman. Roy Foster in *Vivid Faces* comments that Markievicz “eccentricity and stridency were mocked by others besides Yeats” (20). But he calls attention to the fact that she “was a more serious person (and politician) than is often remembered” (20). Then he mentions many of the movements she engaged in or help to build.

In the sequence of the same stanza Yeats talks about a man, “this man” whom he refers to was Patrick Pearse, one of the leaders of Easter Rising and also the one in charge to read the Proclamation of the Irish Republic in front of the General Post Office at the start of the Easter Rising. Pearse played a remarkable role in the nationalist struggle. Besides engaging in the army revolution, he was concerned with the damages caused by the process of colonization in the educational system in Ireland. Among his writings on the subject, “The Murder Machine” stands out. He demonstrates his rage towards the substitution of the Irish Language and cultural features. In one of the passages of his text he writes: “A new education system in Ireland has to do more than restore a national culture. It has to restore manhood to a race that has been deprived of it. Along with its inspiration it must, therefore, bring a certain hardening. It must lead Ireland back to her sagas” (12). Pearse claimed for radical changes that would be operated by means of education. That, however, seemed a vague dream once Ireland still

remained under British rule. Maybe that was the greatest motivation to make the Irish teacher, poet and writer change his pen for a gun.

Yeats remembers Pearse's wish for change by means of education: "This man had kept a school / And rode our winged horse" (24-25). The reference to Pegasus, which is the symbol of wisdom and poetry, alludes to Yeats's acknowledgement of Pearse's competence as a writer. In the sequence, Yeats brings another participant of the Rising to his poem, "This other his helper and friend / Was coming into his force; He might have won fame in the end, / So sensitive his nature seemed / So daring and sweet his thought" (26-30). "This other" was Thomas MacDonagh, as Pearse, he was also a teacher, poet and writer. Yeats mentions he was a helper because he joined the staff of teachers at St. Enda's bilingual school found by Pearse in 1908. The observation in relation to MacDonagh's sensitiveness is also remarked by Roy Foster in *Vivid Faces*: "His own insecure, febrile and intermittently gloomy temperament had propelled him into an emotional state even before the upheavals of the Easter weekend" (233). Foster also adds that: "Sleep deprivation, isolation from other spheres of insurrectionary activities, as possibly the unrelieved diet of cake and biscuits made MacDonagh an erratic leader"; (234). The "daring and sweet thought", traits of MacDonagh personality which are highlighted by Yeats's verse are perceived in MacDonagh's own words quoted by Foster: "A man who is a mere author is nothing. I am going to live things that I have before imagined" (233). All this determination has taken the form of struggle to liberate Ireland.

Yeats continues the stanza talking about the participants of the Rising but he changes from a praising allusion to MacDonagh to a peculiar reference to John MacBride. "This other man I had dreamed / A drunken, vainglorious lout" (31-32). The hostile description performed by Yeats has its roots mainly based on his previous relation with John MacBride. Besides any other possible political disagreement between them, there was the fact that MacBride had married Maud Gonne, Yeats's muse and woman for whom he has nourished an almost lifelong love. Yeats also referred to the way MacBride treated Gonne and possibly Gonne's children: "He had done most bitter wrong / To some who are near my heart," (33-34). Roy Foster also comments on that matter. He says that the "advanced nationalists" refused to listen to Gonne's complaint about the drinking habits of her husband. Foster brings Gonne's own words in a letter to John O'Leary in which she says: "I was blameless as regards my married life. My husband has wronged me deeply. . . . I had hidden from everyone what I have

suffered from John MacBride's drunkenness during our married life" (126). Gonne goes on with her criticism towards MacBride and the male nationalist that thought she should put up with it. Then in the same letter she quotes something Yeats has told her: "The trouble with these men is that in their eyes a woman has no rights" (127). Gonne's quotation of Yeats's words in relation to such subject shows that he was aware of what was going on in their relationship. That justifies Yeats's use of the word *drunken* to describe MacBride and his reluctance to include him in "Easter 1916". But then Yeats explains the inclusion of such a man in the poem: "Yet I number him in the song; / He, too, has resigned his part / In the casual comedy; / He, too, has been changed in his turn, / Transformed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born" (35-40). Despite Yeats's disapproval of MacBride's conduct in his private life, he could not ignore his status of public figure in the Rising.

Yeats starts the third stanza referring to the members of the rising as a unit in relation to the determination to achieve the objective behind the rising. He dedicates the stanza to evoke the idea of change brought by the upheaval.

Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream.
The horse that comes from the road.
The rider, the birds that range
From cloud to tumbling cloud,
Minute by minute they change;
A shadow of cloud on the stream
Changes minute by minute;
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
And a horse splashes within it;
The long-legged moor-hens dive,
And hens to moor-cocks call;
Minute by minute they live:
The stone's in the midst of all. (41-56)

The indications of such changes are made by means of a sequence of metaphors. History pervades the poem but as argued by Terry Eagleton in his analyses of "Easter 1916", it does not seem to be, in this specific case, the ultimate goal of his writing. According to Eagleton, Yeats also has the objective of mythologizing both the event and the participants. In Eagleton's view:

The point of the overall metaphor of the stanza is to sustain this duality of vision: to urge at once the living process of the event ('history') and its strange, stone-like inscrutability ('myth'). Thus, the imagery of stone and stream 'naturalises' the disruptive rebellion, transmuting it effortlessly to an organic disturbance within the texture of a known landscape; but by the same token it distances and depersonalises what has occurred to an elusively obscure process which can be registered rather than understood. The metaphor, that is, dignifies but also withdraws the historical experience, gracing and stylising the bloody events while holding them simultaneously at arm's length. (256)

There is a pursuit to conform history to myth, and vice versa in a sort of dialogue between them. Another aspect worth mentioning is the emphasis on time, little fraction of time. In the third stanza Yeats repeats "minute by minute" in three different lines. The repetition brings the sensation of the change but emphasizing the slow development of it.

In the last Stanza of "Easter 1916", Yeats talks about the sacrifice and the implications of it. He writes: "Too long a sacrifice / Can make a stone of the heart. / O when may it suffice? That is Heaven's part, our part / To murmur name upon name, / As a mother names her child / When sleep at last has come / On limbs that had run wild" (57-64). In these lines, Yeats shows the strong feeling of helplessness face to the sacrifice. To mourn the deaths is what is left for those that have not seen any effective sign of independence. From helplessness Yeats gets to anger when he writes: "What is it but nightfall? / No, no, not night but death; / Was it needless death after all? / For England may keep faith / For all that is done and said. / We know their dream; enough / To know they dreamed and are dead; (65-71). His anger is present but maybe also a little of his disagreement in relation to the foundation of the Rising, that is, the use of violence and sacrifice. That can be perceived in his question about the necessity of those deaths. Yeats seems to be trying to understand the happening, the implications of it and what kind of change it would bring. Besides questioning about the validity of the sacrifice, Yeats adds another question: "And what if excess of love / Bewildered them till they died?"(71-73) Again this question could be assumed as rhetorical, as another disapproval of the Easter Rising. Be

that as it may, Yeats immortalizes some of its participants: “I write it out in a verse — MacDonagh and MacBride And Connolly and Pearse Now and in time to be, Wherever green is worn, / Are changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born”(74-80). All the names presented in these last lines were present in an indirect way in the second stanza of this poem, except James Connolly. As remarked by Foster, “Yeats’s poem profiled the renegade aristocrat, the charismatic mentor of the young, the literary intellectual and the violent man of action: symbolic figures in every classic revolution” (22). But, as Foster says, it also owed to James Connolly, described by Foster as a “brilliant socialist ideologue” (22). Not all the participants are named in the poem but they are all present and represented in a general way.

In Declan Kiberd’s article, “Irish Literature and Irish History”, he, probably bearing in mind the aftermath of the Easter Rising, says that “the points in history at which literature and politics meet have been described as a ‘bloody crossroad’. Romantic impulses, derived from literature, allegedly lead to carnage and terror in city streets” (230). Kiberd also talks about the Conor Cruise O’Brien observations about the Irish collaboration between nationalism and art which he considered as ‘an unhealthy intersection’. Nevertheless, Kiberd presents an existing counter-argument that says that “art is too potent a force to be left entirely in the hands of its creators, and politics too pervasive in its effects to be left in the sole control of politicians” (230). What is seen in Yeats’s “Easter 1916” is precisely the interrelation of art, history and politics, which is mentioned here by Kiberd and also theorized by Octavio Paz.

The next poem to be analyzed in this research is from *The Tower*. It was published in 1928 but most of the poems had already been published in other editions. M.L. Rosenthal comments in *Running to Paradise*, that “Yeats overlap in the sense that they contain work begun and even completed before previous volumes had been printed. *The Tower* (1928) is the prize example. Some of its poems were in the making a decade or more before it appeared” (217). Two main themes are perceived in the poems of this collection. The ones that deal with old age and its implications, as the case of “Sailing to Byzantium” and “The Tower”, and the ones about the Irish Wars. About the war, the collection contains two striking poems, “Meditations in Time of Civil War” (1923) and “Nineteen Hundred Nineteen” (1921). The latter was selected to be analyzed in this thesis for at least two reasons: its political and historical nature and the direct reference to the beginning of the Anglo-Irish war (1919-1921) that is brought in its title.

“Nineteen Hundred Nineteen” is a long poem, organized in a peculiar fashion. Regarding its structure, Toby Foshay in the article “Yeats’s ‘Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen’: Chronology, Chronography and Chronic Misreadings” remarks that “Nineteen Hundred Nineteen is divided in six sections, unequal in length, and shapely divergent in apparently content” (102). He comments that Yeats himself referred to the sections as separated poems. Based on that fact, Foshay argues that “this naming of the sections “poems” implies that their relation to one another is not simply consecutive, that they are not merely a progressive reflection on and of a single state of mind, but rather independent, discrete, and self-contained” (102). Due to the scope of the poem which is enough material for a whole thesis, and its supposedly independent section, only the first section of the poem is analyzed here. Nevertheless, some accounts on the poem as a whole are also brought. “Nineteen Hundred Nineteen” depicts the violence and the feeling of frustration that was operated during the years of the war. Hazard Adams says that “The poem is a lamentation culminating in a vision of mindless horror not balanced by the opposite. Addressing at first the fact of endless destruction in history, it speaks bitterly of the collapse of the illusion of his own generation” (164). The first part contains six stanzas; the first one makes reference to the fallen Acropolis in Athens as a way to make an analogy to the destruction that was caused by the war in Ireland. The idea of loss is already present in the first lines: “Many ingenious lovely things are gone / That seemed sheer miracle to the multitude” (1-2), and retaken in the last two lines of the same stanza: “And gone are Phidias’ famous ivories / And all the golden grasshoppers and bees” (7-8). From this allusion to the loss in Athens, Yeats makes use of the second stanza to mention the loss in Ireland. He gives voice to the Irish people using “we” instead of “I”, and he also affirms his presence as belonging to the nation when he uses “we” instead of “they”:

We too had many pretty toys when young:
 A law indifferent to blame or praise,
 To bribe or threat; habits that made old wrong
 Melt down, as it were wax in the sun’s rays;
 Public opinion ripening for so long
 We thought it would outlive all future days.
 O what fine thought we had because we thought
 That the worst rogues and rascals had died out. (9-16)

Yeats seems to be making reference both to the innocence and the faith of the Irish that “melt down” before the horrors of war. The faith ended up being naïve because of the “rogues and rascals”, probably a reference to the presence of the Black and Tans, a force that joined the Royal Irish Constabulary to fight against the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The Black and Tans became bad in reputation due to the attacks directed to civilians. The stanza brings a nostalgic memory of the past together with the feeling of anger. In the next stanza, Yeats seems to make a comparison between the *modus operandi* of ancient Irish revolutionaries, such as those who fought the Irish Rebellion of 1798, in contrast with his contemporaries when he writes that “All teeth were drawn, all ancient tricks unlearned,”(17-18). Towards the end of the same stanza he says that: “The trumpeters might burst with trumpeting / And yet it lack all glory; and perchance / The guardsmen’s drowsy chargers would not prance” (22-24). The romantic view of the past and even the evocation of the braveness of ancient characters, that could also include the mythological ones, are slightly perceived in the third stanza. As Seamus Deane remarks in “Yeats, Ireland and Revolution,” Yeats began his career by inventing an Ireland amenable to his imagination. He ended up by finding an Ireland recalcitrant to it” (53). The Ireland so discrepant to his imagination and dream helped to change much of his approach on his writing about Ireland. His early career is marked by the freedom of his imagination because one of the main topics of his poetry was linked to the mythical past of Ireland, then he draws attention to some other questions attached to the historical moment he witnessed.

The fourth stanza of “Nineteen Hundred Nineteen” is marked by pessimism and strong depiction of violence.

Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare
 Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery
 Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,
 To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free;
 The night can sweat with terror as before
 We pieced our thoughts into philosophy,
 And planned to bring the world under a rule,
 Who are but weasels fighting in a hole. (25-32)

Each line produces a dreadful image. Violence is represented in a series of examples. One line after another the construction of the images

seems to become more and more violent. Sarah Cole, in her book entitled *The Violet hour: Modernism and Violence in England and Ireland*, puts this poem along with other works of art that has a similar power to depict violence. “‘Nineteen Hundred Nineteen’, especially, stands alongside such landmarks as *The Waste Land* and *Guernica* as among the richest accounts of disenchanting violence in the modernist era” (171). The image of the dead mother brought in the third and fourth lines was based on a real event. Cole brings some details:

Ellen Quinn, the woman whose murder by Black and Tans is dramatized in the poem—pregnant, she was also holding a child in her arms at the moment when she was hit—lived several hours after being shot by the passing Tans, who were drunk in their truck and presumably shot her by mistake: “she was out at the gate watching for [her husband] to come back, an eyewitness wrote, “The lorries passed and shots were fired; the maid ran out and found her lying there”. ‘Oh, I’m shot’ she said. The whole place was splashed with blood like a butcher’s shop.... She lived a few hours in terrible pain. (172)

Cole comments that Yeats probably read those lines at the time, once Lady Gregory wrote about it in a column in a nationalist newspaper called *The Nation*. The selection of this specific event to be portrayed in the poem, in this case the shot woman with a baby in her arms, is able to elevate the sense of violence to its maximum. Yeats continues the stanza in a bitter recognition of hopelessness for Ireland through the image of “weasels fighting in a hole.” All the discussion and philosophical ideas about freedom had culminated into unreasonable violence.

The last stanza of the first part of “Nineteen Hundred Nineteen” goes even deeper in the sense of lost hope.

But is there any comfort to be found?
 Man is in love and loves what vanishes,
 What more is there to say? That country round
 None dared admit, if such a thought were his,
 Incendiary or bigot could be found
 To burn that stump on the Acropolis,
 Or break in bits the famous ivories
 Or traffic in the grasshoppers or bees. (41-48)

As in “Easter 1916”, questions are asked again, maybe in an attempt to find some way out of the horrors brought by the war. The pessimism is evident in the second question: “What more is there to say”? It seems that even art, a means by which human beings can find some solace is put in check before the absurdity of war. Notwithstanding, it is through art, poetry to be specific, that Yeats is able to tell part of the history of Ireland and to position himself politically making use of his voice as a poet as well as the voice of other Irish people. Edward Said summarizes well what Yeats was able to make the reader feel by reading his political poems: “One feels in reading poems like ‘Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen’ or ‘Easter 1916,’ and ‘September 1913,’ not just the disappointments of life commanded by ‘the greasy till’ or the violence of roads and horses, of ‘weasels fighting in a hole,’ but also of a terrible new beauty that changes utterly the old political and moral landscape” (86).

The next poem to be analyzed here is “Come Gather Round me, Parnellites” which is part of the Cuala Press, *New Poems* published in 1938. The choice of this poem is principally due to the importance of the political figure that is the main character of the poem: Charles Stewart Parnell. Parnell was a nationalist politician who fought energetically in favor of Home Rule. In fact, it was under Parnell’s influence that Ireland got nearest to get its independence during the decade of 1880s. Besides “Come Gather Round me, Parnellites”, Yeats wrote some other four poems in memory of Parnell. By the date of Parnell’s death, Yeats was twenty three years old and apparently had never written anything about him until the day of his death. According to Nicholas Grene in the article entitled “Yeats and the Mythopoeia of Parnell”:

Yeats had not been an early supporter of Parnell, influenced against him both by his father John B. Yeats and by his nationalist mentor John O’Leary. But from the moment of the split brought about by the O’Shea divorce case where some of Parnell’s followers wanted him to resign and some stayed loyal, Yeats became a Parnellite, exulting in the fact that Parnell had ‘driven up into dust & vacuum no end of insincerities’. (24)

Four other poems were written by Yeats in memory of Parnell. His life, political and private, is depicted in Yeats's lines. In the first lines of the first stanza Yeats convokes the Parnellites, term used to refer to the admirers of Parnell, to praise his deeds and honor his memory: "Come gather round me, Parnellites, / And praise our chosen man" (1-2). As the poem was written forty-five years after Parnell's death, he was directing the call to the people that supported Parnell by the time his was a much-admired politician. Some strength was required from them: "Stand upright on your legs awhile, / Stand upright while you can," (3-4). As the poem was written forty-five years after Parnell's death, Yeats also included himself in the group of old people that soon would probably be dead as Parnell was: "For soon we lie where he is laid / And he is underground;"(5-6). Three years after the composition of this poem Yeats was dead.

In the second stanza, Yeats lists the reasons why people should praise his memory: "And here's a cogent reason / And I have many more, / He fought the might of England and saved the Irish poor, / whatever good a farmer's got / He brought it all to pass;" (9-14). Yeats rescues the good memory of the dedication of Parnell to release Ireland from British rule and his important role regarding the matters of land, he was the president of the Irish Land League and much was done to repair part of the injustices brought by the Penal Laws. In the last two lines of the stanza, Yeats brings the love of Parnell for Catherine O'Shea as something to be admired as the other reasons cited before: "And here is another reason, / That Parnell loved a lass" (15-16). Nevertheless, it was precisely because of this affair with a married woman that the effort to achieve Home Rule failed. Many supporters of Parnell were scandalized by the rumors of his affair; among them was William Gladstone, the British politician that was supporting Parnell's movement for emancipation. After the scandal, Gladstone withdrew his support.

In the third stanza, Yeats adds a subjective reason to elevate Parnell's memory. He constructs the lines in a persuasive manner, adding justifications for the validity of the admiration that Parnell supposedly deserved:

And here's a final reason,
 He was of such a kind
 Every man that sings a song
 Keeps Parnell in his mind
 For Parnell was a proud man,
 No prouder trod the ground,

And a proud man in a lovely man
So pass the bottle round. (17-24)

Even the flaws of his character are praised in the poem. Roy Foster, commenting on *Politics of Parnellism*, a chapter of his book *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, also tackles on ‘literary Parnellism’ which, as he remarks, was adopted by Yeats and Joyce. He talks about the image of Parnell produced by those writers: “the powerful emotional image of Ireland’s ‘uncrowned king’ torn down by base followers; a prophet outcast with the Promised Land in sight” (428). Not only did writers help to create and sustain such image, but the popular nature of Parnell’s politics helped to create this kind of adoration that perpetuated after his death.

In the final stanza, Yeats tries to justify Parnell’s downfall: “The Bishop and the Party, / That tragic story made, / A husband that had sold his wife / And after that betrayed; But stories that live longest / Are sung above the glass, / And Parnell loved his country / And Parnell loved his lass” (25-32). James Pethica in *Yeats’s Poetry, Drama and Prose* comments on a footnote on the poem that “William O’Shea had known about Parnell’s affair with his wife for several years but kept silent until 1889, preferring to tolerate the situation with the aim of furthering his political career and later hoping that Parnell would pay him to allow his wife an uncontested divorce” (118). Yeats reminds that in the line: “A husband that sold his wife”. Despite everything, apparently Yeats’s intention was to highlight the accomplishments of Parnell as a politician and transform his love for Catharine O’Shea into a noble thing rather than blaming it for the failure of his political career.

The last poem that composes the corpus of this research is “Politics.” It is part of *Last Poems* published in 1939. It is important to keep the epigraph by Thomas Mann because Yeats wanted to go against the grain of Mann’s thought regarding the engagement in politics. The poem is just one stanza long and very straight to the point. After all his long and striking poems on political issues, he seems to be taken by a pessimistic view of all that labor.

‘In our time the destiny of man presents its meaning in political terms’ –Thomas Mann

How can I, that girl standing there,
My attention fix
On Roman or on Russian
Or on Spanish politics?

Yet here's a travelled man that knows
 What he talks about,
 And there's a politician
 That has read and thought,
 And maybe what they say is true
 Of war and war's alarms,
 But O that I were young again
 And held her in my arms! (1-12)

The poem suggests that Yeats pondered about his positioning on politics during his entire life and obtained a different view towards the end of his career. In the first three lines Yeats discusses the impossibility of paying attention to a serious subject such as politics when there is a girl to look at. He seems to be longing for his youth and maybe looking back on his life of political struggle and wondering if it was worth spending so much time on that complex subject. He seems to be highlighting the "history of unimportant events", using Charles Simic's words, in relation to monumental history. It was a late reflection since the poem was written in his last week alive. He sounds like he is looking back on his life and measuring what he could have done differently, probably due to his disappointment concerning the conflicts in Ireland which he witnessed through his life.

Although there are many other political poems written by Yeats, the ones selected to be the focus of this analytical chapter were able to demonstrate his political positioning in different moments of his career, from "To Ireland in the Coming Times", (1892) in which the mythical past is present and Yeats is able to make use of it as his imagination sees fit, to "Politics" (1939), which contains a discussion on the validity of dedicating time and effort to political matters. The selection and analysis of the poems following the chronological order of publication was relevant to identify the changes in relation to Yeats's political involvement. In the first poem analyzed in this thesis, the political positioning is associated to references to the past; the nationalism is mostly rooted in the idealization of Ireland. In the next poems, more engagement to the present was perceived. Yeats brings his considerations on the conflicts that took place in Ireland such as the Easter Rising and the Irish War of Independence as well as his opinion about politicians and their participation in Irish politics. Thus, by means of the poems selected to this analytical chapter, it was possible to discuss on some of Yeats's contribution to tell Irish history and discuss Irish politics from a poetic point of view.

5 CONCLUSION

The close relation between politics and history in Ireland could be perceived in a variety of critical and theoretical works presented along this research. Both the nationalist and the revisionist approaches were brought to the discussion in an attempt to get closer to historical and critical accounts from both perspectives. The analysis of Yeats's poems, which tackled both history and politics, was able to demonstrate the poet's commitment not only with the "injustices and evil of his time", bringing the voice of those that had their rights suppressed by the impositions of an intruding empire, but also a poet that helped to create and engaged in a Literary Revival that aimed to revitalize some traits of Irish literature which was seen by Edward Said as an efficient way towards the decolonization of Ireland.

Yeats's awareness of his role as a poet was able to produce a different approach on history and politics which goes beyond reporting historical and political events just to inform. The historical and political approach of Yeats's poetry was able to bring the voice of the Irish people that had suffered with conflicts in Ireland, besides helping to build a new consciousness in relation to the issue of identity. The political poems of Yeats are interpreted by Edward Said as a movement towards decolonization and resistance. Said argues that:

Yeats is very much the same as other poets resisting imperialism, in his insistence on a new narrative for his people, his anger at the schemes for partition . . . , the celebration of violence in bringing about a new order, and the sinuous interweaving of loyalty and betrayal in the nationalist setting. Yeats's direct association with Parnell and O'Leary, with the Abbey Theatre, with the Easter Uprising, brings to his poetry what R. P. Blackmur, borrowing from Jung, calls "the terrible ambiguity an immediate experience" (85).

Said acknowledges the importance of Yeats's poetry to the process of decolonization of Ireland and to all the political and social relevance of what was written by him and also points to Yeats's important role of "restoring a suppressed history, and rejoining the nation to it". The connection between poetry and history, which is discussed by Octavio Paz, gains great resonance in Yeats's poems. Not

only because “history is the place where the poetic word is incarnated” (549), as argued by Paz, but because there is in Yeats’s verses a movement towards a change in history which was tried by means of his political engagement.

The power of Yeats’s engagement in many of his poems and the positive result of it in relation to some social awakening is undeniable, nevertheless, as Said also mentions, there is ambiguity and contradictions in some moments of his literary and cultural project to Ireland, especially associated to the Irish Revival. Seamus Deane reminds us of that in his article “Yeats, Ireland and Revolution”: “His career is, especially in its close, marked by incoherence and by an almost willful mysticism. Yet Yeats’s demand was that Ireland should retain its culture by keeping awake its consciousness of metaphysical questions” (64). The metaphysical questions can be perceived throughout his literary production. The poet and the political man whose engagement in Irish politics was the aim of so many critical and theoretical works is also the one who was constantly confronting the validity of his own writing. The struggle with all the metaphysical questions that appear strongly in some moments of one’s life and the process of pondering about what was said and done, probably mainly in the field of politics, can be perceived in the first stanza of “Man and the Echo” published in 1939 which serves as a final reflection for this study:

The Man and the Echo

Man

In a cleft that’s christened Alt
 Under broken stone I halt
 At the bottom of a pit
 That broad noon has never lit,
 And shout a secret to the stone.
 All that I have said and done,
 Now that I am old and ill,
 Turns into a question till
 I lie awake night after night
 And never get the answers right.
 Did that play of mine send out
 Certain men the English shot?
 Did words of mine put too great strain
 On that woman’s reeling brain?
 Could my spoken words have checked
 That whereby a house lay wrecked?

And all seems evil until I
Sleepless would lie down and die.
 Echo
Lie down and die. (1-18)

REFERENCES

PRIMARY SOURCES

Yeats, William Butler. *Selected Poems and Three Plays*. 3rd ed. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Adams, Hazard. *The Book of Yeats's Poems*. Tallahassee: The Florida State University Press. 1989.

Albanese, Patrizia. *Mothers of the Nation. Women, families and Nationalism in twentieth-Century Europe*. Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2006.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

---. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

---. *The dialogic Imagination, Four essays*. University of Texas Press. Austin and London. 1982.

Bell, Matthew. "Yeats, Nationalism, and Myth". Phantasmagoria. Web. 24 Jan. 2016.
<<http://writing.colostate.edu/gallery/phantasmagoria/bell.htm>>

- Boyle, John. *The Irish Rebellion of 1916: A Brief History of the Revolt and its suppression*. London: Constable and Company limited. 1916.
- Brown, Christopher and Henderson, Greig E. Dialogism. Glossary of Literary Theory University of Toronto English Library.
<http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/glossary/Dialogism.html>
- Burton, Edwin, Edward D'Alton, and Jarvis Kelley. "Penal Laws." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 11. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. 24 Jun. 2014 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11611c.htm>>.
- Coakley, John. Gallagher, Michael. *Politics in the Republic of Ireland*. 5th Edition, Routledge, 2009.
- Colley, Linda. *Captives, British, Empire and the World, 1600-1830*. London: Pimlico, 2003.
- Colum, Mary. "The Later Yeats". *Poetry Foundation*. 5 February 1916.
- D'Alton, Edward Alfred. *History of Ireland: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. London: The Gresham publishing company.
- Donnell, Sean M. "Between the Upper and the Nether Millstone". *W.B. Yeats, Oppositional Gyres, and the Founding of the Irish Nation State*. Available in:
http://www.elcamino.edu/faculty/sdonnell/yeats_&_postcolonialism.htm.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Crazy John and the Bishop, and other Essays on Irish Culture (Critical Conditions: Field Day Essays and*

Monographs). Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1999.

Foshay, Toby A. Yeats's "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen": Chronology, Chronography and Chronic Misreading. *The Journal of Narrative Technique*. Vol. 13, No. 2 (Spring, 1983), pp. 100-108.

---. *History and Myth in Yeats's 'Easter 1916'*. Wadham College, Oxford. 1971. Downloaded from <http://eic.oxfordjournals.org/>.

Eagleton, Terry, Fredric Jameson, Edward W. Said, and Seamus Deane. *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

Ellis, Steven G. *Historiographical debate: Representations of the past in Ireland: whose past and whose present?* Irish Historical Studies, Vol. XXVII No. 108. 1991.

Ellmann, Richard. *Yeats, the Man and the Masks*. New York: W.W. Norton. 1999.

---. *The Identity of Yeats*. London: Macmillan, 1954.

Fogarty, Anne. "Yeats, Ireland and modernism". *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry*. Edited by Alex Davis, Lee M. Jenkins. Cambridge University Press.

Foster, Roy F. *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*. London: The Penguin Press. 1988.

---. *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1890-1923*.
England: Allen Lane, 2014.

---. *The Oxford History of Ireland*. Oxford University Press. 1989.

Greig, E. Henderson and Christopher Brown, *Dialogism*. Hypertext and HTML. University of Toronto. Last modified: March 31, 1997
<<http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/glossary/Dialogism.html>>

Grene, Nicholas. "Yeats and the Mythopoeia of Parnell". *The Yeats Journal of Korea*, 46, 2015.

Grennan, Eamon. *Facing the music: Irish Poetry in the Twentieth Century*. Omaha: Creighton University Press, 1999.

Heywood, Andrew. *Politics*. 4th edition, Palgrave Macmillan 2013.

Hobsbawm, Eric. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780 Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Hutchinson, John. *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1987.

Kiberd, Declan. *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Kinealy, Christine. *This Great Calamity: The Irish Famine 1845-52*. Virginia: Gill & Macmillan, 1994.

Krans, Horatio Sheafe. *William Butler Yeats and the Irish Literary Revival*. New York: Mclure press, 1904.

Longley, Edna. *The Living Stream: Literature & Revisionism in Ireland*. Glasgow: Bloodaxe Books, 1994.

---. *Michael Robartes and the Dancer: Helicon and ni Houlihan*. Queen's University Belfast: Presses universitaires de Caen, p. 119-143, 1990.

McCormack, W. J. "Eighteenth-Century Ascendancy: Yeats and the Historians". *Eighteenth-Century Ireland Society*. Vol. 4. p. 159-181. 1989. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30071477>>

Moore, Tomas. *The work of Tomas Moore*. Paris: A. and W. Galignani. 1832.

Neil, Hegarty. *The Story of Ireland. A history of the Irish people*. Thomas Dunne books, 2012.

O'Brien, Eugene. *Examining Irish Nationalism in the Context of Literature, Culture and Religion: a study of the epistemological structure of nationalism*, Ireland. The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002.

O'Brien, James H. *Yeats's Discoveries of Self in The Wild Swans at Coole*. Colby Library Quarterly. Volume 8, Issue 1 March, 1968.

O'Donnell, Ruán. *Emmet and the Rising of 1803*. Irish academic press. 2003.

- O’Riordan, Tomás A. *Multitext Project in Irish History*. University College Cork, Ireland. Available in:
<<http://multitext.ucc.ie/display.html?oid=1968>>.
- Pearse, Patrick. “The murder Machine”. St Enda’s College, Dublin. 1916. Available in:
<<http://www.cym.ie/documents/themurdermachine.pdf>>
- Paz, Octavio. *The Bow and the Lyre*. Trans. Ruth L.C. Simms. Austin. University of Texas press, 1956.
- Quinn, Justin. *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern Irish Poetry, 1800-2000 (Cambridge Introductions to Literature)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Rosenthal, M. L. *Running to Paradise*. New York: Oxford University press, 1997.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.
- Simic, Charles. “Notes On Poetry and History.” *The Uncertainty Certainty: Interviews, Essays and Notes on Poetry*. Ann Harbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995.
- Stafford, Fiona. *Starting Lines in Scottish, Irish, and English Poetry: From Burns to Heaney*. New York: Oxford, 2000.
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Nationalism: *First published Thu Nov 29, 2001; substantive revision Mon Dec 15, 2014.*

Steele, Karen. *Women, Press, and Politics During the Irish Revival*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007.

Stephens, James. *The Insurrection in Dublin*, Maunsel & Co. Dublin. 1916.

The Story of Ireland. Documentary series. Writ. Neil Hegarty and Fergal Keane. Prod. Mike Connolly. BBC Northern Ireland RTÉ. 2011.

Welch, Robert. *Irish Poetry from Moore to Yeats*. California: Colin Smythe Limited, 1980.

---. *Irish Writers and Religion (Irish Literary Studies 37)*. Ed. Savage: Barnes & Noble, 1992.

Weygandt, Cornelius. *The Irish Literary Revival*. The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1904.

Yeats, William Butler. *A General introduction for my work*. unpubl. 1937. Reprinted in *Essays and Introductions*, London; Macmillan 1961.