

Thesis Title: The Arnoldian Element in Yeats's *A Vision*

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ABSTRACT

In this study of the influence of Matthew Arnold on W.B. Yeats, I describe a tendency in the critical field to overlook the placement of Arnold at Phase 18, and the implications of his presence beside Yeats at Phase 17, in Yeats's key philosophical treatise *A Vision* (1926, 1937). The central contribution of my thesis is to address this crucial blind spot but also the concomitant failure by critics to consider Arnold's overall bearing on the 'System' itself. Chiefly through analysis of the gyres, two types of man, and lunar phases of the Great Wheel, I trace five main, interrelated aspects comprising 'the Arnoldian element' in *A Vision*: 1) Romanticism; 2) morbidity; 3) Celticism; 4) culture; and 5) the over-arching ideal of ancient Greek genius. My thesis that Arnold is paramount to Yeats's poetical and political concerns in the treatise demonstrates how the Arnoldian element – including a covert extension of Yeats's dialogue with Arnold in "The Celtic Element in Literature" (1897) – within its abstruse occult discourse partly but powerfully shapes: 1) the projection of Irish self-rule and unity, principally in the figure of the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 (Yeats) subversively juxtaposed with the fragmenting Emotional Man of Phase 18 (Arnold and Goethe), in a time of anarchy; and 2) the representation of a range of phasal examples (named and unnamed, encompassing both literature and sexual love). I argue that Yeats's considerable indebtedness to Arnold 1) both spurs and troubles readings of Yeats as a poet of decolonization; 2) merits attention in the long-running 'Orwellian' debate over Yeats's alleged fascism, coinciding with Yeats's eugenics; 3) illuminates *A Vision* as an 'anxiety of influence' text in which Yeats 'kills' his critical fathers Arnold and J.B. Yeats; and 4) warrants Arnold's routine inclusion among Yeats's foremost influences like Nietzsche, Blake, Dante, and Shelley whose portrayals in *A Vision* are partly bound up, as I show, with Yeats's engagement with Arnold.

The Arnoldian Element in Yeats's *A Vision*

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And when we consider Arnold as a critic, no matter how often we note his errors of opinion, we cannot avoid coming to the judgment that Arnold was one of the greatest critics in English literature, or, indeed, in the literature of the world. It is never really of consequence how wrong a critic is on one point or another, or even on many points. What is of consequence is that he should, by what he says about a work of literature, induce us to look at it with a renovated curiosity, and that he should lead us to judge it not merely by the highest literary standards but also by our own sense of life. To do this, a critic must take large chances. He must unsettle old established notions and propose new ones, and this is never without its risk. We can go so far as to say that a critic who is essentially right may be most interesting and most powerful and most useful when he is wrong, that his mistakes may sometimes be the most vital part of him, for they represent his passion and commitment.

– Lionel Trilling, *Matthew Arnold*

Why should you leave the lamp
 Burning alone beside an open book,
 And trace these characters upon the sands?
 A style is found by sedentary toil
 And by the imitation of great masters.

– W.B. Yeats, “Ego Dominus Tuus”

Introduction

i) A VISIBLE BLIND SPOT IN THE CRITICAL FIELD: YEATS, ARNOLD, AND A *VISION*

In “Yeats, Victorianism, and the 1890s” (2006), George Watson observes that although Yeats was born in 1865 “in... the high noon of the Victorian period” and “lived thirty-six of his seventy-four years” during the reign of Queen Victoria, critics tend not “to characterize Yeats as a Victorian” (2006:36). That Yeats “was irredeemably hostile to everything Victorian,” he adds, “has been an article of critical faith” (2006:36). He proceeds to demonstrate, however, that Yeats’s emphatic anti-Victorianism has obscured a number of “ways in which Yeats engaged more positively with the Victorian age into which he was born” (2006:40). He asserts: “In particular, the relation between Yeats and Matthew Arnold needs re-scrutiny” (2006:40). Convincingly, he argues that despite Yeats’s “constant attacks on Arnold’s notion of art as a criticism of life” Yeats was in fact “to conduct a covert dialogue with the most famous Victorian critic for a good part of his life” (2006:40) in more productive ways than the repeated rejection might appear to signal.

Watson presents a range of correspondences and references in Yeats’s writings that confirm an Arnoldian influence, stretching from the 1880s to the last years of Yeats’s life, but he does not explicitly link Arnold to Yeats’s key philosophical treatise *A Vision* (published in 1926, with the revised version appearing in 1937). This is a crucial oversight afflicting not only Watson’s essay but Yeats scholarship in general. It is puzzling that despite Goethe and

Arnold being named as the examples of Phase 18 in the Great Wheel of *A Vision* (both versions), generations of Yeats biographers and critics have scarcely ventured to interrogate the incorporation of Arnold, in particular, into the ‘System’.¹ In *The Wisdom of Two: The Spiritual and Literary Collaboration of George and W.B. Yeats* (2006), Margaret Mills Harper has offered a most considered reflection, as we will see, on Goethe in relation not to Arnold but to the medium Mrs Yeats: the original occupant of Phase 18 in the so-called Automatic Script from which Yeats compiled *A Vision*. Moreover, in her account of the Great Wheel (which has the virtue of encompassing, among the phasal examples, both great men and, expressly, great women), Harper overlooks Arnold at Phase 18 – which has historically been the case among the foremost biographers and critics, perhaps most notably Richard Ellmann and, more recently, R.F. Foster.

Harold Bloom, aware of the ‘private’ placement of Mrs Yeats and (according to Ellmann) Yeats’s father John Butler Yeats (JBY) at Phase 18, is the sole leading critic to have attempted to explain the formal pairing of Goethe and Arnold in the treatise. His conclusion in *Yeats* (1970) that their location at Phase 18 signifies Yeats’s rejection of “the flight from Romanticism of these poets” (1972:256) is illuminating. However, Bloom’s brief analysis of Phase 18 is severely limited by space and scope in the course of an accelerated expository progression through the Great Wheel, and in particular by the narrow but nevertheless important track which Bloom follows, of Yeats’s Romantic sensibility. Bloom fails to appreciate, as we will see, the extraordinary complexity of the critical treatment meted out to Arnold in particular at Phase 18, in both textual and symbolical terms, in relation to the placement of Yeats himself at Phase 17. Although by no means neglected by Bloom, Arnold

¹ As R.F. Foster reports, the “archetypes of the twenty-eight incarnations remain much the same” (2003:603) in the 1937 version.

remains little considered in relation to Yeats across Bloom's works. This appears to be partly the result of a critical distaste for Arnold. In *The Anatomy of Influence: Literature as a Way of Life* (2011), Bloom dismisses Arnold in passing as "the most overrated of all critics, ever" (2011:152).

Nor has scholarly attention been greatly exercised towards identifying, let alone exploring in depth, any Arnoldian influence on Yeats's 'System' itself. A notable exception is Ronald Schuchard who, as the title of his essay "Yeats, Arnold, and the Morbidity of Modernism" (1985) suggests, is especially attuned to Yeats's lifelong preoccupation with the 'morbidity' in modern poetry.

Schuchard links the appearance of the single term "Morbidity" (Yeats 2008:54) as a defining characteristic of Phase 13, that of Baudelaire, Dowson, and Beardsley, to Yeats's analysis of his ill-fated associates of the 1890s in "The Tragic Generation" (1922) partly by way of Arnold's notion of "morbidity effort" (Yeats 1991:313). Although this phrase arises in Arnold's letter to Mrs Forster dated 6 August 1858, Schuchard effectively relates both morbidity at Phase 13 in *A Vision* and morbidity effort in "The Tragic Generation" (among other correspondences across Yeats's oeuvre) in turn to Arnold's seminal "Preface to First Edition of *Poems*" (1853) in which Arnold insists on joy and censures morbidity in modern poetry, and on that basis famously excludes his own dramatic poem "Empedocles on Etna" from the collection. Schuchard argues, as Watson similarly maintains in his essay, that Yeats's "seemingly conflicting attitudes toward Arnold have obscured the fact that Arnold's [1853] Preface was to become Yeats's primary critical touchstone for evaluating modern poetry" (1985:89). He perceives – though perhaps in too reductive a way, ignoring the interrelation of the preface and Arnold's Celticism, for instance, as well as wider nineteenth-century discourses on morbidity – that "for the whole of Yeats's career Arnold was not only an abiding and informing sage but the

critical master of his fifty-year struggle with the morbid temperament of his age” (1985:89).

Puzzlingly, however, Schuchard does not carry his insights into the Arnoldian complexion of morbidity at Phase 13 any further in regard to the rest of the treatise. As we will see, his recognition of Yeats’s Arnoldian influence on Synge in viewing morbidity as an undesirable strain in modern literature could also be instructively related to *A Vision*. Crucially, Schuchard also ignores the presence of Arnold, with Goethe, at Phase 18. It is even more puzzling, then, and chiefly provides the impetus for my thesis on the Arnoldian element in *A Vision*, that linkage of Arnold to the treatise also falls by the wayside in the chapter “The Last Aisling – A Vision” in *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (1995) by Declan Kiberd, the other notable exception to the general critical neglect of Arnold’s bearing on *A Vision*. Kiberd’s account of *A Vision* – specifically, as the chapter title indicates – is predicated upon, and yet has the curious quality of treating rather obliquely and briefly, the notion of an Arnoldian Celticist input to the treatise.

According to Kiberd, *A Vision* “deliberately refers the Irish reader back to the *aisling* or vision-poem, practised by the fallen bards like Ó Rathaille to whom Yeats was increasingly attracted” (1996:318). It is from the *aisling* tradition, he argues, “that Yeats appears to have drawn his framework for *A Vision*. That the *spéirbhean* should in this particular instance have been his own English wife must have tickled his sceptical imagination: but Mrs. Yeats proved a wonderful medium” (1996:318). Kiberd’s speculative alignment of the primary and antithetical gyres with his own appellations of “Anglo” and “Celtic” respectively, and his argument that *A Vision* is “a Celtic constitution not solely for Ireland but for all the world, after the rough beast has come again” (1996:319), are also buttressed in part by the insight that Yeats had in his essay

“on Matthew Arnold and the Celtic element in literature... endorsed the basic outlines of the Celticist analysis, but for the word ‘Celtic’ had repeatedly substituted the word ‘ancient’” (1996:318). Therefore, Kiberd says, “[a]s early as 1897” Yeats had been “expanding the meanings of ‘Celtic’ to global dimensions, sensing that the ancient was due for a return” (1996:318).² “For that reason, as well as for its roots in *aisling* tradition,” he argues, “it makes sense to read *A Vision* as a kind of Celtic constitution, first published in 1925, at a juncture when the new Irish state, of which Yeats was by then a senator, was seeking to codify its own laws and customs” (1996:318).³

Oddly, however, this is the only explicit mention of Arnold throughout Kiberd’s chapter on *A Vision*. Kiberd proceeds to foreground the placement of Walt Whitman at Phase 6 in the Great Wheel – and overlooks entirely the placement of Arnold. This intriguing blind spot in regard to the significance of Arnold’s presence at Phase 18, even on the part of critics who do stress the importance of Arnold for Yeats, is compounded by the two volumes of George Mills Harper’s *The Making of Yeats’s A Vision: A Study of the Automatic Script* (1987): when and by whom, exactly, Arnold was selected and approved as an example of Phase 18 is not recorded. Goethe’s appearance, however, can be traced to a key preliminary list of examples dated June 1918, which also includes Mrs Yeats. Harper’s study is the most authoritative account of the Script available to Yeats scholars, but within the veritable avalanche of individuals considered as phasal examples during the creative process and those ultimately named in *A Vision*, Arnold is scarcely referred to. The odd impression is that Arnold rather suddenly appears from nowhere alongside Goethe as the only other example of Phase 18 in *A Vision*. Nor is the mystery cleared up by the four volumes of

² Yeats’s “The Celtic Element in Literature” is dated 1897 in *Essays and Introductions* (1961). However, as the editors Warwick Gould, John Kelly, and Deirdre Toomey explain in *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats Volume II: 1896-1900* (1997), the essay “did not appear [in *Cosmopolis*] until June 1898” (1997:154).

³ In *W.B. Yeats: A Life – II. The Arch-Poet 1915-1939* (2003), R.F. Foster determines that *A Vision* was “dated 1925 (though published in 1926)” (2003:282). The revised version was published in, and dated, 1937.

Yeats's Vision Papers (the first three published in 1992 and the fourth in 2001) compiled under Harper's general editorship. All of this presses the case for re-scrutiny of Arnold – but there are two further vital gaps in Yeats scholarship to consider.

Firstly, while Bloom has interpreted Arnold's location at Phase 18, with Goethe, from the angle of Yeats's Romantic sensibility, and Schuchard has linked Arnoldian morbidity to Phase 13, and Kiberd has related the framework of the treatise to Arnold's Celticist analysis, it remains that no biographer or critic has tied *A Vision* to Arnold's cultural outlook, elaborated chiefly in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). The climactic revolutionary period of Irish history, culminating in the entrenchment of the independent Irish state, inspires the Arnoldian title of *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland: 1890-1939* by F.S.L. Lyons, in whose memory R.F. Foster dedicates both volumes of his biography on Yeats. Oddly, however, Arnold's bearing on Yeats (and others, not least John O'Leary and Synge) is not brought to the fore, even though, as Foster observes, "the analysis of *Culture and Anarchy [in Ireland]* was inspired by Lyons's tracing of Yeats's personal political odyssey" (2001:48). Lyons asserts that "the connection between culture and anarchy is fundamental to the understanding of modern Ireland" (1982:2) but confines his account of Arnold to only a few pages of the introduction, all but divorcing Arnold from his own thesis, augmented by quotation of the concluding lines of Yeats's "Remorse for Intemperate Speech" (1931), that "in modern Ireland culture has been a divisive rather than a reconciling influence" (1982:26). In "the period from the fall of Parnell to the death of Yeats," Lyons argues, "an anarchy in the mind and in the heart... forbade not just unity of territories, but also 'unity of being'" (1982:177). Strikingly, however, as we will see, the Daimonic Man of Phase 17 in *A Vision*, who has achieved the ideal condition of Unity of Being, is posited by Yeats in the context of the Irish civil

war, i.e. a time of anarchy – a fact that has never been interrogated by Yeats scholars, including Lyons, in relation to Arnold.

Although Watson does not link Arnold to *A Vision* (and therefore the historical context of the Irish civil war which frames the Great Wheel), his account of Yeats and Victorianism broadly, as well as Yeats and Arnold specifically, touches upon each of these four aspects in various ways – the Romantic, the morbid, the Celtic, and the cultural, the latter primarily relating to Yeats’s Arnoldian anti-Philistinism and running battles with Irish nationalists. The second vital gap to consider, however, is that no biographer or critic (including Watson) has yet considered in Yeats, and the treatise, a fifth aspect in relation to Arnold, which ultimately encompasses the other four: the ideal of ancient Greek genius. As the over-arching nature of this fifth aspect suggests, all five aspects are in fact interrelated rather than strictly compartmentalized across Arnold’s oeuvre and therefore, as we might expect, all five aspects are also interrelated within Yeats’s holistic rather than narrow engagement with Arnold’s works. The interrelation has much to do with the underlying Coleridgean (or Kantian) objective-subjective dichotomy operative in each case; and closely connected to this, a penchant for ‘classical-romantic’ dialectic in the respective critical approaches of both Arnold and Yeats. It is mainly these five interrelated aspects, collectively comprising the Arnoldian element in *A Vision*, which I endeavour to trace over the five chapters of this thesis, as an integrated matrix of influence: the Romantic, morbid, Celtic, cultural, and over-arching ideal of ancient Greek genius.

Although *A Vision* is an exceedingly complex text, and notoriously obscure, my thesis is fairly straightforward in its outline and rationale of progression. Its central contribution to the critical field is to address, in particular, the crucial blind spot of Arnold’s appearance at Phase 18 alongside Yeats at Phase 17 in

the Great Wheel, as well as, broadly, the concomitant failure by critics to consider Arnold's overall bearing on the 'System' itself. The first two chapters are preparatory for entering *A Vision* in chapter three. In chapter one, I will survey the collective Arnoldian element in Yeats, emphasizing its early emergence, complex interrelation, and longevity in Yeats's work. Building on our understanding of the Arnoldian Yeats, I will look at some of the larger issues and implications arising from Yeats's recourse to primitivism in response to Arnold's portrait of the Celt, and Yeats's related approach to class, unity, and the state in the Irish context, in chapter two. Against this wide-ranging backdrop we will then enter *A Vision*, examining in chapter three Yeats's two types of man aligned with the principal symbol or interpenetrating primary and antithetical gyres respectively, which echoes Arnold's two types of man aligned with Hebraism and Hellenism respectively in *Culture and Anarchy*. I will situate the gyres in philosophical and literary tradition, and thus Yeats in relation to his Arnoldian or Empedoclean Romantic heritage, before turning to the lunar phases of the Great Wheel.

My point of departure will be to enlarge Schuchard's narrow focus solely on morbidity at Phase 13 (that of the Rhymers) by briefly highlighting the appearance of morbidity, too, at Phase 23, that of another member of the tragic generation: Synge. The primary focus, however, will be on the explicit inter-linkage and contrast between the morbid Phase 13 and the ideal Phase 17, that of Yeats. My consideration of this contrast effectively inaugurates the principal (non-)linear progression of my analysis along what Bloom has deemed to be the Romantic and, in so far as Yeats describes them, most important phases of the Great Wheel – 13 to 17 – owing to the possibility of the achievement of Unity of Being at these phases only (except for Phase 15 where, we are told by Yeats, human incarnation is not possible). Led or even, in a sense, forced by Yeats to pay heed to the prioritization of these phases, what Bloom calls his own "not so

arbitrary as it may seem” procedure of analysis of the Great Wheel is largely based on his close attention, accordingly, to these “crucial” phases in particular “clustered around 15, concentrating on 17, the phase of Yeats, Shelley, and Dante” (1972:235).

However, while my analysis encompasses, too, phases 13 to 17, I maintain sufficient critical distance from Yeats’s arcana, obscurities, and promptings so as to step into the breach, as it were, and demonstrate that Phase 18 is in fact also – indeed, especially – crucial to Yeats in relation to his own ideal Phase 17. The progression of my thesis therefore shifts from consideration of the contrast between Phase 13 and Phase 17, to the contrast between Phase 17 and Phase 18. My examination of the configuration of Phase 17 and Phase 18 spans chapters four and five. I close my thesis, in chapter five, with a brief consideration of the intervening phases 14 and 16, those of Yeats’s Muses Iseult Gonne (but also the Romantics Wordsworth and Keats) and Maud Gonne (as well as Blake) respectively. As we will see across chapters three to five, the Arnoldian element within the abstruse occult discourse partly shapes the portrayal of a range of phasal types and examples (named and unnamed, encompassing both literature and sexual love) – not least Yeats himself. Indeed, the Arnoldian element, involving a covert extension of the dialogue Yeats conducts with Arnold in “The Celtic Element in Literature”, achieves its apotheosis in the projection of Irish self-rule and unity in the figure of the Daimonic Man or ideal man of genius of Phase 17 (Yeats) arising from opposed universal forces and to be embodied in an independent Irish state, subversively juxtaposed with the fragmenting Emotional Man of Phase 18 (Arnold and Goethe), in a time of anarchy.

My thesis has considerable implications for the critical field. Besides enhancing critical appreciation of the scale of Arnold’s influence on Yeats and *A Vision*,

my thesis both spurs and troubles readings of Yeats, most notably by Kiberd and his predecessor Edward Said, as “a poet of decolonization” (Said 2001:84). In addition, my thesis reinvigorates the longstanding ‘Orwellian’ debate over Yeats’s alleged fascism and its connection to *A Vision*, by suggesting that the Arnoldian Daimonic Man of Phase 17 (Yeats) merits consideration in order to better understand Yeats’s later controversial politics, coinciding with the pronounced turn to his Anglo-Irish precursors in the 1920s, as well as his eugenicist views. Furthermore, I illuminate what Bloom does not, though he provides a critical paradigm for doing so: that the configuration of Phase 17 and Phase 18 confirms *A Vision* to be an exemplary ‘anxiety of influence’ text in which Yeats ‘kills’ his critical fathers: Arnold and JBY. Lastly, as I will reiterate, with important qualifications, in the second part of this introduction, my thesis calls for Arnold’s routine inclusion among Yeats’s foremost influences like Nietzsche, Blake, Dante, and Shelley whose portrayals in *A Vision* are, as I will show, partly bound up with Yeats’s engagement with Arnold.

ii) ON FAMILIAR TERMS: THE ALLUSIVE YEATS AND ELUSIVE ARNOLD

My thesis, however, must commence on a note of caution. Examining the five aspects in the works of Arnold and Yeats, and specifically *A Vision*, it is apparent that each carries its own distinct range of ideas and terms (although there are crucial overlaps indicative of the interrelation, in fact, of all five aspects) without knowledge of which we would remain unaware of Arnold’s special importance to the treatise. We may start to get to grips with this exceeding complexity by way of the published and unpublished online volumes of *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, under the general editorship of John

Kelly, which also assist in confirming Yeats's lifelong preoccupation with Arnold. For instance, in *Volume II: 1896-1900* (1997), in a footnote to Yeats's letter to D.P. Moran, the editor of *The Leader*, dated 26 August 1900, the editors Warwick Gould, John Kelly, and Deirdre Toomey have picked out the single term "sweetened" in the letter and have correlated this with Yeats's usage of the single word "sweeten" in his early poem "To Ireland in the Coming Times" (as it was re-titled in 1895), and have related both instances in turn to Arnold.

In the letter, Yeats seeks to reconcile Irish identity with writing in English: "... this writing must for a long time to come be the chief influence in shaping the opinions and the emotions of the leisured classes in Ireland in so far as they are concerned with Irish things, and the more sincere it is, the more lofty it is, the more beautiful it is, the more will the general life of Ireland be sweetened by its influence, through its influence over a few governing minds" (1997:564). The editors single out "sweetness" for comment:

WBK frequently uses this term, derived from Swift's *The Battle of the Books* ('the two noblest of things, sweetness and light') by way of Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*, and in 'To Ireland in the Coming Times' wished to be '*True brother of a company/That sang, to sweeten Ireland's wrong*'... But AE had written to A[ugusta]G[regory] only 3 days before... 'Personally I dislike Morans [sic] writing... I have read a good many of his essays and there [is] a continual bitterness without any sweetness as a set off. However if I come across him I will do what I can to make him friendly'.

(1997:564)

I will return to Yeats's letter in chapter two in regard to his politics; and I will consider the important early poem in chapter four, in connection with not only the Arnoldian cultural inflection evidently conveyed in Yeats's usage of the term "sweeten" but also what I believe is the closely related Arnoldian Celticist term "measure" which Yeats introduced, retrospectively, to the poem as late as 1925— that is, while he was finalizing the original *A Vision*.⁴ Significantly, in the same letter, Yeats rejects Moran's accusations that he is an Arnoldian Celticist. In section XVII of the introduction to Volume II of the collected letters, the editors mention that in the letter Yeats "denied that he had ever used the phrases 'Celtic note' and 'Celtic Renaissance'" but "in fact, his criticism until recently had been saturated in Celtic terminology, although from now on he was to be far more circumspect" (1997:lxxx). However, as their later singling out of "sweeten" suggests, Yeats's writings had been saturated in Arnoldian terminology beyond solely the Celtic aspect.

As we will see in more detail in chapter one, Arnold claims that the qualities of "[b]alance, measure, and patience" (2008:44) or, as he later puts it, "a law of measure, of harmony, presiding over the whole" (2008:46) are sorely lacking in the Celt and rather the hallmark of the genius of the exemplary ancient Greeks, and Italians such as Dante. As a result of this fatal flaw, Arnold argues, the Celt is unable to govern himself. Accordingly, the word "measure" is among a range of Arnoldian ideas and terms which we can locate in Yeats's direct response to Arnold, "The Celtic Element in Literature". We should be wary, therefore, of the seemingly innocuous, everyday usage of the word "measure" by Yeats in close proximity to his allusion once again, much later in life, to Arnold's cultural analysis in his letter to Olivia Shakespear dated 23 February 1928:

"Once out of the Senate... Once out of Irish bitterness I can find some measure

⁴ I am grateful to Professor Matthew Campbell for having directed me to *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats*, edited by Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach, who establish that the year of first publication of this poem, with its revisions on "measure", was 1925.

of sweetness, and of light, as befits old age...” (Kelly, Schuchard 2002). As we will see, Watson has shown that there was always a close connection between Yeats’s early Celticism and cultural campaign in Ireland, with both aspects powerfully shaped by Arnold.

We can see something of the potential link to be drawn by Yeats between Arnold’s Celticist and cultural analyses when we recognise, for instance, that Arnold’s cultural notion of sweetness or “beauty ” (2008:104) is paralleled by his Celt whose genius had “love of beauty, charm, and spirituality for its excellence” (2008:49). We can therefore also see something of the potential for a subversive reading of Arnold by Yeats, bringing Hellenistic (i.e. ancient Greek) sweetness or beauty into alignment with the Celt’s love of beauty, at the same time adding the corrective of measure as a hallmark not only of ancient Greek but also Celtic genius, facilitated by Yeats’s substitution, evidently drawing in part upon Andrew Lang’s article “The Celtic Renaissance” (published in *Blackwood’s Magazine* in February 1897), of the catch-all term “ancient” for “Celtic”. As I will argue, the cultural and Celtic are yoked together in Yeats’s subversive, holistic reading of Arnold. More than this, the three aspects briefly outlined by critics, separately, in relation to Arnold and *A Vision* – Romanticism, morbidity, and Celticism – as well as the fourth and fifth aspects I have highlighted, those of culture and the over-arching ideal of ancient Greek genius, achieve an extraordinary level of integration in Yeats’s ‘System’, above all in the projection of the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17.

At this stage, the editors’ correlation of “sweetened” and “sweeten”, despite the absence of any explicit reference to Arnold by Yeats in these instances, and Schuchard’s correlation of morbidity at Phase 13 in *A Vision*, despite the absence of any explicit mention of Arnold in this instance, with Yeats’s explicit reference to Arnold’s phrase “morbid effort” in “The Tragic Generation”

(among other correspondences across Yeats's oeuvre), serve to underline the importance of recognising how Yeats can at times strongly allude to Arnold with just single words that might otherwise appear to be conventional rather than special literary usage. Of course, even in the most seemingly obvious of cases, such as "sweetness" and "light" in close proximity, allusion can still leave room for doubt, however little, of a definitive link. There is invariably – and shrewdly in Yeats's case, I would suggest – a limitation on our full certainty that in encountering such words it is Yeats's debt to Arnold, primarily or solely, that we are dealing with. There is almost always critical space for scepticism and consideration of other influences possibly also in play, including influences upon influences, such as the example of Swift whose formulation of "sweetness and light" is effectively usurped by Arnold, but who remains an Anglo-Irish precursor of increasing importance to Yeats in later life.

As we will see, other highly influential figures besides Arnold can often also be linked to particular 'magic' words in Yeats's oeuvre, such as Burke and Nietzsche on "measure"; or Shelley, Lang, and Frazer on "ancient". Even as we seek to re-scrutinize Arnold's influence, in particular, on Yeats and *A Vision*, we can never forget that Yeats was engaged in a great conversation, as it were, with an immense and diverse literary heritage. Nevertheless, as I have indicated, the textual evidence confirms that Yeats is conducting in *A Vision* a "covert dialogue" specifically with Arnold; and it is a continuation – indeed, the decisive instalment – of his overt dialogue with Arnold in "The Celtic Element in Literature", before circumspection evidently set in, on the question of the Celtic constitution of the ideal man of genius. Moreover, a strand within my thesis is that Arnold, greatly underestimated by critics, merits routine inclusion among Yeats's foremost influences like Nietzsche, Blake, Dante, and Shelley whose portrayals in *A Vision* are in fact partly shaped, as we will see, by Yeats's long familiarity with Arnold.

As the examples of Kelly et al and Schuchard suggest, we should not desist from endeavouring to pin Yeats down in relation to Arnold, pre-eminently when it seems warranted, by pointing to striking correspondences between Yeats's oeuvre (not least *A Vision*) and that of Arnold. After all, critics have generally marvelled at the extent and longevity of Arnold's influence as the foremost Victorian poet-critic, even to our own day, let alone in Yeats's lifetime. As we will see, Lionel Trilling has gone so far as to hail Arnold the true father of modern criticism. As Vinod Sena broadly observes in *W.B. Yeats: The Poet as Critic* (1980): "Arnold was too great a force in the late nineteenth century for Yeats not to have been familiar with his work... There can be little doubt of [Yeats's] wide acquaintance with Arnold's writings for he recalls him in his concern for international standards in criticism, for its disassociation from all questions of practical utility, his account of the dangers of provinciality, his use of terms like culture, taste, sweetness, light, or his onslaughts on the philistinism of the Irish middle class" (1981:10/11). Even this generous, largely cultural concession, however, does not do justice to how wide – and deep – Yeats's knowledge of Arnold's writings really was, or the extent of his usage – and at times elaboration, almost beyond recognition – of terms and concepts featuring in Arnold's works.

As Schuchard has demonstrated by homing in on morbidity at Phase 13, we are on firmer ground when we can locate correspondences within Yeats's oeuvre involving explicit reference to Arnold, and can cross-reference these with areas of *A Vision* where, despite lacking explicit mention of Arnold, particular ideas, terms, and phrases can nevertheless be seen to be implicitly – or circumspectly – Arnoldian. Richard J Finneran conveys in his preliminary note on the text of the 1937 version that *A Vision* is a "central work" (1976:320) in Yeats's oeuvre. John Unterecker affirms that "almost everything Yeats wrote after 1922 and a

good deal that he wrote before that date is linked to *A Vision*” (1963:29). Similarly, but placing weight on the ‘before’ rather than ‘after’, Ellmann observes that “the ideas in [*A Vision*] are not novel in Yeats’s work. He had said them all before, in one way or another” (1964:150). As we might expect, however, Arnold is not necessarily so easily tracked, in regard to all five aspects of the Arnoldian element, across Yeats’s oeuvre.

The need for the closest re-scrutiny of *A Vision* is especially pressed by critics’ awareness of Yeats’s circumspection on Arnold, chiefly but not solely relating to the Celtic aspect. In the expanded edition of *The Vast Design: Patterns in W.B. Yeats’s Aesthetic* (1964), Edward Engelberg is critical of Sena’s book overall but comments approvingly on the opening chapter that Arnold “does not seem a likely precursor, and in many ways he was not; yet Arnold’s views were so strong and lingered so long in the consciousness of British writers that Yeats (and Eliot as well) were hard-pressed to shake him loose, even when they tried” (1988:264). Invoking Bloom’s famous theory, he adds: “Here surely is a splendid example of the ‘anxiety of influence’” (1988:264). Yeats’s circumspection, or anxiety of influence, has helped to render Arnold, as Schuchard observes, “one of the most elusive figures in Yeats’s critical life” (1985:88/89). This must be factored into an appreciation of Yeats’s curiously muted treatment, as we will see, of Arnold at Phase 18; but also how we consider Arnold’s overall relation to the treatise.

Besides re-scrutiny of terminology – which assumes particular importance given that the ‘System’ is essentially built up out of special terms (of definition and exposition) in accordance with a reductive or, as Foster puts it, “uneasily formulaic approach” (2003:284) – we must also be alert to Arnoldian ideas and terms which have evidently assumed new masks, whether in seemingly small details or the larger framework and components of the ‘System’. We will find

neither “sweetness” nor “measure”, for instance, as key terms in the Great Wheel, yet beauty predominates in the central antithetical phases and Mask, with the Mask itself the crucial means for the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 to achieve, in effect, the measure that Arnold had deemed lacking in the Celt but which was the hallmark of the genius of the ancient Greeks. As we will also see, Arnold’s phrase “buried self”, and the whole idea of eliciting a higher spiritual being from within, can be linked to Yeats’s concept of the Daimon so vital to his poetic theory or doctrine of the Mask and projection of the Daimonic Man of *A Vision*, even though the phrase is not explicitly employed in the treatise. As I will argue, the term “Daimon”, which Yeats defines in the revised *A Vision* as the “ultimate self” (1990:132), is really just another way of saying “ancient Greek genius”, an idea and phrase that proliferates in Arnold’s oeuvre, not least his vision in *Culture and Anarchy* of eliciting what he calls, in strikingly similar fashion, the “best self”.

Lastly, and closely related to Yeats’s circumspection, the need for re-scrutiny of *A Vision* in relation to Arnold is pressed further still by the abstruseness of its occult discourse. That Arnold’s presence has hitherto escaped assiduous scrutiny would appear to be, in part, a consequence of the arcane language and symbolism of the treatise. As A.G. Stock describes it, “*A Vision*, with its doubtful origins, its bizarre terminology, and the unfashionable drift of its philosophy, is an awkward book to swallow” (1963:139). Ellmann says that if “no reader has ever been converted to its doctrines, the reason is that one is never sure what is being offered for acceptance or what attitude the writer wishes to elicit” (1964:162/163). The impenetrability of *A Vision*, Ellmann suggests, stems in part from its being enshrouded or “clothed in a style more metaphorical than any used in English prose since the seventeenth century” (1964:162). This echoes Ellmann’s comment that *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1918), in which Yeats elaborately describes the doctrine of the Mask duly

incorporated into *A Vision*, is “built up out of evasion so skilful that the reader is never sure whether he is being presented with a doctrine or with a poem in prose” (1960:223).

Foster writes scathingly that the “generalizations on which the archetypes are erected, the arbitrary and self-referencing symbolism, the incomprehensibility of it all to anyone not already versed in [Yeats’s] own thought and life, rob [*A Vision*] of any general intellectual interest” (2003:282). However, even extensive knowledge of Yeats’s thought and life such as that possessed by Foster himself is, evidently, of limited assistance in seeking to decipher *A Vision*. Amusingly, Foster quips that “following the System” ultimately necessitates “the suspension not only of scepticism but of the faculty of rational analysis” (2003:285). In such a rarefied critical space, it is a short step to Daniel Albright’s perception of *A Vision* as a slipway into surreality: “Based on years and years of George Yeats’s trances, in the form of both automatic writing and transcriptions of voices she uttered while she slept, *A Vision* never falters in its attempts to rationalize the unrationalizable: the messages from the unconscious, or from beyond death, seem all the eerier because they exercise such strong resistance to interpretation” (2006:74). “It could be argued,” Albright says, that *A Vision* “is the greatest of all Surrealist experiments” (2006:74).

While the central contribution of my thesis chiefly relates to critical neglect of Arnold’s overall bearing on *A Vision*, my thesis also effectively entails counteracting this tendency in the critical field to give up on the point of confident literary interpretation. Certainly, we cannot pretend to know the mind of Yeats. For instance, in his examination of the Automatic Script of 10 January 1918, George Harper humorously acknowledges his inability to “reconstruct the imaginative connections made in Yeats’s mind as it jumped from one seemingly unrelated mythic story to another” (vol 1, 1987:135). Edward Malins similarly

remarks that “like Nietzsche [Yeats] was maddeningly unsystematic in working out his ideas, despite the apparent categorization in [*A Vision*]” (1994:63). On the question of interpreting *A Vision*, Yeats has ultimately, like the Thirteenth Cone of his ‘System’, “kept the secret” (1990:283). Yet Yeats fascinates precisely because he is so difficult; and as a prolific writer he has not left us entirely in the dark, as it were, of the moon, there to remain mystified. In showing that Arnold is in fact paramount to Yeats’s poetical and political concerns in *A Vision*, and that critics have therefore greatly underestimated the significance of the incorporation of Arnold into the ‘System’, I am offering one way – a crucial one, I think – of approaching and interpreting the treatise in literary terms.

* * * * *

Chapter One

A General Survey of the Arnoldian Element in Yeats

In this opening chapter, we will survey the collective Arnoldian element in order to emphasize three key points: 1) its early emergence in Yeats's work; 2) the interrelation of the five aspects comprising the Arnoldian element; and 3) its enduring importance to Yeats's writings into the twentieth century. In chapter two, developing our understanding of the Arnoldian Yeats, we will look at some of the issues and implications arising from Yeats's recourse to primitivism in response to Arnold's *Celt*, as well as Yeats's allied approach to class, unity, and the state in the Irish context. The rationale of these first two chapters, which are broad in scope and preparatory to our entering *A Vision* in chapter three, is simply to give the reader a sense of the formative nature, complexity, and lasting effects of Arnold's impact on Yeats, stressing Yeats's wide-ranging rather than narrow engagement with Arnold's works, and pointing to the potentially far-reaching ramifications of the Arnoldian element in Yeats, not just in literary but also political terms, germane to *A Vision*. Moreover, as we venture to examine in detail Arnold's bearing on Yeats as it pertains to *A Vision*, I sound at the outset of this opening chapter a further note of caution on how we proceed to chart our course through the exceeding complexity of influence on Yeats in general and, in particular, in regard to Arnold.

i) AMID THE LABYRINTH IN ART OR POLITICS: TOWARDS A *VISION* FROM YEATS'S EARLIEST REVIEWS, ON FERGUSON

In *The Anatomy of Influence: Literature as a Way of Life* (2011), Harold Bloom asserts that the “structure of literary influence is labyrinthine, not linear” (2011:9). Quoting from the epigraph to his book, drawn from Tolstoy’s letter to Nikolai Strakhov dated 23 April 1876, Bloom states his intention “to guide readers through some of the ‘endless labyrinth of linkages that makes up the stuff of art’” (2011:9). However, by his own admission still “haunted” (2011:11) by Yeats, Bloom might easily have expanded his epigraph to include a portion of the third stanza of Yeats’s “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen” (1921), in which Yeats acknowledges “the labyrinth” of his own making, and his own susceptibility to self-absorption, even bewilderment, therein:

A man in his own secret meditation
Is lost amid the labyrinth that he has made
In art or politics

(Allt, Alspach 1989:431)

Later, having admitted that his book is his “last reflection on influence” (2011:29) in his advanced age, thus adding a stoic poignance to his self-portrait of a solitary man or “department of one” (2011:5) at Harvard university – reminiscent of an approaching Landor-like readiness to depart – Bloom elaborates on his view of influence as labyrinthine with perhaps a Freudian slip rather than mere allusion to Yeats’s poem:

Belated authors wander the maze as if an exit could be found, until
the strong among them realize that the windings of the labyrinth are

all internal. No critic, however generously motivated, can help a deep reader escape from the labyrinth of influence. I have learned that my function is to help you get lost.

(2011:31)

My own intention is, of course, decidedly not to help the reader become lost in the labyrinth of influence on Yeats, nor to equate the labyrinth in general, as Bloom later does, with the abstraction of “life itself” (2011:335), but rather to act as guide along a mapped-out route, unravelling some of the complexity of Arnold’s influence on Yeats’s art and politics, pertaining to *A Vision*. Nevertheless, as my cautionary remarks in the introduction on the terminological challenges posed by Yeats suggests, there are difficulties imposed upon us by not only the internalized windings of the labyrinth of influence on Yeats broadly, which inform the innumerable and often mysterious linkages that make up the stuff of *A Vision*, but also those internalized windings of the also labyrinthine (rather than merely linear) influence of an individual source such as Arnold. As we endeavour to trace the Arnoldian element in Yeats and *A Vision* in some depth, without getting ourselves lost, there is a risk – a considerable risk, given that we are dealing with a work that has long bewildered many of Yeats’s finest critics – of disorientation exacerbated by reasonable expectancy of linear guidance. I wish to temper such expectancy slightly by preparing the reader for frequent changes of tack across the five interrelated aspects I have outlined in the introduction, each of which is itself multifaceted. That is to say, we must recognize upfront that the relation between Yeats and Arnold is labyrinthine, within the wider labyrinth of influence, assimilated into the labyrinthine ‘System’: something of a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma, which we can only come at successfully through some lateral and winding journeying.

Our first step, therefore, is to appreciate how early and deeply formative Yeats's engagement with Arnold's works actually was, years before he immersed himself in those of such pivotal figures as Blake (between 1889 and 1892, in the collaborative book project with Edwin Ellis) and Nietzsche (whom he first read in 1902) who are routinely cited by critics as among his foremost influences. Denis Donoghue, for instance, claims in *Yeats* (1971) that "the crucial figure in Yeats's poetic life, if any single figure may be named, is Nietzsche" (1971:48) rather than Blake. Among many other critics who prioritise Nietzsche in Yeats without adequate consideration of Arnold, Donoghue builds a strong case, of which I largely approve, that Yeats's poetical voice, gestures, and outlook into the twentieth century were both galvanized and animated by Nietzsche. Nevertheless, his central claim is deeply troubled by the fact that the chapter in which it is posited is entitled "The Play of Consciousness", a concept at the core of his argument, as we might expect, but which, as we will see, can be related in Yeats to Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*. Surprising as it is, perhaps, Nietzsche is a latecomer, and ultimately secondary, to the much earlier, more powerfully formative and lasting Arnoldian tradition of Yeats, which the relation between Yeats and Nietzsche, if viewed in isolation from Arnold, often masks.

Similarly, in *The Identity of Yeats* (1954), Richard Ellmann examines Yeats in relation to both Nietzsche and Blake; and while I largely approve, too, of his insights on a range of points of comparison, his chapter title "The Pursuit of Spontaneity" and therefore the keynote for his juxtapositions might also have been instructively related in Yeats to Arnold's cultural analysis, as we will see. It will, I hope, become clear in the course of this thesis that Yeats's readiness to embrace such pivotal figures as Blake and Nietzsche was owing in part to his already appreciable predilection for Arnold's works. Critical attention to Blake and Nietzsche has largely followed Yeats's enthusing, in a letter to Lady Gregory dated 26 December 1902, about "that strong enchanter" Nietzsche who

“completes Blake & has the same roots” (Kelly, Schuchard 1994:284). Yeats’s foremost influences extend, however, some way beyond merely this pairing; and Yeats came to view not only Blake and Nietzsche but a range of exemplars, not least Dante and Shelley, as well as a number of his associates, both professional and personal, partly by way of his engagement with Arnold, as reflected in their portrayals in *A Vision*. Arnold, I aim to show, merits being routinely named among Yeats’s earliest, lasting, and ultimately greatest influences, even as I acknowledge the multifarious and labyrinthine nature of influence generally which, internalized in Yeats – or as Auden puts it in his elegy on Yeats in 1939, “modified in the guts of the living” (1991:247) – subsumes any individual source such as Arnold, or Nietzsche, or Blake, and so on.⁵

Something of the early and powerful impact of Arnold can be gauged from R.F. Foster’s amusing account of how the young Yeats “was already claiming his intellectual niche” (1998:32) at the Erasmus Smith High School in Dublin. The school, Foster says wryly, “nurtured [complacent philistines] in droves” (1998:32). Significantly, Foster indicates that Yeats’s penchant for Arnold was acquired from his father. He writes that Yeats “stunned some schoolfellows by relaying JBY’s opinions, proclaiming himself an ‘evolutionist’, and remarking dismissively that ‘no one could write an essay now except Herbert Spencer and Matthew Arnold’” (1998:32). Tracing Yeats’s early intellectual development, Ellmann humorously informs us: “When John Eglinton reminded him that he had once said at the High School that ‘Only two people can write an essay now-a-days: Matthew Arnold and Herbert Spencer’, Yeats angrily denied that Spencer had ever interested him” (1960:33).⁶ It is telling that no such denial was

⁵ Given that Arnold lived till 1888, and his initial impact on Yeats occurred some years before this, I have purposely omitted Auden’s prior reference to “the words of a dead man” (1991:247), although this is largely true in relation to Arnold across Yeats’s long career.

⁶ Spencer, however, also proved to be of enduring interest to Yeats – he is an example of Phase 22 in *A Vision*.

forthcoming in regard to Arnold; but as we have seen in the introduction, by reference to Yeats's letter to Moran, denial of Arnold's Celticist influence became something of a necessity for Yeats around the turn of the century, in the increasingly 'Gaelicized', predominantly Catholic nationalist context in Ireland. Yet, as we have also seen, in Yeats's letter to Moran, even as Yeats denies Arnold's Celticist influence, Yeats evidently endorses Arnoldian cultural sweetness, with Yeats, oddly enough, feeling no compulsion to defend himself on that aspect which is, in fact, closely related to the Celtic one.

The intertwinement of the Arnoldian Celticist and cultural aspects in Yeats, even as he seeks to distance himself from Arnold on the Celtic front, is noticeable in his two earliest published reviews, both on the poetry of Sir Samuel Ferguson – as early as 1886.⁷ Moreover, we can also see in these reviews the emergence of all three of the remaining interrelated aspects comprising the Arnoldian element: the Romantic, morbid, and ideal of ancient Greek genius. To acquire a sense of the shifting nature of Yeats's engagement with Arnold from even the earliest stages of his career, we must undertake some lateral and winding journeying across all five of these aspects. A good starting point is Foster's observation, in his account of Yeats's appraisal of Ferguson, that although "jeering at Matthew Arnold" Yeats "still apparently subscribed to the Arnoldian view of the Celt as dreamy, sensitive and doom-laden" (1998:53). Yeats's seemingly contradictory approach to Arnold here might appear to relate solely to the Celtic aspect; but both the "jeering" at, and indebtedness to, Arnold in the appraisal are not confined to the Celtic aspect. I will examine the Celtic aspect in the reviews on Ferguson in some detail later in this chapter; and at this

⁷ A little confusingly, Yeats's first published review, which appeared in *The Irish Fireside* dated 9 October 1886, would seem to refer the reader to the more substantial review written previously but published later, in *The Dublin University Review* in November 1886. In *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats Volume IX: Early Articles and Reviews*, the editors John P. Frayne and Madeleine Marchaterre speculate that the first published review "may have been written after the longer, more detailed one that appeared" (2004:3) the following month. As they say, the first review was "one of two pieces written by Yeats to sum up the achievement of Ferguson" (2004:3).

stage wish briefly to underline that Foster's observation intersects with Watson's broader explanation that Arnold's "potent stereotype of the Celt" exercised "an enormous influence on the Irish Literary Revival, and especially, for a time, on the young Yeats..." (2006:41).

Watson confirms that Arnold's "portrait of the Celt, spiritual, melancholy, in love with beauty... did indeed powerfully shape Yeats's art and criticism in his early years" but he also points to Yeats's denial in "The Celtic Element in Literature" – more than a decade after the Ferguson reviews – "that Arnold's lectures [on which *On the Study of Celtic Literature* was based] had had any impact on him" (2006:41). The relevant sentence from Yeats's essay reads: "Though I do not think any of us who write about Ireland have built any argument upon them [Arnold's ideas], it is well to consider them a little, and see where they are helpful and where they are hurtful" (Yeats 1972:174). Watson also points to Yeats's denial in the letter to Moran, and in the relevant passage Yeats clearly – and disingenuously – seeks to confine the entirety of his response to Arnold to only "The Celtic Element in Literature": "You have been misled, doubtless, by reading what some indiscreet friend or careless opponent has written, into supposing that I have ever used the phrases 'Celtic note' and 'Celtic Renaissance' except as a quotation from others, if even then, or that I have quoted Matthew Arnold's essay on Celtic literature 'on a hundred platforms' or elsewhere in support of the ideas behind these phrases... all I have said or written about Matthew Arnold since I was a boy is an essay ['The Celtic Element in Literature'] in 'Cosmopolis,' in which I have argued that the characteristics he has called Celtic, mark all races just in so far as they preserve the qualities of the early races of the world" (Gould, Kelly, Toomey 1997:568).

In light of these denials, Watson puts forward the intriguing question: "Why was Yeats so eager to deny any influence on his work, even though Arnold's

picture of the Celt is on the whole complimentary?” (2006:42). Quoting from J.V. Kelleher’s “Matthew Arnold and the Celtic Revival” (1950), Watson answers that on “a simple level, one can agree that ‘it would be too painful for an evangelizing Celt to admit, even to himself, that he had got any substantial share of his gospel from an Englishman – even a good Englishman, now dead’” (2006:42). Watson elaborates:

... there was the incontrovertibly awkward fact that for all Arnold’s admiration for the Celt, he saw him as essentially inferior to the Saxon in one vital area. He is ‘sentimental,’ by which Arnold means that he is ‘always ready to revolt against the despotism of fact’... [this] renders him unfit to govern himself. So, Arnold implies, the Saxons would continue in their dull and muddy-mettled but practical way to run the show, but the Celts would be most welcome at the banqueting board of the British Isles, because they would supply the music, the charm, and the imagination... For an Irishman with aspirations to being a national poet to buy into this package, as it were, was to endorse the colonial relationship.

(2006:42)

As we will see, Yeats’s buying into the Arnoldian Celticist package continues to perplex and pose problems for the critical field; and it is therefore important to register at this early stage that crucial areas of Yeats’s complicated approach to that package can be located in Chapter IV of *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, from which Watson draws his quotations here, and where Arnold, employing some additional key terms not referred to by Watson (or Yeats in his letter to Moran), describes what he sees as the Celt’s fatal flaw. In the labyrinth of Arnoldian Celticist terminology, we must link “sentimentality” and the reaction against “fact” – single terms which also happen to crop up as key terms of

definition and exposition in *A Vision* – to the crux of Arnold’s stereotype of the Celt: a lack of “balance, measure”:

Sentimental – always ready to react against the despotism of fact...

it is not a bad description of the sentimental temperament; it lets us into the secret of its dangers and of its habitual want of success. Balance, measure, and patience, these are the eternal conditions, even supposing the happiest temperament to start with, of high success; and balance, measure, and patience are just what the Celt has never had.

(2008:44/45)

Employing further single terms defining the Celt – not least excess “emotion” and a lack of “sanity”, which are also key terms of definition and exposition arising in *A Vision* – Arnold then extols the genius of the ancient Greeks at the expense of the Celts. However, in doing so, Arnold actually likens the ancient Greeks – up to the decisive advantage of possessing “measure” – to the Celts: “Even in the world of spiritual creation, [the Celt] has never, in spite of his admirable gifts of quick perception and warm emotion, succeeded perfectly, because he never has had steadiness, patience, sanity enough to comply with the conditions under which alone can expression be perfectly given to the finest perceptions and emotions. The Greek has the same perceptive, emotional temperament as the Celt; but he adds to this temperament the sense of measure; hence his admirable success in the plastic arts, in which the Celtic genius, with its chafing against the despotism of fact, its perpetual straining after mere emotion, has accomplished nothing” (2008:44/45). Significantly but unsurprisingly, Yeats would appear to have read this portion of Arnold’s essay closely and repeatedly. In his personal copy of *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1891), this passage appears on p86, which is dog-eared as a place marker, perhaps serving also for the continuing argument on p87.

Arnold proceeds to turn his attention specifically to poetry, and again finds the Celt sorely wanting in “measure”:

In poetry... which the Celt has so passionately, so nobly loved; poetry where emotion counts for so much, but where reason, too, reason, measure, sanity, also count for so much, – the Celt has shown genius, indeed, splendid genius; but even here his faults have clung to him, and hindered him from producing great works, such as other nations with a genius for poetry, – the Greeks, say, or the Italians, – have produced. The Celt has not produced great poetical works, he has only produced poetry with an air of greatness investing it all, and sometimes giving, moreover, to short pieces, or to passages, lines, and snatches of long pieces, singular beauty and power... but the true art, the architectonics which shapes great works, such as the Agamemnon or the Divine Comedy, comes only after a steady, deep-rolling survey, a firm conception of the facts of human life, which the Celt has not patience for.

(2008:45)

In this vein, Arnold extends his diagnosis of the Celt’s lack of “measure” further still, from poetry to commerce and politics: “If his rebellion against fact has thus lamed the Celt even in spiritual work, how much more must it have lamed him in the world of business and politics! The skilful and resolute appliance of means to ends which is needed both to make progress in material civilisation, and also to form powerful states, is just what the Celt has least turn for” (2008:45). Nevertheless, in all, Arnold expresses great admiration for the Celt, lamenting only the lack of measure which, he implies, would have made the Celt his ideal genius:

And yet, if one sets about constituting an ideal genius, what a great deal of the Celt does one find oneself drawn to put into it! Of an ideal genius one does not want the elements, any of them, to be in a state of weakness... one wants all of them to be in the highest state of power; but with a law of measure, of harmony, presiding over the whole. So the sensibility of the Celt, if everything else were not sacrificed to it, is a beautiful and admirable force... Sensibility gives genius its materials; one cannot have too much of it, if one can but keep its master and not be its slave. Do not let us wish that the Celt had had less sensibility, but that he had been more master of it.

(2008:46)

As we will see, the concession to likeness (barring the quality of measure) with the ancient Greeks ultimately assists Yeats in promptly, as early as 1886, promoting the Celt – improbably represented by Sir Samuel Ferguson – to their ranks in the highest echelon of poetical genius, as defined by Arnold; and partly informs Yeats’s much later endorsement, in the 1920s, of tough measures in the founding of what Yeats envisioned as a powerful Irish state, well capable of independent self-rule. While the Celt’s readiness to react against fact is referred to throughout Arnold’s analysis, a notable instance occurs in Chapter VI in the description of the Celt’s “passionate, turbulent, indomitable reaction against the despotism of fact” (2008:64). In Yeats’s personal copy, these words are underlined, on p130. This is hardly surprising – the formulation appears in the opening section of “The Celtic Element in Literature”, among the “well-known sentences” (Yeats 1972:173) quoted by Yeats in brief summary of Arnold’s pronouncements on the Celt. Yeats writes that, according to Arnold, “the Celtic imaginativeness and melancholy are alike ‘a passionate, turbulent, indomitable reaction against the despotism of fact’” (1972:173). This characterization of the

Celt can be readily related to Foster's assessment that Yeats, in his appraisal of Ferguson, "called for a distinctively Irish passion and imagination against the imposition of bloodless (and self-interested) English rationalism" (1998:53); but Arnold's cultural analysis, too, can be readily related to this assessment – which is to say, we cannot ultimately consider the Celtic aspect in Yeats in isolation from the cultural aspect.

From just this brief, initial recognition of the early importance of the Celtic aspect to Yeats, we may instructively shift to the cultural aspect which emerges so stridently – but, crucially, in close relation to the Celtic one – in Yeats's reviews on Ferguson. Prior to his observation of Yeats's "jeering" at Arnold while remaining indebted to Arnold's portrait of the Celt, Foster writes that the appraisal of Ferguson "provided the opportunity for an explicit attack on [Edward] Dowden and the spirit of West-Britonism in Ireland" (1998:52). Indeed, in what John P. Frayne and Madeleine Marchaterre describe as the "arrogant and defiant" yet "magnificent" (2004:10) opening to the second published review, Yeats writes: "It is a question whether the most distinguished of our critics, Professor Dowden, would not only have more consulted the interests of his country, but more also, in the long run, his own dignity and reputation, which are dear to all Irishmen, if he had devoted some of those elaborate pages which he has spent on the much bewritten George Eliot, to a man like the subject of this article... If Sir Samuel Ferguson had written to the glory of that, from a moral point of view, more than dubious achievement, British civilization, the critics, probably including Professor Dowden, would have taken care of his reputation" (Yeats 2004:11).

I will touch upon Yeats's rather Arnoldian view of George Eliot later in this chapter, but as Foster explains earlier in his book: "Dowden, part-time poet, influential critic and Professor of English Literature at Trinity, conveniently

represented to JBY the fate of men who subordinated artistic genius to the bourgeois embrace” (1998:29). Foster conveys that Yeats came to share his father’s view of Dowden, but Foster’s passing reference to the ideal of artistic genius which Dowden, in the eyes of JBY and Yeats, failed to live up to is not followed up by Foster in relation to Arnold in the appraisal of Ferguson (and elsewhere). As we are about to see, Yeats himself explicitly linked their view of Dowden to Arnold. It is Shelley, rather than Arnold, whose importance Foster primarily attaches to JBY and Dowden, in relation to Yeats. Foster says that Yeats’s “early and enduring reverence for Shelley’s poetry, while instituted by his father, also owed something to the influence of Dowden – perhaps the foremost Shelleyan of his time. WBY inherited his father’s view of respectable Dublin and of Dowden, who was cast as the symbol of all the city’s shortcomings” (1998:29).

However, while Shelley’s early and lasting importance to Yeats should not be minimised in any way, it is important not to lose sight of that of Arnold on the cultural front. The decisive bearing of Arnold on the attitude to Dowden of father and son is illuminated by Yeats’s later portrayal of Dowden in “Reveries over Childhood and Youth”, published in 1916 – a year before the advent of the Automatic Script which would give rise to *A Vision*. In section XXIV, Yeats writes that he was “chilled... when [Dowden] explained that he had lost his liking for Shelley and would not have written [his *Life of Shelley*] but for an old promise to the Shelley family” (1991:87). Yeats adds: “When it was published, Matthew Arnold made sport of certain conventionalities and extravagances that were, my father and I had come to see, the violence or clumsiness of a conscientious man hiding from himself a lack of sympathy” (1991:87). Arnold criticises Dowden in his own essay on Shelley, which I will consider in chapter four in regard to the placement of Shelley at Yeats’s Phase 17 in *A Vision*. Yeats concludes section XXIV of “Reveries over Childhood and Youth” with an anti-

Victorian, yet rather Arnoldian, flourish: “Living in a free world accustomed to the gay exaggeration of the talk of equals, of men who talk and write to discover truth and not for popular instruction, [JBY] had already, when both men were in their twenties, decided, it is plain, that Dowden was a provincial” (1991:88/89).

The alignment with Arnold is clear enough, but it should be explicitly highlighted that Arnold repeatedly disparages “provinciality” in *Culture and Anarchy*. For instance, in regard to the disestablishment of the Irish Church, Arnold holds that “we have got it fixed in our minds that a more full and harmonious development of their humanity is what the Nonconformists most want, that narrowness, one-sidedness, and incompleteness is what they most suffer from; in a word, that in what we call provinciality they abound, but in what we may call totality they fall short” (2008: 80). For Arnold, provincialism and a lack of totality are among the shortcomings not merely of the Nonconformists but, more pertinently in the context of his overall thesis, the pivotal figure he famously calls by the term “Philistine”; and for Yeats it is Dowden who effectively stands in here, in the Irish context, for Arnold’s Philistine. This association had long since been aired in Yeats’s “Dublin Scholasticism and Trinity College”, published in *United Ireland* on 30 July 1892. As Watson says, the article “shows how carefully he had read Arnold, and how smoothly he was able to transfer Arnold’s terminology to the discussion of Irish Philistinism” (2006:44).

Watson’s attention to the article forms part of his broader demonstration that Yeats’s lifelong campaign against Irish Philistinism was a thoroughly Arnoldian enterprise. He says that “Yeats knew that in Arnold the cultural critic he had an ally in the fight that both waged in their respective societies against what Arnold called Philistinism. Arnold has made the term ‘Philistine,’ the thick-witted, materialistic, opinionated, utilitarian, vulgar, and complacent member of

the middle class so current a term of abuse that it needs no glossing, for his own time or indeed for ours” (2006:44). The close relation of the cultural and Celtic aspects is clear in that, as Watson explains, the “key text is *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), but the attack had been mounted pretty comprehensively two years earlier in the pages of *On the Study of Celtic Literature*” (2006:44). He points to Lionel Trilling’s view of the latter “as primarily a treatise on the failure of the Victorian middle class, with the Celt providing the salutary (and highly idealized) contrast: ‘Speaking for the Celt, Arnold speaks for... the style of the dream and the ideal, of all that is the opposite of getting and spending, the Philistine activities which have laid waste the powers of England’” (Watson 2006:44). Watson adds: “Getting and spending, the valuation of getting on, the utilitarianism that he saw as the true enemy of vision and dream, and the enemy of what Arnold called ‘disinterestedness’ – these were Yeats’s foes too” (2006:44).

How Dowden fits into Yeats’s Arnoldian opposition of Celt/culture to Philistinism can be readily appreciated in that, as Frayne and Marchaterre explain, Yeats’s “disdain for Trinity in 1892 was partly caused by the hostility of English literature professor Edward Dowden toward the Irish Literary Movement” (Yeats 2004:173), which formed part of the wider Celtic Revival. Watson cobbles together several sentences from the article in which Yeats openly advertises his discipleship of Arnold; and this explicit cultural endorsement is in stark contrast to his later denials of Arnold’s Celticist influence:

Nobody in this great library is doing any disinterested reading, nobody is poring over any book for the sake of the beauty of its words, for the glory of its thought, but all are reading that they may pass an examination... [Trinity] has gone over body and soul

to scholasticism, and scholasticism is but an aspect of the great god, Dagon of the Philistines. “She has given herself to many causes that have not been my causes, but never to the Philistines,” Matthew Arnold wrote of Oxford. Alas, that we can but invert the sentences when we speak of our own University – “Never to any cause, but always to the Philistines.”

(Watson 2006:45)

Yeats is drawing upon Arnold’s “Preface to Second Edition” (1869) of *Essays in Criticism* (1865), in which he writes of Oxford: “Adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic! who hast given thyself so prodigally, given thyself to sides and to heroes not mine, only never to the Philistines!” (1914:8). Yeats would also have encountered Arnold’s praise of Oxford as a bulwark against Philistinism in Chapter 1 of *Culture and Anarchy*, as we will see in chapter four. Yeats’s usage of the single term “disinterested” is notably Arnoldian, too, as Watson indicates. It appears many times in *Culture and Anarchy* as a defining quality of culture. In Chapter I, Arnold asserts that “perfection, – as culture, from a thorough disinterested study of human nature and human experience, learns to conceive it, – is an harmonious expansion of all the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature, and is not consistent with the over-development of any one power at the expense of the rest” (2008:101). In Chapter II, in a passage which Yeats seems also to have drawn upon in disparaging what he felt was the self-interested rather than disinterested mode of reading by Trinity scholars, Arnold holds that culture “with its disinterested pursuit of perfection” and “simply trying to see things as they are, in order to seize on the best and to make it prevail, is surely well fitted to help us to judge rightly, by all the aids of observing, reading, and thinking... and can thus render us a practical service of no mean value” (2008:120).

Even more specifically, in Chapter V, Arnold disparages those who “use their books” incorrectly. “What we want,” he argues, “is a fuller harmonious development of our humanity, a free play of thought upon our routine notions, spontaneity of consciousness, sweetness and light; and these are just what culture generates and fosters” (2008:165). Arnold adds that proceeding “from this idea of the harmonious perfection of our humanity, and seeking to help itself up towards this perfection by knowing and spreading the best which has been reached in the world – an object not to be gained without books and reading – culture has got its name touched, in the fancies of men, with a sort of air of bookishness and pedantry, cast upon it from the follies of the many bookmen who forget the end in the means, and use their books with no real aim at perfection” (2008:165). In light of even these few quotations, it is problematic, as I have indicated earlier in this chapter, that Denis Donoghue does not consider Arnold’s impact on Yeats in the chapter “The Play of Consciousness”; and so too with Richard Ellmann in the chapter “The Pursuit of Spontaneity”. As we can see, these concepts in Yeats relating to intellect and creativity can be located, almost word for word, in Arnold’s cultural analysis. They effectively meld into one, for instance, in Chapter VI, where Arnold explains that “the free spontaneous play of consciousness with which culture tries to float our stock habits of thinking and acting, is by its very nature... disinterested” (2008:184/185).

The importance to Yeats of Arnold’s disinterested approach to intellectual and creative achievement can hardly be overstated. As we will come to appreciate more fully in the course of this thesis, “free spontaneous play of consciousness” is aligned by Arnold with the force of Hellenism (associated with intellect and ancient Greek genius), acting upon its interlocking opposite Hebraism (associated with modern Philistine morality) with which it is perpetually in conflict, with the aim of achieving balance and unity – the full harmonious

perfection of the individual and society, whose collective, Hellenised “best self”, as Arnold calls it, is to be embodied in the state, in a time of anarchy. This can be readily related to the core theme in Yeats which Donoghue links to Blake in the first instance but primarily to Nietzsche: “consciousness as conflict” (1971:40) or, in Yeats’s words from the revised *A Vision*, quoted by Donoghue, “a struggle towards harmony, towards Unity of Being” (Yeats 1990:222). Donoghue’s concluding sentence might easily have been applied to the relation between Yeats and Arnold: “Conflict is valued because, one energy confronting its opposite, the mere person is transformed” (1971:69). Nor is the “contempt for the herd” which Donoghue cites among the features of what he calls “a definitive relation” between Yeats and Nietzsche, “never abandoned or even greatly modified” (1971:57), too far removed, in Yeats, from his pre-existing Arnoldian anti-Philistinism.

Moreover, the potential for a subversive reading by Yeats can already be seen in that Philistinism is contrasted with both the Celt and Hellenism (i.e. ancient Greek genius) in Arnold’s respective texts –which might therefore be merged in the new single figure of a Hellenised or measured Celt, or Celticised Hellene, opposed to Philistinism. Even without anticipating such a merger, but merely recognising the close relation of the Celtic and cultural aspects in Yeats, Arnold might have been brought into play amid Ellmann’s report of Yeats’s hopes “to capture from the [Irish] peasantry... an insouciant spontaneity” (1964:88) and his subsequent comparison of Yeats to Blake and Nietzsche in relation to such features as cyclical theory, transformation of the self, denunciations of “conventional morality” (1964:92) and linked to this, as we will see, Yeats’s preoccupation with the “morality of the noble man... of the ruling class” (1964:96). Both Donoghue and Ellmann rightly recognise Nietzsche and Blake as foremost influences on Yeats, but disinterested “free spontaneous play of consciousness” is bound up with Arnoldian anti-Philistinism, which exercised

such a great effect, in the first instance, upon Yeats, as his attacks on Dowden indicate. As we have seen, in the opening salvo in the appraisal of Ferguson, Yeats refers to the morally “dubious achievement” of British civilization. Although Yeats is speaking from the opposed perspective of an Irish nationalist, this might be said to be a theme tune of the anti-Philistine Arnold’s Celticist and cultural analyses, and across his oeuvre.

On the point of Philistine morality, Arnold is later echoed by Yeats in “The Tragic Generation” (1922) where he recalls the Rhymers’ rejection of Victorian morality in relation to art. Although the Aesthetic Movement broadly and the influence of Walter Pater in particular are palpable, Arnoldian spontaneity of consciousness or “making a stream of fresh thought play freely about our stock notions and habits” (2008:164), impelled by the bent of Hellenism which drives at an “unimpeded play of thought” (2008:147), is echoed, too, in Yeats’s suggestion that “[t]he critic might well reply that certain of my generation delighted in writing with an unscientific partiality for subjects long forbidden. Yet is it not most important to explore especially what has been long forbidden, and to do this not only ‘with the highest moral purpose’, like the followers of Ibsen, but gaily, out of sheer mischief, or sheer delight in that play of the mind?” (1991:326). This also echoes Yeats’s description of a “free world accustomed to the gay exaggeration of the talk of equals” inhabited by JBY, in Yeats’s account of the provincial Dowden made fun of by Arnold, in “Reveries over Childhood and Youth”.

Moreover, it could be speculated that Yeats’s usage in both instances, and penchant across his oeuvre, for the word “gay” and its variants (meaning joy rather than, in contemporary parlance, sexual orientation), which is so often picked up on by critics (including Ellmann and Donoghue) in relation to Nietzschean tragic joy, might well also be related, in the first instance, to

Arnold. In Chapter IV of his Celticist analysis, Arnold speaks of “the gay defiant reaction against fact of the lively Celtic nature” (2008:47); and prior to this, he explains that “[o]ur word *gay*, it is said, is itself Celtic. It is not from *gaudium*, but from the Celtic *gair*, to laugh; and the impressionable Celt, soon up and soon down, is the more down because it is so his nature to be up to be sociable, hospitable, eloquent, admired, figuring away brilliantly” (2008:44). This amusing etymological lesson (the Celtic aspect) could have been, even more amusingly, subversively cross-referenced by Yeats with Arnold’s insistence, which we will register later in this chapter, on tragic joy in literature in his 1853 preface (the morbidity aspect), long before Yeats encountered Nietzschean tragic joy after the turn of the century. Without detracting from the many ways in which Nietzsche and Blake impacted upon Yeats, and remained influences in play on wide-ranging issues and particular works throughout Yeats’s career, my point is simply that the relation between Yeats and Arnold effectively paved the way in crucial respects for later influences such as Nietzsche and Blake, and yet has not been routinely recognised by critics in general as having had such long-term repercussions for Yeats within, as Bloom calls it, the labyrinth of influence.

Arnold must be seen in Yeats, therefore, as not only an abiding presence, in his own right, arising from his powerful (and labyrinthine) formative impact, but as a seminal figure whose continuing presence can often be felt in the midst of those later influences in the labyrinth of Yeats’s making, in art or politics. Without even the addition of the Romantic and morbid aspects, and the overarching ideal of ancient Greek genius, we can appreciate that the cultural aspect and inseparable Celtic aspect form a potent combination which gives Arnold, in the Irish colonial context, a particular relational importance to Yeats, ultimately, among later influences like Nietzsche and Blake. Watson concludes, perceptively, that “Yeats’s instinctive hatred of Philistinism was confirmed by

Arnold's association of it with lumpen Saxonism, the antithesis of which is the passionate idealism of the Arnoldian (and Yeatsian) Celt" (2006:44). Illustrating the powerful and lasting impact of Arnold's anti-Philistinism on Yeats's life and work, in the Irish context, Watson points to Yeats's "contemporaneous... rows with Sir Charles Gavan Duffy and his supporters over the kinds of books – strong on patriotic sentiment, weak on anything resembling artistic merit – that they wanted to publish in the New Irish Library series intended to nurture the Irish imagination", as well as to the later "rows over *The Playboy of the Western World*" and "the Hugh Lane bequest of pictures to Dublin on the condition that a suitable gallery be built" (2006:45).

Rather than get too far ahead of ourselves, however, I wish to bring us back to Yeats's first published reviews, on Ferguson, where both the Celtic and cultural aspects emerge with combined force; for we must not leave behind the remaining interrelated aspects of the collective Arnoldian element which also arise in the reviews. It is a short step, in Yeats as in Arnold, from both the Celtic and cultural aspects to the over-arching ideal of ancient Greek genius, but their interconnection is not readily evident in Foster's brief observations on Yeats's appraisal of Ferguson, accurate though they are in themselves. We will draw out and take stock of the aspect of genius, above all, in the course of this thesis, in order to fully appreciate the collective Arnoldian element in *A Vision*; but for the moment, the appraisal of Ferguson also serves to bring into focus the aspects of morbidity and Romanticism. Again, however, their interconnectedness is not readily evident, this time in Watson's observations on the Ferguson reviews, accurate though they are, too, in themselves.

Watson comments that Yeats "had clearly read Arnold carefully, and quite extensively" (2006:40) but he highlights only two textual correspondences, in the second published review. A little later, he points in passing to a third

correspondence, in the first published review.⁸ The first correspondence relates to Arnold's 1853 preface (the morbidity aspect), the second to Arnold's 1853 poem "The Scholar-Gipsy" (the Romantic aspect), and the third to Arnold's Celticist analysis (the Celtic aspect). Firstly, Watson says that Yeats's reference to "the sad soliloquies of nineteenth century egoism" confirms Arnold's diagnosis in the 1853 preface of "'the dialogue of the mind with itself' as a disfiguring introspectiveness in modern poetry" (2006:40). This diagnosis occurs almost immediately in Arnold's preface; and in this context, its relation to his ideal of ancient Greek genius is impossible to miss. Arnold reflects upon the central character of his poem "Empedocles on Etna", the exclusion of which from the collection he seeks to justify:

I intended to delineate the feelings of one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers...Into the feelings of a man so situated there entered much that we are accustomed to consider as exclusively modern...What those who are familiar only with the great monuments of early Greek genius suppose to be its exclusive characteristics, have disappeared: the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity have disappeared; the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust.

(1992:172)

Besides noting Arnold's early usage of the term "disinterested" in relation to ancient Greek genius, later elaborated in *Culture and Anarchy*, Yeats's confirmation of this diagnosis, in the appraisal of Ferguson, partly assists us in linking Arnold, later in Yeats's career, to important components of the 'System'

⁸ I specify the reviews for accuracy of detail. Within the space constraints of his essay, Watson does not distinguish between the reviews.

of *A Vision*. These include the fundamental opposition of objectivity and subjectivity projected in the principal symbol or interpenetrating gyres, reimagined as the Great Wheel; and the appearance of Dowson and Beardsley as examples, along with Baudelaire, of the morbid Phase 13. Yeats's full sentence in the second published review reads: "At once the fault and the beauty of the nature-description of most modern poets is that for them the stars, and streams, the leaves, and the animals, are only masks behind which go on the sad soliloquies of a nineteenth century egoism" (2004:26). It is vital that Yeats refers not just to the "fault" but also the "beauty", which helps to explain in part, as we will see in chapter three, how he came to view his ill-fated associates of the tragic generation of the 1890s, many of whom were exponents of the Decadence which exalted beauty over morality, by the 'Empedoclean' light of Arnold's preface and poem centring on the fault of modern poets. As Ronald Schuchard says, "Empedocles was in effect a mask for Arnold's view of the modern lyric poet, who had lost 'the calm, the cheerfulness,' the classical sense of joy" (1985:90); and it was Yeats's father "who, echoing Arnold, first gave his son's new friends [the Rhymers] 'their right name,' saying that 'they are the Hamlets of our age'" (1985:92).

Even more importantly, in chapter four, we will trace how Yeats's poetic method or doctrine of the Mask set out in *Per Amica* is incorporated into *A Vision*. As Ellmann says, the Mask is "so complex and so central in Yeats that we can hardly attend to it too closely" (1960:175). At this stage, I wish merely to point out that we can appreciate, in the reference to modern "masks" in the appraisal of Ferguson, that the seeds of the later development of Yeats's Mask have already been planted, before he met Wilde and long before he read Nietzsche, two figures often seen by critics to have chiefly influenced Yeats's Mask. Clearly, in its mature and cultivated formulation, Yeats's Mask could never serve the purpose of facilitating the sad soliloquies of an excessive

subjectivity typical, according to Arnold, of modern poets. Yeats would inevitably seek to remedy the “fault” yet retain the “beauty”. His later Mask, therefore, would be powerfully informed by his early endorsement of Arnold’s diagnosis. Yeats’s passing reference to “masks” in the appraisal of Ferguson might seem a tenuous link to the later full-blown doctrine of the Mask were it not for the fact that, closely related to this, we can also appreciate that the Daimonic Man of Phase 17 in *A Vision*, who possesses the ideal Mask of Yeats and has consequently achieved the ideal condition of Unity of Being in which it is “as though we touched a musical string that set other strings vibrating” (1990:135), is already emerging in embryonic form in the first published review:

Man is like a musical instrument of many strings, of which only a few are sounded by the narrow interests of his daily life... Heroic poetry is a phantom finger swept over all the strings, arousing from man’s whole nature a song of answering harmony. It is the poetry of action, for such alone can arouse the whole nature of man... It ignores morals, for its business is not in any way to make us rules for life, but to make character.

(2004:6)

This inchoate Daimonic Man bears the traces of Yeats’s subversive – but anxious – cross-referencing of Arnold’s Celticist analysis (the Celtic aspect), 1853 preface (morbid aspect), and cultural analysis (cultural aspect) in reaching his own position on poetry and the Celtic genius of Ferguson. Clearly, Yeats is portraying Celtic genius as having – rather than lacking – what Arnold had called “a law of measure, of harmony, presiding over the whole” (2008:46) exemplified by the genius of the ancient Greeks (our over-arching fifth aspect). Immediately preceding this passage, Yeats turns the spotlight on Ferguson’s

“Lament of Deirdre”, which he declares to be “one of ‘the things of the old time before’”, and comments in a most Arnoldian way that “perhaps, some one will say, if it has come from so far off, what good can it do us moderns, with our complex life?” (2004:6). This echoes one of the core issues Arnold had sought to address in his 1853 preface, in which he champions subjects “chosen from distant times” against the choice “of any subjects but modern ones” (1992:173), arguing that “all great poets” found their “best in past times” (1992:178). In this vein, Arnold contrasts “modern problems” (1992:172) and “the bewildering confusion of our [modern] times” (1992:182), i.e. modern complexity, with the fortifying and composing effect of the ancients, recommending that the aspiring modern poet’s “attention should be fixed on excellent models; that he may reproduce... something of their excellence, by penetrating himself with their works and by catching their spirit, if he cannot be taught to produce what is excellent independently” (1992:178).

However, although the profoundly harmonizing effect of the poetry of the ancients, favourably compared to modern representations of the problems of daily life, is a central argument of the 1853 preface, Arnold never uses the single word which is favoured here by Yeats: harmony. Nevertheless, this word (along with its variants) is employed not only in Arnold’s Celticist analysis but also, extensively, in Arnold’s chief anti-Philistine text, *Culture and Anarchy*. For instance, Arnold argues that “by our best self we are united... at harmony” (2008:127), to which we can draw a line from the 1853 preface, where Arnold, referring to those who experience the “steadying and composing effect” of “commerce with the ancients”, asserts that “[w]hat they want, they know very well; they want to educe and cultivate what is best and noblest in themselves” (1992:181). In this vein, Arnold’s cultural analysis would appear to inform Yeats’s lofty anti-Philistinism in answering his own question in the appraisal of Ferguson: “Assuredly it will not help you to make a fortune, or even live

respectably that little life of yours. Great poetry does not teach us anything – it changes us” (2004:6).

Yeats’s reference to the heroic poetry of action, arousing the whole nature of a man, and making character, harks back to the 1853 preface where Arnold speaks of delighting in “the contemplation of some noble action of a heroic time” (1992:182) and argues that, in poetry, “the action itself, its selection and construction, is what is all-important. This the Greeks understood far more clearly than we do” (1992:175). In Arnold’s estimation, the “radical difference between their poetical theory and ours” is that, “with them, the poetical character of the action in itself, and the conduct of it, was the first consideration; with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action. They regarded the whole; we regard the parts” (1992:175). Accordingly, Arnold’s emphasis is on wholeness and unity in creative work. “We can hardly at the present day understand,” he humorously says, “what Menander meant, when he told a man who enquired as to the progress of his comedy that he had finished it, not having yet written a single line, because he had constructed the action of it in his mind. A modern critic would have assured him that the merit of his piece depended on the brilliant things which arose under his pen as he went along” (1992:177). This might have seemed to Yeats rather Shelleyan. In “A Defence of Poetry” (written in 1821 and published in 1840), Shelley remarks that “Milton conceived the *Paradise Lost* as a whole before he executed it in portions” (1973:758). Significantly, Arnold adds: “We have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages; not for the sake of producing any total impression” (1992:177).

This is much like his later claim that the Celt gives “to short pieces, or to passages, lines, and snatches of long pieces, singular beauty and power”, and

thus shows only flashes of brilliance rather than producing any great poetical works. Also foreshadowing his portrait of the Celt, Arnold complains: “We have critics who seem to direct their attention merely to detached expressions, to the language about the action, not to the action itself” (1992:177). Again, in language that would be echoed in regard to the Celt, Arnold says: “They will permit the poet to select any action he pleases... provided he gratifies them with occasional bursts of fine writing, and with a shower of isolated thoughts and images” (1992:177). Arnold proceeds to caution against the “imitation” – taking the word from Aristotle – of Shakespeare at the expense of his “fundamental excellences” (1992:178); and in doing so he praises Goethean architectonics, which he describes in terms reminiscent of Coleridge’s transformative, shaping and unifying (Secondary rather than Primary) Imagination: “These other excellences were [Shakespeare’s] fundamental excellences as a poet; what distinguishes the artist from the mere amateur, says Goethe, is *Architectonicē* in the highest sense; that power of execution, which creates, forms, and constitutes: not the profoundness of single thoughts...” (1992:178/179).

Just as he would later convict the Celt of a failure to attain “the true art, the architectonics which shapes great works”, then, Arnold identifies this deficiency as prevalent among modern poets. As we will see, holistic poetical construction is a particular, subversive point of emphasis for Yeats who, in portraying Ferguson as a Celtic genius, declares in the second published review that to detach anything at all, through short quotations, from what he holds to be Ferguson’s greatest masterpiece “Deirdre”, would be to do the poem an injustice, which is key to his elevation of Ferguson’s Celtic genius to, explicitly, the high company of that of the ancient Greeks. That Arnold is uppermost in Yeats’s thoughts in sketching what we can see is his embryonic Daimonic Man, in the first published review, is clear in that, in a striking instance of the anxiety of influence, Yeats is quick to distinguish his own description of what poetry is,

from Arnold's definition of what poetry is. Yeats adds: "It is not, as a great English writer has said, 'a criticism of life', but rather a fire in the spirit, burning away what is mean and deepening what is shallow" (2004:6). The fact that Yeats refers specifically to Arnold, from the first, in distinction to his projection of a man whose whole nature is roused and harmonized by the phantom hand of poetry, makes it all the more puzzling that biographers and critics have never closely examined the later configuration of the Daimonic Man Yeats at Phase 17 – whose inspiration derives from a "ghost [which] is simple" (1990:43), as he describes Daimonic possession in *Per Amica* – beside Arnold (and Goethe) at Phase 18 in *A Vision*.

This seemingly clear-cut distancing of himself from Arnold becomes less and less convincing not only as the appraisal of Ferguson unfolds, but as we trace the long-term trajectory from the embryonic Daimonic Man of the appraisal to the fully and perfectly formed Daimonic Man of *A Vision*. Frayne and Marchaterre explain that Arnold's "famous dictum that poetry is '... the criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty'" (2004:494) appears in "The Study of Poetry", first published as the introduction to *The English Poets* (1880). However, they pinpoint Arnold's first usage of this phrase to long before this, on "23 November 1863 in an Oxford lecture on French writer Joseph Joubert (1754-1824), entitled 'A French Coleridge'" (2004:494). Notably, Watson pairs Yeats's apparent rejection of Arnold here and across his oeuvre on the critical point of this dictum with Yeats's similar targeting of George Eliot, who is named with evident displeasure, as we have seen, in relation to Dowden in the second published review on Ferguson. As Watson says:

[Yeats] is repeatedly severe on what he sees as an ethical bias in the literary attitudes and critical principles of two quintessential

Victorians, Matthew Arnold and George Eliot. He frequently alludes, and always with hostility, to Matthew Arnold's dictum that poetry should be 'a criticism of life.' He is even more antagonistic to George Eliot, who fails to provide Yeats with what he sees as an inescapable quality of great art, namely joy.

(2006:38)

As I have indicated, I will touch upon Yeats's rather Arnoldian view of George Eliot later in this chapter. At this stage, it must be said that Yeats was in fact not averse to using Arnold's famous dictum when it suited his own purpose. For example, in the printed circular addressed "To Abbey Playwrights" and signed solely by "W.B.Y", and which is included in the online archive of Yeats's collected letters under the editors' speculative dating of "[? early March 1909]", Yeats advises: "A play to be suitable for performance at the Abbey should contain some criticism of life founded on the experience or personal observation of the writer, or some vision of life, of Irish life by preference, important from its beauty or from some excellence of style; and this intellectual quality is not more necessary to tragedy than to the gayest comedy" (Kelly, Schuchard 2002). While the slant is obviously towards the Irish context, both the criticism of life and vision of life are amenable to Yeats here; and the importance of beauty and excellence of style associated with intellect are all in harmony with Arnold's conception of Hellenism in *Culture and Anarchy*, which Arnold also associates with the Platonic virtue of attaining "perfect intellectual vision (2008:148/49), and which on the points of beauty and style, especially, parallel his earlier analysis of the Celt. Much later, and even more strikingly, Yeats employs Arnold's dictum to describe his own mature poetry, in introducing the last poem "Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931" (1932) in his final BBC broadcast, entitled "My Own Poetry Again", on 29 October 1937: "It is typical of most of my

recent poems... not at all a dream, like my earlier poems, but a criticism of life” (Foster 2003:601).⁹

I expressly do not wish to disorient the reader as we shift briefly between all five aspects of the Arnoldian element before resuming our course along the morbidity track, but it might be added that Arnold’s dictum is bound up for Yeats with another of Arnold’s highly influential ideas: that of culture as “seeing things as they really are”, which Arnold closely associates with perfect intellectual vision. In Chapter IV, Arnold explains that the “partaking of the divine life, which both Hellenism and Hebraism... fix as their crowning aim, Plato expressly denies to the man of practical virtue merely, of self-conquest with any other motive than that of perfect intellectual vision; he reserves it for the lover of pure knowledge, of seeing things as they really are...”

(2008:148/49). This is in line with Arnold’s argument throughout that culture seeks disinterestedly “in its aim at perfection, to see things as they really are” (2008:90). The phrase recurs across Arnold’s oeuvre. In Lecture II of *On Translating Homer* (1861/2), Arnold had similarly spoken of the “critical effort... to see the object as in itself it really is” (1914:285), the demurrals to which he acknowledges in *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* (1865), and the wording of which would be famously exploited by Pater and Wilde to prioritise the aesthetic critic as artist.

In Volume II of the collected letters, in a footnote to Yeats’s letter to the editor of the *Daily Express* dated 8 November 1898, the editors refer to Yeats’s “view of the world as a ‘dictionary of types and symbols’ in ‘The Autumn of the

⁹ Similarly, following publication of *The Tower* (1928), Edmund Wilson had enthused in *Axel’s Castle: A Study of the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930* (1931) that Yeats “writes poems which charge now with the emotion of a great lyric poet that profound and subtle criticism of life” (1959:61).

Flesh' [1898], where Goethe, Wordsworth, and Browning are accused of giving up such a view in favour of the Arnoldian idea that poetry should be a 'critic of life'" (Gould, Kelly, Toomey 1997:297). However, Yeats's actual wording on this point in his essay is illuminating: "... it was only with the modern poets, with Goethe and Wordsworth and Browning, that poetry gave up the right to consider all things in the world as a dictionary of types and symbols and began to call itself a critic of life and an interpreter of things as they are" (1972:192). It is important to recognise, therefore, along the trajectory from the appraisal of Ferguson towards *A Vision*, that Yeats links – in negative terms, as it were – Arnold's dictum that poetry is the "criticism of life" with Arnold's notion of seeing "things as they are" (2008:99). As Bloom comments in *The Anatomy of Influence*, albeit not considering Arnold any further in relation to Yeats, "Matthew Arnold implicitly is thus blamed on Goethe, Wordsworth, and Browning, which is neither fair nor convincing" (2011:173). Indeed, I wish to signpost here that in Arnold's dictum and related notion, for Yeats, of seeing things as they are, we are encountering important phraseology alluded to, as I will show, in *A Vision*, not least in the representation of the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17.

As we will see (so to speak), Yeats's reading of Arnold on the point of seeing, which is closely related to his attacks on Arnold's dictum, is indeed more than a little unfair and unconvincing. In *The Arnoldian Principle of Flexibility* (1979), William Robbins comments that Arnold's "seeing things as they really are is not the same objectivity as that of the man of science, though it may supply a bond or bridge" (1979:16). In this vein, it might be added that Arnold does not see things as they are in the same way as the "great enemy" Locke whom Yeats would read, as Donoghue (among others) recognises, "in the Romantic way of Blake and Coleridge" (1971:49). Among others, Adam Phillips has explained

that Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) "revealed that Arnold's ideas of objectivity were more problematic than they at first seemed" (Pater 1998:xvii), but what is not routinely stressed by critics is that this has much to do with the fact that Arnold was largely inclined to a Romantic mode of vision bound up with his ideal of the harmonizing genius of the ancient Greeks. Arnold's "seeing things as they are" paradoxically requires the heightening of the subjective self, a creative engagement with and bracing of the objective world, precisely because objective fact as seen by those who Hebraise is so open to question, as Arnold sees it.

Inexact and dubious though Arnold's formulation is, to see things as they are is, clearly, to not see things as a Philistine sees them; and nor is it to slip into the isolation of a purely aesthetic subjectivity – the dialogue of the mind with itself – such as that described by Pater in the conclusion to the *Renaissance*.

Therefore, Arnold's position is not so far removed from that of Yeats as the repeated rejection of Arnold's dictum might suggest. Nevertheless, the subtlety and terminological muddle, if you will, of Arnold's formulation of seeing things "as they are" provides leeway for Yeats to shrewdly subject Arnold to what Bloom calls in general a "[c]reative misreading" (2011:5), in which he effectively splits Arnold in two, similarly to his division, as we have seen, between a "criticism of life" and "vision of life" in the circular to Abbey playwrights. In *A Vision*, Yeats is thereby able to allude negatively to Arnold's notion of seeing things as they are while occupying what is Arnold's largely Romantic position on artistic vision and free handling of objective fact outlined in Arnold's essay "Dante and Beatrice" (1863), as we will see. The latter position is closely related to Arnold's notions of style and genius in his Celticist analysis, where he also references Dante as an exemplary figure – all of which

would appear to inform the placement of Dante, along with Yeats, at the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision*.

Moreover, as Watson says, Yeats saw in Arnold's notion of poetry as a "criticism of life" an ethical or moral bias. On the point of morality, Yeats also creatively misreads Arnold, whose closeness to Yeats's own position can be readily appreciated in Arnold's argument in *Culture and Anarchy* that just "because we have braced the moral fibre,[we] are not on that account in the right way, if at the same time the idea of beauty, harmony, and complete human perfection, is wanting or misapprehended amongst us; and evidently it is wanting or misapprehended at present" (2008:104). The anti-Philistine Arnold sought to transform – rather than approve of – what he saw as the staunch and misguided Hebraistic morality of his time, which he explicitly linked to misrule of Ireland. Watson argues:

Yeats was acutely aware of the role he had imposed on himself as one who wanted to mold [sic] the nation, as one of those who 'sang, to sweeten Ireland's wrong'... Yeats may have used Arnold's phrase about literature being a 'criticism of life' as a shorthand stick with which to beat the narrowly moralistic strain of Victorian writing... He was, however, too honest a reader not to see that Arnold transcends that narrow moralism, and that in his own way he too, like Yeats, links the morality of art to the enhancement of life rather than to its repression.

(2006:44)

We might say, however, that while Yeats saw Arnold as he really was on the point of morality, this did not stop Yeats from seeking to differentiate himself

from Arnold on just this point, as the attacks on Arnold's dictum show. It might also be added at this stage that Yeats's metaphor of a spiritual fire in distinguishing poetry (and his proto-Daimonic Man) from morals, and Arnold's dictum, might seem to align Yeats, in the long term, with Pater's notorious exhortation, in the conclusion to the *Renaissance*, to "burn always with this hard, gem-like flame" (1998:152), which so inspired exponents of the Decadence (not least Wilde). This is a tempting linkage, particularly given Yeats's additional metaphor of musical strings in this early vision of poetical harmony, which might seem to align Yeats, too, with Pater's famous assertion, in "The School of Giorgione" in the same book, that "[a]ll art constantly aspires towards the condition of music" (1998:86). After all, Pater is also a writer concerned with "measure" or a law of harmony presiding over the whole. Asserting that lyric poetry is "the highest and most complete form of poetry" (1998:87), Pater points to the poetry of Blake as well as Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* on his way to affirming, nevertheless: "In music, then, rather than in poetry, is to be found the true type or measure of perfected art" (1998:88).

It would seem to be possible but highly unlikely, however, that in conjuring his embryonic Daimonic Man in the appraisal of Ferguson in 1886 Yeats is using Pater against Arnold. Richard Bizot speculates in "Pater and Yeats" (1976) that it is "uncertain when Yeats first made acquaintance with Pater's writings, yet it was probably not too long after (and it could have been before) the Yeats family moved from Dublin to London in the spring of 1887" (1976:394). He adds that, in light of Pater's "relative celebrity ever since the publication of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), renewed by the publication of *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), it is safe to assume that Yeats was acquainted with Pater's reputation, if not his actual writings, at an earlier date", and would certainly have become more acquainted (with perhaps especially the *Renaissance*)

through Wilde, from 1888 or 1889, and both Lionel Johnson and Arthur Symons “at least from the time the Rhymers’ Club was founded early in 1891” (1976:394). Yet it is only – and tellingly, it would seem – in September 1891, as Bizot indicates, that Yeats’s “first published reference to Pater (and the only one prior to Pater’s death in 1894) appeared in the *Boston Pilot*” (1976:394), in which Yeats mentions reading *Marius the Epicurean*. This is quite some time after the appraisal of Ferguson; and across Yeats’s oeuvre Bizot finds “fewer than thirty direct references to Pater, over half of which consist of a sentence or less” (1976:393).

Yeats’s familiarity with Pater’s works would appear to have developed in the longer term, whereas his immersion in the works of Arnold, and references to Arnold, can already be seen as early as the Ferguson reviews in 1886. Moreover, as critics have observed (including T.S. Eliot, whose own Arnoldian inclinations have not escaped critical scrutiny), many of Pater’s ideas could be seen to have been already sanctioned by Arnold, not least the free spontaneous play of consciousness. Crucially, as we will see in chapter three, we have only to turn to Arnold’s morbid poem “Empedocles on Etna”, in conjunction with Yeats’s account in “The Tragic Generation” of his ill-fated fellow Rhymers losing their balance under the sway of Paterian influence, to appreciate Arnold’s decisive bearing on Yeats’s view of those of his peers who were ultimately (to use a different but apposite metaphor, also to be found in Arnold’s poem) devoured by the flame within. The contrast between Yeats’s Arnoldian position on the need to attain the “measure, balance” of the ancients, and Paterian art for art’s sake descending into excessive subjectivity and morbidity, is projected in the relation between Phase 13 and Phase 17 in *A Vision*.

While we must acknowledge, then, the powerful influence of Paterian aestheticism on Yeats in the long term, including in the development of Yeats's fully and perfectly formed Daimonic Man of *A Vision*, we must ultimately not follow Bloom in summarily relating, as we will see in chapter four, Phase 17 solely and pre-eminently to Paterian influence on Yeats. At this stage, I wish merely to emphasize that, along the trajectory from the Ferguson appraisal to *A Vision*, even if we allow for a degree of Paterian influence (whether merely by reputation, or perhaps direct reading by Yeats) on the inchoate Daimonic Man of the Ferguson review, it is Arnold's representation of the musicality of the Celt, and exaltation of Hellenistic harmony, which can often be seen to characterise Yeats's work and evolving poetic theory, including in so far as it was publicised, in the long term. For instance, William Sharp's portrayal of Yeats in the introduction to *Lyra Celtica, An Anthology of Representative Celtic Poetry* (1896) is instructive on the point of Yeats's own intentionally Celtic musicality. As Gould, Kelly, and Toomey report in a footnote to Yeats's letter to Sharp in June 1896, Sharp "describes WBY 'as pre-eminently representative of the Celtic genius of to-day'" (1997:37). Sharp adds: "He has grace of touch and distinction of form beyond any of the younger generation of Great Britain, and there is throughout his work a haunting beauty, and a haunting sense of beauty everywhere perceived with joy and longing, that makes its appeal irresistible... in almost every poem he has written there is that exquisite remoteness, that dreamlike music, and that transporting charm which Matthew Arnold held to be one of the primary tests of poetry, and, in particular, of Celtic poetry'" (1997:37).

This is a test Yeats would seem to have long since applied, as early as the appraisal of Ferguson, whose mantle as Celtic genius Yeats effectively assumes in Sharp's introduction. The praise of Yeats's "distinction of form" echoes

Yeats's own praise of Ferguson's mastery of form – a 'correction', we can already appreciate, of Arnold's Celt on the point of measure, even as other qualities of Arnold's Celt, such as a sense of beauty, musicality, and charm, are evidently endorsed. Furthermore, we may relate Arnold, on the point of musicality, to not only the Celtic aspect but to Yeats's pursuit of Hellenistic harmony (the cultural aspect). It is also instructive to recall the report of "*The Musical Critic of the 'Manchester Guardian,' 19th May, 1903*" which is reproduced in the "Biographical and Historical Appendix" in *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats Volume IV:1905-1907* (2005) edited by John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard. Referring to Yeats's work with Florence Farr in "the art of speaking to the psaltery" (2005:888), the critic explains Yeats's desire for a continuity between the Hellenistic and modern worlds in the achievement of a balanced treatment of music and words. The critic writes that Yeats has "laid hold upon a most important fact – the modern impoverishment both of music and of poetry by the divorce between those arts" (2005:889). Yet it is Arnold, rather than Pater (or Nietzsche, for that matter), who emerges as the foremost impetus for Yeats in this regard, when the critic adds: "This is part of the broader fact that we have not any such harmony among the arts as the Greeks of the great age possessed, but are harassed by 'the sick hurry, the divided aims,' of which Matthew Arnold complained. If we are ever to find a way back to a true harmony between music and poetry it will almost certainly be by some such way as Mr. Yeats's..." (2005:889).

The critic's quotation here is from Arnold's poem "The Scholar-Gipsy" (1853), a favourite of Yeats, as we will see. For the moment, again questioning just how clear-cut the distinction from Arnold in the appraisal of Ferguson really is, and again with a long-term view, I wish to suggest that Yeats's description of poetry as a "fire in the spirit" might also lead us to consider that Arnoldian anti-

Philistinism, so robustly taken up by Yeats in the Irish context, is aimed precisely at burning away the “mean” and “shallow” in not only the individual but society as a whole by prioritising the inner spirit as a corrective to Philistine materialism and arrested development in all its forms, including provincialism and the stultifying religious morality of those who Hebraise rather than Hellenise. As we will see in more detail in chapter three, Arnold describes a particular type of man who “tends towards sweetness and light” (2008:104) and who is thus a man of both culture and poetry. Naturally, such a man, fixed upon harmonious perfection, which is characterised by sweetness and light, is the direct opposite of the Philistine. Along this trajectory, Arnold later homes in on the passion which impels genius, which he associates with individuals who seek to evoke their “best self”, superseding the everyday “ordinary self” and its doing as it likes.

Arnold therefore expands the customary notion of what genius entails, locating genius in a realm not ordinarily apprehended by the Philistine “world”, i.e. as a social rather than merely artistic phenomenon. Nevertheless, there is never any doubt that such cultured individuals are at one with the law of poetry: for Arnold, the poetical and political are effectively one and the same. Such individuals tending towards sweetness and light and, by extension, the state in which their collective best self is to be embodied, thereby effectively transcend the limitations of class background. Arnold sees potential in this for an overarching national unity:

But in each class there are born a certain number of natures with a curiosity about their best self, with a bent for seeing things as they are... To certain manifestations of this love for perfection mankind have accustomed themselves to give the name of genius; implying... something original and heaven-bestowed in the passion. But the passion

is to be found far beyond those manifestations of it to which the world usually gives the name of genius, and in which there is... a talent of some kind or other, a special and striking faculty of execution, informed by the heaven-bestowed ardour, or genius. It is to be found in many manifestations besides these, and may best be called... the love and pursuit of perfection; culture being the true nurse of the pursuing love, and sweetness and light the true character of the pursued perfection.

(2008:134/5)

Arnold's concern with passion and perfection is strongly evident long before *Culture and Anarchy*, in the 1853 preface, where he asserts that the most excellent actions are those "which most certainly appeal to the great primary human affections... To the elementary part of our nature, to our passions, that which is great and passionate is eternally interesting; and interesting solely in proportion to its greatness and to its passion" (1992:174). He asserts that "[p]oetical works belong to the domain of our permanent passions" (1992:174). Passion is also a core defining quality of Arnold's Celt, reacting against fact. When Yeats, in the appraisal of Ferguson, says that poetry "ignores morals, for its business is not in any way to make us rules for life", we might think of Yeats's later declaration, in section X of "Anima Hominis" in *Per Amica*, that for the poet "passion is his only business" (1990:45), and consider the long-term importance of Arnold to this fundamental Yeatsian tenet, in the formulation of the doctrine of the Mask incorporated into *A Vision*. Strikingly, in the passage just quoted from *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold uses the metaphor of fire to describe the incendiary effect of the passion – indeed, the sheer genius – of individuals who seek to elicit their best selves. Reiterating that "[n]atures of this bent emerge in all classes" and that "this bent always tends... to take them out of their class", so that their "distinguishing characteristic... [is] their humanity", Arnold adds: "... they set up a fire which enfilades... the class with which they

are ranked; and, in general, by the extrication of their best self as the self to develop, and by the simplicity of the ends fixed by them as paramount, they hinder the unchecked predominance of that class-life which is the affirmation of our ordinary self..." (2008:134/5).

Yeats, we should note, sought to rise above his Anglo-Irish middle-class background in spearheading the Irish literary revival and fashioning himself as Ireland's national poet. Moreover, his own pursuit of perfection is renowned. For instance, in volume II of the collected letters, in a footnote to Yeats's letter to T. Fisher Unwin dated 6 June 1899, the editors mention that "*The Bookman* of June 1899, noting WBY's 'considerable revision', observed... that he was 'a fastidious artist restlessly striving after perfection'" (Gould, Kelly, Toomey 1997:421). In late life, in "What Then?" (1937), the perfectionist Yeats, spurred by the Hellenistic spirit, as it were, of Plato's ghost, would reflect:

'... Let the fools rage, I swerved in naught,
Something to perfection brought';
But louder sang that ghost, 'What then?'

(Allt, Alspach 1989:577)

I will recall Arnold's important passage, in the second part of this chapter, in relation to Yeats's approach to genius and class in his appraisal of Ferguson, bearing in mind the trajectory towards the fully and perfectly formed Daimonic Man (Yeats) of *A Vision*. At this stage, I wish merely to signpost, too, that Arnold's usage here of the single term "simplicity", as a defining feature of those naturally tending towards sweetness and light and eliciting their best selves, corresponds with many instances across his oeuvre – including such texts as the 1853 preface, *On Translating Homer* and *On the Study of Celtic Literature* – in which he employs this term to define ancient Greek (and Latin)

genius, on the point of style, and by which he effectively means perfect “measure”, poetical and political, in this case the antidote to anarchy. As I will argue, this single term frequently employed by Arnold feeds into the formulation of the Mask-as-style of the Daimonic Man in *A Vision*, which is partly defined as “simplicity” (1990:172), and which is his mode of measure. Of course, within the labyrinth of influence, a preoccupation with “simplicity” is far from the sole preserve of Arnold. As Matthew Gibson points out in *Yeats, Coleridge and the Romantic Sage* (2000), Yeats refers to Wordsworth and Coleridge in his 1906 *Samhain* essay “Literature and the Living Voice” in “regard to their attempts to discover ‘simplicity’ in adopting a poetic model which preceded the development of device” (Gibson 2000:18).

In the essay, Yeats argues that the authors of the *Lyrical Ballads* “were influenced by the publication of Percy’s *Reliques* to the making of a simplicity altogether unlike that of the old ballad-writers” (1973:211). Gibson comments that a reason for Yeats linking both Romantics “to the effort to find a ‘simplicity’ in keeping with his own attempt to find a living voice may well have been not their use of Percy, but because Wordsworth himself held to a primitivist doctrine of language in writing the *Lyrical Ballads*” (2000:19). Recognition of Yeats’s linkage of the single term “simplicity” to a primitivist approach to language might also point us, however, in the direction of the relation between Yeats and Arnold, on the Celtic aspect. While it must certainly be recognized that both Wordsworth and Coleridge were strongly in play as influences on Yeats’s preoccupation with simplicity and language in the Irish context, the authors of the *Lyrical Ballads* were also, as Arnold biographers and critics have frequently highlighted, powerfully influential on Arnold. Wordsworth is among the four most potent influences on Arnold – the others being Goethe, Saint-Beuve, and Cardinal Newman – explicitly cited by Arnold himself in his letter to Newman dated 28 May 1872. As Neil Heims says,

Arnold would attempt in his own essay on Wordsworth “to reverse the ‘diminution of popularity’” of Wordsworth’s poetry by arguing “for the virtue of its simplicity” (2003:53).

We can readily see a possible link between Wordsworth and Arnold’s preoccupation with simplicity in relation to the best, and a possible linkage of both, in turn, for Yeats, in Gibson’s report that in “the Preface to the second edition of the book, Wordsworth described a language derived from men who ‘hourly communicate with the best objects, from which the best parts of language are derived’... and which is ‘plainer and more emphatic’, eschewing ‘traditional associations’, a phrase echoed in Yeats’s praise of the language of the uncorrupted peasantry for having less ‘mechanical specialisations and traditions’” (2000:19). From Yeats’s perspective, Gibson adds, both Wordsworth and Coleridge “held to a prelapsarian and spiritual view of the language of the ordinary folk, which in his own case translated to the possibility of Unity of Culture if the high artifice of the Anglo-Irish could use the raw strength of that tradition” (2000:19). We are approaching very closely here, however, to Yeats’s attitude towards Celtic primitivism which, as we will see in chapter two, is related to Yeats’s hopes for Unity of Being through Unity of Culture in Ireland, or what he called his “dream of the noble and the beggarman” (Allt, Alspach 1989:603), ultimately inseparable from his engagement with both Arnold’s Celticist and cultural analyses.

At this stage, we might merely register that there can be little doubt that Yeats’s own frequent usage of the single term “simplicity” derives, in no small part, from Arnold. We will take stock of Arnold’s usage of this term in a range of works, within the wider labyrinth of influence, in chapter four; but as we have already seen, the term arises not just in the description of Hellenised geniuses in *Culture and Anarchy* but also, with the adjective “noble”, in the 1853 preface,

in describing the genius of the ancient Greeks. The interrelation of the preface and Arnold's cultural analysis, in Yeats, can be appreciated in a journal entry dated February 6, 1909. The anti-Philistine Yeats reflects, in distinctly Arnoldian terms of "style", "sweetness" and, as we will see in chapter three, "serenity" by which Arnold defines the truly aristocratic nature of ancient Greek genius and art in *Culture and Anarchy*: "When I think... of Synge dying at this moment of their bitterness and ignorance, as I believe, I wonder if I have been right to shape my style to sweetness and serenity" (1974:161). Yeats proceeds to recall the *Playboy* debate, again in distinctly Arnoldian terms of "sweetness" (one of the two "noblest of things") and "simplicity", which he contrasts with the anarchy of the "mob": "No man of all literary Dublin dared show his face but my own father, who spoke to, or rather in the presence of, that howling mob with sweetness and simplicity. I fought them, he was nobler – he forgot them" (1974:161).

That said, I wish to shift us back to the morbidity track. Although Watson does not relate Arnold's diagnosis in the 1853 preface to *A Vision*, he follows up Yeats's confirmation of Arnold's diagnosis, in the appraisal of Ferguson, by stressing the enduring importance of the preface in that it "confirmed in Yeats the belief that art, even tragic art, must be instinct with joy" (2006:41). Yeats's view of joy as an inescapable quality of great art, and his condemnation of George Eliot as moralistic and lacking joy, can therefore be seen, I wish to expressly point out, to have a powerful Arnoldian input, even though Yeats evidently bracketed both Arnold and Eliot as moralistic Victorians. In the preface Arnold quotes Schiller's statement that "[a]ll art... is dedicated to Joy, and there is no higher and no more serious problem, than how to make men happy. The right art is that alone, which creates the highest enjoyment" (Arnold 1992:173). It might be noted, too, that the link within the labyrinth of

influence to the tradition of German Hellenism, in which we can locate Schiller, also illuminates Arnold's later advocacy of a "free spontaneous play of consciousness", which underlines the interconnection between the morbid and cultural aspects. In his *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* (1795), as Douglas Smith says (though not in relation to Arnold but to Nietzsche), Schiller had "distinguished between the free and spontaneous (naïve) creativity of the Greeks and the problematic and self-conscious (sentimental) sensibility of the modern artist" (Nietzsche 2008:xi).

In the 1853 preface, Arnold continues in the spirit of Schiller, adding that a "poetical work... is not yet justified when it has been shown to be an accurate, and therefore interesting representation; it has to be shown also that it is a representation from which men can derive enjoyment" (1992:173). Watson quotes Arnold's delineation of scenarios that are, on the other hand, not enjoyable: "They are those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done" (Arnold 1992:173). However, in the next sentence (not quoted by Watson), Arnold uses the single word "morbid" which, as we will see, helps to confirm Arnold's powerful covert 'presence' across a number of phases of the Great Wheel of *A Vision*, beyond his overt appearance as an example of Phase 18:

In such situations there is inevitably something morbid, in the description of them something monotonous. When they occur in actual life, they are painful, not tragic; the representation of them in poetry is painful also. To this class of situations, poetically faulty as it appears to me, that of Empedocles, as I have endeavoured to

represent him, belongs; and I have therefore excluded the poem
[“Empedocles on Etna”] from the present collection.

(1992:173)

Whereas Watson observes that Yeats transfers Arnold’s cultural terminology smoothly to the Irish context in his 1892 article on Trinity scholasticism, and the editors of volume II of Yeats’s collected letters point to the saturation of Yeats’s early work with Arnold’s Celticist terminology, Ronald Schuchard has similarly observed, from what might seem this unrelated angle (the morbidity aspect), that by as early as 1888 “Yeats’s literary judgment and taste had become adjusted to Arnold’s critical language” (1985:91). The saturation of Yeats’s work with Arnoldian terms and language, even if we were to limit our study to just these three aspects, can therefore be seen to be far more extensive than has been realized, with each of these critics dealing separately with a particular aspect. This only serves to underline that Yeats’s terminology – not least in *A Vision* – merits the closest re-scrutiny in relation to Arnold.

Schuchard explains that this adjustment followed Yeats’s initial ‘Empedoclean’ or “morbid experiments” in 1887 in writing two ballads that were, as Yeats had anticipated, disapproved of by his Fenian mentor John O’Leary, who had decidedly “Arnoldian expectations” (1985:91) for Irish poetry. Schuchard quotes from letters to O’Leary and Katherine Tynan in which Yeats can be seen to have adopted Arnoldian analytical terms such as “morbid” and “joyless” (1985:91). The extraordinary longevity of Yeats’s preoccupation with Arnold’s 1853 preface is highlighted by both Schuchard and Watson, the latter explaining that Yeats read the preface “with excitement and approval”, and inevitably pointing, like the former, to the fact that Yeats was “famously and controversially to take up Arnold’s point in excluding the poets of the Great War from *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*” (Watson 2006:41) published late

in Yeats's life, in 1936. Watson quotes Yeats's explanation of his editorial decision: "I have rejected these poems for the same reason that made Arnold withdraw his Empedocles on Etna from circulation; passive suffering is not a theme for poetry" (Yeats 1970:xxxiv).

Watson adds that this "was not a passing judgement. The views Arnold expressed on the need for art to assert joy, and Arnold's concern about the introspective, even solipsistic character of modern poetry, were congenial to Yeats right through his career" (2006:41). However, while this is true, we must not lose sight of the fact that the flip-side is equally true. In the 1853 preface it is the genius of the ancient Greeks against which Arnold measures the moderns, and finds them sorely wanting. It should be no surprise, therefore, that Arnold's fixation on the genius of the ancient Greeks should remain congenial to Yeats, too, right through his career – especially when we factor in Arnold's similar unfavourable judgment that the genius of the Celts, though capable of flashes of brilliance, could not match that of the masterful ancient Greeks. As we might then expect, it is in the relation between Yeats's Phase 17 and Arnold's Phase 18 in *A Vision* that Yeats's career-long preoccupation with Arnold's projections of the genius of the ancients attains its climax. Yeats, we might say, ensures that he ultimately has the measure of Arnold.

ii) THE SCHOLAR-GIPSY YEATS: CROSS-REFERENCING ARNOLD'S PROJECTIONS OF GENIUS

In deepening our appreciation, in relation to *A Vision*, of Yeats's preoccupation with Arnold's ideal of genius, we must change tack once more within the collective Arnoldian element, from the morbid to the Celtic, and thereby gain a

foothold on the Romantic aspect, in taking stock of the second correspondence highlighted by Watson in regard to Yeats's appraisal of Ferguson. Watson says Yeats's hope that "the study of Irish legends will save Irish readers from 'that leprosy of the modern – tepid emotions and many aims'" echoes Arnold's description "in his poem 'The Scholar Gypsy' (1853) of the 'strange disease' of modern life, 'with its sick hurry, its divided aims'" (2006:41).¹⁰ As we will see, there is a lot more to this echo of Arnold in 1886, carried here by the single word "aims", in the long run, with Yeats bringing Blake (via Palmer) equally into play against the "tepid" – another resonant single word we can correlate with this echo in 1886 – in "Blake's Illustrations to Dante" (1897). In this vein, with the Romantic Blake as his ally, Yeats shrewdly turns Arnold against Arnold, as it were, in "The Celtic Element in Literature" that same year by defending the vivifying excess of the Celt in opposition to a passionless, tepid, and lifeless sanity in art. An inkling of the tremendous importance of Arnold to not only the Celticism but the Romantic sensibility of Yeats, implicit in this echo in 1886, can be gauged from a passing reference in the introduction to volume II of the collected letters, to Yeats's Romanticism.

In section IV, the editors write, albeit without noting the echo of Arnold, that Yeats was in these years seeking "the restoration of what he was to characterize as 'Unity of Being' through 'Unity of Culture'. Always a Romantic, he had from the beginning sought to make his writings not merely an individual utterance, but a voice in some larger harmony that would restore cultural and social coherence to a modern, alienated, entropic world of 'tepid emotions and many aims'" (Gould, Kelly, Toomey 1997:lxii). It will not surprise the reader that we are in fact encountering, potentially, all five interrelated aspects of the Arnoldian element in the labyrinth that opens up by merely scratching the surface of Watson's brief tracing of Yeats's fondness for "The Scholar-Gipsy".

¹⁰ Arnold's spelling of the title is "The Scholar-Gipsy".

Following on from the echo in the appraisal of Ferguson in 1886, Watson reports that Yeats “had made a kind of pilgrimage to Oxford in 1889, the year after Arnold’s death, and quotes approvingly, even lovingly, from ‘The Scholar Gypsy’ in his essay on ‘Magic’ in 1901” (2006:41). The pilgrimage Watson refers to is described in Yeats’s letter to Katharine Tynan dated 14 August 1889, in which his fondness for “The Scholar-Gipsy” is also evident: “This is a most beautiful country, about here – I walked sixteen miles on Sunday – going to the places in Matthew Arnolds poems – the ford in ‘the Scholour Gipsej’ being the furthest away & most interesting” (Kelly, Domville 1986:181).

However, we might easily see here an intersection with the cultural aspect, for it is quite possible that Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* would also have been in Yeats’s thoughts during his visit to Oxford in 1889. As Joseph Hone explains in *W.B. Yeats* (1943), Yeats’s trip was for the purpose of “transcription of a rare (Caxton) volume of Aesop which Alfred Nutt wished to reprint” (1971:60/61). Arnold’s famous phrase “sweetness and light” derives from the “long descant” (Swift 2008:113) of Aesop in St James’s Library, in Jonathan Swift’s *The Battle of the Books* (1704). Aesop relates the acrimonious exchange between the bee and the spider to the dispute between the Ancients and Moderns respectively, and concludes that “the difference is that instead of dirt and poison [of the Moderns, like the spider], we [the Ancients, like the bee] have rather chose to fill our hives with honey and wax, thus furnishing mankind with the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light” (2008:113). As the borrowing of this phrase suggests, Arnold shows himself in *Culture and Anarchy* to be on the side of the Ancients rather than the Moderns, a position he had long since affirmed in the 1853 preface in which he rejects morbidity and extols the genius of the ancient Greeks as the ideal model for modern poets.

This short step to the morbid aspect might easily be followed by another, to the Celtic aspect, intersecting with the Romantic aspect. In his essay “Magic”, it is apparent that Yeats not only quotes approvingly from “The Scholar-Gipsy”, in section IV, where he envisions the titular figure still “wandering somewhere, even if one cannot see him, as Arnold imagined” (Yeats 1972:38) him in various locales, but that Yeats also fashions himself into a kind of scholar-gipsy, a possessor of secret or occult knowledge, of what he calls in the concluding section VIII “hidden things” (1972:51). Yet this self-fashioning was clearly under way in 1889. Schuchard captures in passing Yeats’s Arnoldian occultism, as it were, as well as its ramifications within the labyrinth of influence, perhaps most notably in regard to Blake: “Even as [Yeats] wrote [to Tynan], the scholar-gipsy had begun the ‘strange pursuits’ that led him into the visionary company of Blake, Blavatsky, Mathers, and the Golden Dawn...” (1985:91). We should also appreciate here Yeats’s ‘Celticisation’ of these individuals – notwithstanding Samuel Liddell Mathers, with whom Yeats would collaborate on the Order of Celtic Mysteries, and whose renaming of himself as MacGregor Mathers was expressly a proclamation of Celtic heritage. In *The Life of W.B. Yeats* (1999), in his account of the Order of the Golden Dawn’s spiral into crisis at the turn of the century, Terence Brown humorously explains that Mathers “had declared himself in a fit of bravura, Celtic extravagance and self-delusion, ‘the Comte de Glenstrae’” (2001:114).

As a range of critics have also pointed out (without, however, tying the fact to the placement of Blake at Phase 16 in *A Vision*), Yeats was convinced that Blake was a Celt. Peter Ackroyd sets the record straight almost immediately in *Blake* (1995) by establishing that the English Romantic “was not, at any rate, of Irish extraction – this was the theory of William Butler Yeats, who believed that the father of a visionary must spring from somewhere west of Dublin” (1999:3). Furthermore, as Marjorie Howes emphasizes in *Yeats’s Nations: Gender, Class,*

and Irishness (1996), the Russian-born Blavatsky was “repeatedly compared [by Yeats]... to an Irish peasant” (1996:38). Accentuating Yeats’s occultism, Bloom has remarked that Yeats “confounded Blake with Blavatsky and would not see the difference” (1972:217), but this is bound up, we should note, with their ‘Celticisation’ by Yeats. Crucially, as such Celtic characterizations reflect, the scholar-gipsy Yeats fashions himself into a decidedly Celtic version.

The telling lines, so to speak, occur in section VIII of “Magic”: “I have now described that belief in magic... and I look at what I have written with some alarm, for I have told more of the ancient secret than many among my fellow-students think it right to tell” (1972:50/51). The reference to “ancient” can be related to Yeats’s conspicuous substitution of this word for “Celtic” in his response to Arnold in “The Celtic Element in Literature” four years earlier. Arnold feminizes the Celt in terms of an attraction to the “secret” of natural magic, in Chapter IV, and comments that in “the productions of the Celtic genius, nothing, perhaps, is so interesting as the evidences of this power” (2008:46). The Celt’s natural magic, Arnold proceeds to argue in Chapter VI, even surpasses what he calls the “Greek way” (2008:68) of apprehending nature – an assessment Yeats is happy to endorse. This helps to explain in part how irresistible Arnold’s Celticist analysis was to Yeats as both nationalist and occultist, and his linkage of the Celt – improbable though it might perhaps seem, initially – to the preoccupation with magic of Arnold’s scholar-gipsy.

More than this, the linkage is not only on account of magic but the closely related ideal of ancient genius. Arnold’s preoccupation with genius in “The Scholar-Gipsy” looms large when we turn to the text itself. In Arnold’s reworking of “Glanvil’s... oft-read tale”, his scholar-gipsy vows:

And I... the secret of their art,

When fully learn'd, will to the world impart;
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill.

(1905:274)

Yeats's telling lines on the ancient secret in "Magic" could thus reference both Arnold's Celt and scholar-gipsy. Later reflecting on the scholar-gipsy's death and lasting legend, Arnold writes: "To the just-pausing Genius we remit/ Our worn-out life, and are – what we have been" (1905:278). Continuing to draw a distinction between the enthusiastic, immortal scholar-gipsy on the one hand, and ordinary selves on the other, Arnold writes of the titular figure:

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd...
lose to-morrow the ground won to-day –
Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

(1905:278/279)

In "Arnold, Burke and the Celts" in *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature* (1985), Seamus Deane captures the close relation of Celt and Scholar-Gipsy in a way that illuminates Yeats's cross-referencing of these Romanticized figures:

Even now it is difficult to overestimate the importance of Arnold's Oxford lectures, *The Study of Celtic Literature*... The dreamy, imaginative Celt, unblessed by the Greek sense of form, at home in wild landscapes far from the metropolitan centres of modern social and political life, could cure anxious Europe of the woes inherent in Progress. The Scholar Gypsy of Europe, the Celt is already encroaching

upon the territory of Yeats and Synge – where folk-tales are preferred to the ‘English diet of parliamentary speeches and the gutter press’, where speech is highly flavoured, where peasants, be they Christy Mahons or figures from a Jack Yeats painting, have the vigour and vitality the anaemic city dweller has lost.

(1987:25)

Arnold’s scholar-gipsy, in conjunction with his Celt, helped to confirm Yeats’s occult belief in the revitalizing powers of “ancient” magic in modern times, and provided further Arnoldian grounds for Yeats’s defence of the magical Celt several years before what Watson calls his “loving” quotation from “The Scholar-Gipsy” in “Magic” in 1901. In section II of “The Celtic Element in Literature”, the occultist and nationalist Yeats ‘corrects’ Arnold by stating that “[w]hen Matthew Arnold wrote, it was not easy to know as much as we know now of folk-song and folk-belief, and I do not think he understood that our ‘natural magic’ is but the ancient religion of the world, the ancient worship of Nature and that troubled ecstasy before her” (1972:176). Yeats’s Romantic ally here is, I suspect, Shelley, who says in “A Defence of Poetry” that “Dante and Milton were both deeply penetrated with the ancient religion of the civilized world” (1973:755). Yeats argues in “The Celtic Element in Literature”, taking issue with Arnold’s praise of Dante at the expense of the Celts, that Dante was in fact deeply indebted to the Celts – and these factors therefore help to explain, in part, why Dante and Shelley join Yeats at the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision*.

Yeats’s preoccupation with the “ancient religion”, as a poet without a formal university education who graduated instead through occult organisations, must be seen as partly but powerfully bound up with his sense of himself as both a Celticist and scholar-gipsy – such that we should automatically suspect Arnold’s deep importance to an occult text like *A Vision*. Although we will

enter the ‘System’ proper in chapter three, we should note the allusion to “The Scholar-Gipsy” in Yeats’s introduction to the original *A Vision*, in which the supposed origins of the treatise are recounted in elaborate and humorous fiction. Yeats’s character Owen Aherne explains the discovery of the *Speculum Angelorum et Hominorum* written by Giraldus: “My beggar maid had found it, she told me, on the top shelf in a wall cupboard where it had been left by the last tenant, an unfrocked priest who had joined a troupe of gypsies and disappeared, and she had torn out the middle pages to light our fire” (2008:lx). Catherine E. Paul and Margaret Harper comment: “The plot may follow Joseph Glanvill’s story from *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661) of the wandering gypsy, made famous by Matthew Arnold’s poem ‘The Scholar-Gypsy’” (Yeats 2008:225).

There is, however, also a possible Celtic intimation in the figure of Giraldus. This is speculation on my part; but I cite this example to suggest, again, that Yeats’s tendency to draw upon Arnold’s works, moderated by Yeats’s circumspection, was almost certainly far more multifaceted and complex than has been realized, not least in relation to *A Vision*. As Paul and Harper say, “Giraldus has several possible historical antecedents, including Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald de Barry), a twelfth-century Cambro-Norman historian who wrote about Ireland” (Yeats 2008:215). Notably, Arnold refers to Giraldus as a prime source in Chapter II of *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, where he explains that “in the twelfth century testimony to this primitive [Celtic] literature absolutely abounds; one can quote none better than that of Giraldus de Barri, or Giraldus Cambrensis, as he is usually called” (2008:27). While, in shadowing Yeats’s linkage of the Scholar-Gipsy and Celt, I can only speculate on a possible link here in *A Vision* between Arnold and Yeats’s ‘Giraldus’, there can be little doubt that Arnold’s “The Scholar-Gipsy” was of keen interest to Yeats in relation to the Arnoldian ideal of the genius of the ancient Greeks –

which is also the case, as we have seen in our methodical progression in this chapter, in regard to Arnold's Celt, Arnold's Hellenistic "best self" in *Culture and Anarchy*, and Arnold's meditation on modern poets' loss of objectivity and consequent morbidity in the 1853 preface.

I forewarn the reader that we must stretch ourselves once more, while declining to get ourselves lost in the labyrinthine relation between Yeats and Arnold, by stepping from the intersection of the Celt and Scholar-Gipsy, or Celtic and Romantic aspects, to the intersection of both with Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna", or the morbid aspect. As William A. Madden very perceptively explains in "Arnold the Poet: Lyric and Elegiac Poems" in *Matthew Arnold* (1975):

... [the] first part [of "The Scholar-Gipsy"] concentrates upon the Cumnor landscape, recreating Glanvil's historical figure as a genius loci who has kept himself unspotted while awaiting the spark from heaven to fall. The second part transfigures the Scholar-Gipsy into a symbol of immortal youth and hope whose single-minded pursuit and quiet self-possession stand as a devastating indictment of the hurry, disease, and endless fluctuations of life in the modern world... The original 'Oxford scholar poor' is dead, but the poem translates him into the realm of myth and poetry, a compelling image of a spiritual state which remains uninfected by the disease of modernity. 'The Scholar-Gipsy' brings together some of the major images of Arnold's poetry in a comprehensive rendering of his central poetic themes: the Cumnor flowers, the cool bank of the Thames, the moonlit stream, the dewy grass, the quiet bower, through which the Scholar-Gipsy moves as a titular figure, an image of Arnold's own buried self.

(1975:66)

The dichotomy, in the 1853 preface, between the focused and self-possessed ancient Greeks, and the troubled and fragmented moderns, is readily evident here; and Madden rightly links – as Yeats did – the scholar-gipsy as *genius loci* with the “buried self” as locus of genius in “Empedocles on Etna”. The occult appeal to Yeats of the latter poem, around which the 1853 preface famously revolves, can be readily appreciated in Act II, in the central character’s long soliloquy before he plunges into the crater, dealing with reincarnation. The buried self is portrayed as the supreme goal or ideal spiritual state of harmony, the achievement of which delivers the individual from earthly travails and a recurring pattern of failure:

And then we shall unwillingly return
 Back to this meadow of calamity,
 This uncongenial place, this human life;
 And in our individual human state
 Go through the sad probation all again,
 To see if we will poise our life at last,
 To see if we will now at last be true
 To our own only true, deep-buried selves,
 Being one with which we are one with the whole world.
 Or whether we will once more fall away
 Into some bondage of flesh or mind,
 Some slough of sense, or some fantastic maze
 Forged by the imperious lonely thinking-power...

(1905:471-73)

To be true to the buried self is to achieve, in a cosmic sense, what Arnold describes in the 1853 preface as the holism and unity of “early [i.e. ancient] Greek genius”, as opposed to bondage of the mind and fragmentation, or what

he calls in the preface “the dialogue of the mind with itself” (1992:172) afflicting the moderns. As the reader might anticipate, given my foregoing arguments on the preface, this passage is crucial to Yeats’s reading of the Paterian Rhymers as modern poets, which we will examine in chapter three in relation to *A Vision*. It is also a short step from this passage (the morbid aspect) back to Arnold’s Celticist analysis (the Celtic aspect). The poem’s “meadow of calamity” and portrayal of a recurring pattern of failure, a falling away for those who do not manage to be true to their buried selves, can be correlated with Arnold’s argument in the preface that the “representation of the most utter calamity” (1992:173) is not enough to vitiate one’s enjoyment of tragedy in an artistic work; and in turn, with his own representation of the Celt as always falling, as a perpetual failure lacking the “balance, measure, and patience” exemplified by the genius of the ancient Greeks.

In Chapter IV, Arnold argues:

... as in material civilization he has been ineffectual, so has the Celt been ineffectual in politics. This colossal, impetuous, adventurous wanderer, the Titan of the early world, who in primitive times fills so large a place on earth’s scene, dwindles and dwindles as history goes on, and at last is shrunk to what we now see him. For ages and ages the world has been constantly slipping, ever more and more out of the Celt’s grasp. ‘They went forth to the war,’ Ossian says most truly, ‘*but they always fell.*’

(2008:46)

In Chapter VI, where Arnold seeks to illustrate the Celtic element in English poetry, he explicitly and emphatically associates the Celt with recurring calamity: “The Celts, with their vehement reaction against the despotism of fact,

with their sensuous nature, their manifold striving, their adverse destiny, their immense calamities, the Celts are the prime authors of this vein of piercing regret and passion, – of this Titanism in poetry” (2008:63). We are encountering, then, in “Empedocles on Etna” a vital piece of the much bigger puzzle of Yeats’s overall engagement with Arnold, with all aspects leading up to the ideal of ancient Greek genius, and therefore an ideal condition of unity and harmony presiding over the whole, whether personally, poetically, politically, or (in a universal or cosmic sense) existentially.

The occult appeal to Yeats of “Empedocles on Etna” is also evident in that the central character is renowned for his magical powers. Although Empedocles ultimately falls prey to his own morbidity, and commits suicide, and therefore fails to unite with his buried self, he expresses, in Act 1 Scene II, his faith in the mind in answer to Pausanias’s reference to his ability to spellbind:

Spells? Mistrust them!

Mind is the spell which governs earth and heaven.

Man has a mind with which to plan his safety;

Know that, and help thyself!

(1905:443/444)

Surprising as it might be, initially, this exhortation to help one’s self through application of the mind prefigures Arnold’s championing of the free play of the mind as a hallmark of genius intellect or Hellenism in *Culture and Anarchy*, with the “whole scope” of his essay being, as he famously says at the outset, “to recommend culture as the great help out of our present difficulties; culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world, and, through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon

our stock notions and habits” (2008:77). This change of tack to the cultural aspect is easily followed by another, back to the Romantic aspect. Concluding his recitation in “Magic” of “The Scholar-Gipsy”, Yeats quotes the description of the titular figure living on “with a free, onward impulse” (Yeats 1972:38) – which prefigures the mind-set of Hellenism elaborated in *Culture and Anarchy*. Empedocles’s conception of the mind as “the spell which governs earth and heaven” is strikingly similar, in turn, to Yeats’s belief in a universal mind, expressed in “Magic” where he quotes lovingly from “The Scholar-Gipsy”.

This brings us but another short step from the Celtic aspect. In “Magic”, Yeats boldly declares his belief that a “great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols” (1972:28). Yeats’s conception of a great mind and memory develops into what he later calls in *Per Amica*, by reference to Henry More, the Anima Mundi or Soul of the World, which forms part of his own poetic method or doctrine of the Mask, and therefore *A Vision*, as we will see in more detail in chapter four. The relation between “Magic” and Yeats’s response to Arnold in “The Celtic Element in Literature”, and therefore the cross-referencing by Yeats of Arnold’s magical scholar-gipsy and Celt, would again appear to be confirmed by Yeats’s preoccupation with the “ancient” in modern times when he poses the question, in section V of “Magic”, that “[i]f I can intentionally cast a glamour, an enchantment, over persons of our own time who have lived for years in great cities, there is no reason to doubt that men could cast intentionally a far stronger enchantment, a far stronger glamour, over the more sensitive people of ancient times, or that men can still do so where the old order of life remains unbroken. Why should not the Scholar-Gipsy cast his spell over his friends?” (1972:42).

For Yeats, then, Arnold’s Scholar-Gipsy is akin – although in an even more expressly occult way – to the Ferguson he portrays in 1886, as we will see shortly, as a Celtic genius on account of having a like mind, or nature, with the

ancients. In “Magic”, Yeats’s capaciousness on the point of “ancient” genius is evident when, continuing the line of speculation involving the Scholar-Gipsy, he relates, in section V, the artist’s ability to spellbind and “influence the imagination of others” to the revelation of supernatural genius, synonymous with a collective or universal mind: “Have not poetry and music arisen... out of the sounds the enchanters made to help their imagination to enchant, to charm, to bind with a spell themselves and the passers-by?... And just as the musician or poet enchants and charms and binds with a spell his own mind when he would enchant the mind of others, so did the enchanter create or reveal for himself as well as for others the supernatural artist or genius, the seeming transitory mind made out of many minds” (1972:43). If we recall that Arnold had said the Celt lacked “balance, measure, and patience”, it can be no coincidence that the anti-Philistine Yeats adds, again employing the term “ancient” he had substituted for “Celt” in his response to Arnold four years earlier, and again with evident antipathy to the modern, that “in ancient times” men “looked as carefully and as patiently toward Sinai and its thunders as we look towards parliament and laboratories. We are always praising men in whom the individual life has come to perfection, but they were always praising the one mind, their foundation of all perfection” (1972:44).

That one mind or foundation of all perfection, I wish to underline, can be correlated with that in “Empedocles on Etna”: the buried self “being one with which,” Arnold says, “we are one with the whole world”. As we will see, this serves as an occult or philosophical template for Yeats’s poetic theory or doctrine of the Mask (involving immersion of the individual mind in the universal mind) which is incorporated into *A Vision*, and resultant projection of the unified and harmonious Daimonic Man Yeats at the ideal Phase 17. However, not wishing to disorientate the reader by examining Yeats’s opaque doctrine and delving into the complexities of the ‘System’ of *A Vision* while we

are still coming to terms with the complexities of the Arnoldian element in Yeats generally, I wish rather to simply highlight at this stage that Marjorie Howes has rightly linked Yeats's response to Arnold in "The Celtic Element in Literature" to Yeats's conception of a great mind and great memory in "Magic". She argues that the aim of the former essay is "to refigure the racial specificity of Yeats's Celt as the embodiment of qualities that were more universal than particular. Yeats constructed the Irish folk tradition and the Celtic temperament as the most vital and immediate manifestations of the rich imaginative powers and access to the universal secrets of the Great Memory that all primitive traditions shared" (1996:31).

In chapter two, we will turn our attention to the considerable implications of Yeats's recourse to primitivism in "The Celtic Element in Literature"; but we can follow the trail of Yeats's anxiety to distance himself from Arnold in regard to the "ancient" right back to his earliest reviews, on Ferguson. In the second published review, we can see that Yeats is already responding to Arnold's criticism of the Celt as lacking balance, measure, and patience enough to go beyond merely excellent lines of poetry to the achievement, like the ancient Greeks (such as Aeschylus, as well as Italians such as Dante), of the sustained shaping and holistic construction necessary to great works, which the Celts had therefore, according to Arnold, never produced. In addition to Arnold's Celticist analysis (the Celtic aspect), Yeats has absorbed Arnold's prior but closely related 1853 preface (the morbidity aspect), where Arnold similarly recommends that modern poets, afflicted by an inability to advance beyond flashes of brilliance to the persistent fashioning of works of overall genius, "imitate" (Arnold 1992:185) the masterful ancient Greeks – a term attracting sufficient criticism for Arnold to address, in his "Preface to Second Edition of *Poems*" (1854), its usage as not inconsistent with the term "emulate" (1992:185) preferred by his critics.

Acutely mindful of – even jeering at – Arnold, Yeats emphatically asserts in the second published review, in praise of what he holds to be Ferguson’s greatest poem “Deirdre”, that it is “in no manner possible to do it justice by quotation” (2004:14); and he promptly situates Ferguson in the high company of not only the Celts but the ancient Greeks. In doing so, Yeats subversively reverses Arnold’s criticism of the Celt upon the Saxon (the Celtic aspect), and simultaneously endorses Arnold’s criticism of modern poets in the 1853 preface (the morbidity aspect), by turning upon his later acquaintance Edmund Gosse:

If fate compelled me to review [Gosse’s] work, and to review also some princely Homer or Aeschylus, and to do this by the method of short quotations, the admirable Londoner, in the minds of many readers, would rule the roost. For in his works grow luxuriantly those forms of fancy and of verbal felicity that are above all things *portable*; while the mighty heathen sought rather after breadth and golden severity, knowing well that the merely pretty is contraband of art. With him beauty lies in great masses – thought woven with thought – each line, the sustainer of his fellow. Take a beauty from that which surrounds it – its colour is faded, its plumage ruffled – it is dead.

(2004:14)

The term “fancy” almost certainly references Coleridge’s Imagination-Fancy antithesis; but the overall argument targets Arnold, whose alignment of ancient Greek genius with the transformative, shaping, and unifying Imagination posited by Coleridge can be readily appreciated in such works as the 1853 preface and both the Celticist and cultural analyses. In the 1853 preface, Arnold appears to allude to Coleridge in his criticism of Shakespeare’s “gift of expression” as sometimes falling into “an irritability of fancy”, which leads

Arnold to endorse Guizot's claim "that Shakespeare appears in his language to have tried all styles except that of simplicity. He has not the severe and scrupulous self-restraint of the ancients" (1992:181). In particular, Yeats would seem to have in mind Arnold's description of the masterful construction of a work by "the poet, embodying outlines, developing situations, not a word wasted, not a sentiment capriciously thrown in: stroke upon stroke... until at last, when the final words were spoken, it stood before him in broad sunlight, a model of immortal beauty" (1992:176). Referring to his notion of the "action" of a work, Arnold adds that this "was what a Greek critic demanded; this was what a Greek poet endeavoured to effect" (1992:176). Yeats, cross-referencing this with Arnold's Celticist analysis, therefore subversively arrogates Arnold's ideal of ancient Greek genius to his own portrayal of the Celtic genius of Ferguson.

Similarly, in the first published review, Yeats directs the reader to "that ringing ballad, 'Willy Gilliland', or that other, 'The Welshmen of Tirawley'... for I cannot do them justice by short quotations. I could give no idea of a fine building by showing a carved flower from a cornice" (2004:6). In the second published review, having expropriated this thoroughly Arnoldian critical position, Yeats then turns, in another instance of the anxiety of influence, upon Arnold and his narrative poem *Sohrab and Rustum* (1853) by way of a strategic exploitation of Arnold's usage of the term "imitate" in the preface: "... not that [Ferguson] was an imitator, as Matthew Arnold in *Sohrab and Rustum*; but for a much better reason; he was *like* [the ancients] – like them in nature, for his spirit had sat with the old heroes of his country. In *Deirdre* he has restored to us a fragment of the buried Odyssey of Ireland" (2004:14). As Marjorie Howes observes, Yeats describes "Ferguson's mystic identity with Celtic nature as the source of his genius" (1996:39) – and that Celtic genius, I wish to stress, is already, as early as 1886, placed in league with the genius of the ancient

Greeks, as the parallel with Homer's *Odyssey* indicates. Howes says that for Yeats "this Irishness coincides with the virtues of other ancient literatures, especially the Greek tradition... Ferguson produced works which were fundamentally continuous with ancient Greek epics" (1996:26). In his retelling of the episode from Ferdowsi's Persian epic *Shahnameh* (circa 997-1010CE), Arnold had attempted to imitate Homer's style which would later be discussed at length in his *On Translating Homer* (1861). Yeats must have readily noted the mythological parallel between Rostom and Cuchulain, who each killed their son; but it is the link through Arnold to Homer which provides Yeats with a golden opportunity to revise Arnold according to his own Celticist agenda.

Significantly, Yeats refers earlier to Ferguson's "The Naming of Cuchullin" as an example of "the keynote of his work – that simplicity, which is force" (2004:12). This would appear to allude to, and usurp, Arnold's assertion, in the 1853 preface, that the ancients' "expression is so excellent... because it is so simple and so well subordinated; because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys" (1992:175). As we will see in chapter four, "simplicity" is precisely the term Arnold uses to define Homer's style; and "simplicity" is also the term he uses to describe the perfect style of Pindar and Dante in *On the Study of Celtic Literature* before extolling the Pindarism or intoxication of style of the Celts; and to describe, as we have seen, the ends of those perfection-pursuing geniuses who arise out of the confines of their class, in *Culture and Anarchy* – an important consideration here when we recall that the Ferguson being portrayed by Yeats as a unified Celtic genius was a Belfast-born unionist who went on to found, in Dublin, the Protestant Repeal Association, allied to Young Ireland and seeking to re-establish an Irish parliament. This early terminological appropriation by Yeats later resurfaces, as we have seen, in his portrayal of JBY at the *Playboy* debate; and later still, as

we will see in chapter four, in defining the Mask-as-style of the Daimonic Man – Yeats himself, along with Dante – of the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision*.

As I have argued, in Yeats's appraisal of Ferguson we can see the emergence of the Daimonic Man in embryonic form, so defensively posited by Yeats in distinction to Arnold. Evidently addressing Arnold's argument that the Celt had never produced great works, Yeats asserts shortly before concluding the second published review that the bringing forth of "a truly great and national literature [in Ireland]... will find its morning" in the poetry of Ferguson, whose singularity arose from "the purifying flame of National sentiment" (2004:26). Like the "fire in the spirit" of Yeats's inchoate Daimonic Man, which consumes what is "mean" and "shallow", this description of Ferguson is therefore also curiously reminiscent of those Hellenistic, genius individuals described by Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy*, who "set up a fire which enfilades" their particular class, and whose sweetness and light is diametrically opposed to the meanness and shallowness of Philistinism, in this case Dowden. Rather than class spirit, the bent of these individuals is towards an over-arching national spirit, naturally seeking to elicit their best selves which are to be collectively embodied in the state, thereby transcending class divisions in national unity. For Arnold, the poetical and political are ultimately one and the same in the "best self"; and while Yeats is clearly concerned with poetry and culture rather than the state, explicitly, in his appraisal of Ferguson, the trajectory thereto is implicit.

In the appraisal Yeats elevates the Celt to the high company of the genius of the ancient Greeks; and while Dowden might seem to be the chief target, it is in fact Arnold who emerges as the foremost opponent – and ally – throughout. Still acutely mindful of Arnold in closing the second published review, Yeats asserts that in Ferguson's poems "and the legends they contain lies the refutation of the

calumnies of England and those amongst us who are false to their country” (2004:26). Besides this swipe at Dowden, we can see Yeats addressing Arnold’s characterization of the Celt, not least the claim that the unstable Celt lacks the balance, measure, and patience of the ancient Greeks, when he then argues:

We are often told that we are men of infirm will and lavish lips,
 planning one thing and doing another, seeking this to-day and
 that tomorrow. But a widely different story do these legends tell.
 The mind of the Celt loves to linger on images of persistence...

(2004:26)

However, this dig at Arnold comes just before Yeats advocates the study of Irish legends which, he says, contain “the Celtic heart”; and at which point he strikingly echoes (as Watson points out) Arnold’s “The Scholar-Gipsy” in hoping that Irish readers will thereby be saved “in their high companionship from that leprosy of the modern – tepid emotions and many aims” (2004:27). This brings us back, therefore, to the intersection of the Celtic and Romantic aspects, or Yeats’s cross-referencing of the Celt and Scholar-Gipsy, in this emphasis on situating the individual within a larger harmony – attainable by high companionship with ancient genius – that might restore cultural and social coherence to a modern, alienated, entropic world. Yeats’s cross-referencing of Arnold’s “The Scholar-Gipsy” and Celticist analysis, within a wide rather than narrow response to Arnold, also encompassing such works as the 1853 preface and *Culture and Anarchy*, is also evident in the first published review where Yeats hails Ferguson “the greatest Irish poet” – the best, we might say – for his work embodies “the Irish character. Its unflinching devotion to some single aim. Its passion” (2004:8/9), i.e. an ancient single-mindedness and passion which is the exact opposite of the “many aims” afflicting the tepid modern. Yet for Arnold, as we have seen, passion is not only a core quality of the Celtic genius

in its reaction against fact, but also fundamental to great poetry such as that of the ancient Greeks, as he affirms in the 1853 preface; and the feature he singles out in *Culture and Anarchy* in describing those Hellenistic geniuses who “set up a fire” and arise out of their class.

In the appraisal of Ferguson, all five aspects of the Arnoldian element can be seen to emerge – but it is still early days in 1886. That Yeats would have to address more fully, in due course, the morbidity aspect in relation to the temperament of the Celt, with a dose of Arnoldian sweetness, and of Arnoldian tragic joy, can be readily appreciated in that, shortly after praising the Celtic single-mindedness and passion of Ferguson, Yeats claims “in a very Arnoldian way” (2006:43), as Watson notes elsewhere in his essay (effectively identifying a third correspondence with Arnold), that the Celt has “above all others” a “faithfulness to things tragic and bitter... Those who have it, alone are worthy of great causes” (2004:9). This is the key sentence which bears out Foster’s observation that Yeats jeers at Arnold while still subscribing to Arnold’s portrayal of the Celt. As Watson says, Arnold’s emphasis “on the Celt as above all passionately melancholy – ‘their manifold striving, their adverse destiny, their immense calamities’ – the Celt as defeated but heroic in defeat, greatly impressed Yeats. Stereotype it might be, but it was preferable to the stereotype of Pat the comic Irishman with his bulls and his blunders” (2006:43). In ideal terms, however, to be “bitter” would ultimately not do for Yeats. As we have seen in the introduction, in his letter to Olivia Shakespear dated 23 February 1928, “Irish bitterness” is contrasted by Yeats with a “measure of sweetness, and of light” (Kelly, Schuchard 2002); and as we have seen earlier in this chapter, such a contrast is also evident in his description in the journal entry dated 6 February 1909 of the “bitterness and ignorance” of Synge’s enemies

while his own style has been shaped to “sweetness and serenity” (1974:161).¹¹ It might be added that, arguing against conscription in a letter to Lord Haldane on 7 October 1918, Yeats puts forward a similar contrast: “If that is done England will only suffer in reputation, but Ireland will suffer in her character, and all the work of my life-time and that of my fellow-workers, all our effort to clarify and sweeten the popular mind, will be destroyed and Ireland, for another hundred years, will live in the sterility of her bitterness” (Kelly, Schuchard 2002).

At the beginning of his long career, Yeats is obviously far from having fully worked out and refined his overall response to Arnold, in the Irish context – but he has clearly latched onto Arnold above all as both nemesis and ally, and has already established the fundamentals of that response in the long term. Recognising this saturation of Yeats’s thinking with his wide as well as deep engagement with Arnold’s works, down to even single terms, from the start of his career, we are almost well equipped to begin identifying and examining the Arnoldian element in all its convolution – precisely because it is by its nature shifting – inside the ‘System’ of *A Vision*. These few observations and quotations serve, at this stage, to illustrate the early emergence, interconnectedness, and continuing importance into the twentieth century of the five aspects comprising the Arnoldian element in Yeats; and to bring to the fore the subtlety that Yeats’s equation of “Celtic” with “ancient” is in fact an occultist and Irish nationalist but also very much Arnoldian ‘correction’ of Arnold, who consistently and emphatically praised the ancients at the expense of the moderns across his oeuvre, in particular the genius of the ancient Greeks (and Latins) rather than that of the unmeasured Celt, whom he nonetheless greatly admired. Bloom observes in *Yeats* (1970) that, generally, “[w]herever Yeats’s debts were largest, he learned subtly to find fault” (1972:24). This is clearly the case with

¹¹ As we have also seen in the introduction, in his letter to Lady Gregory on 23 August 1900 AE observes that in Moran’s essays “there [is] a continual bitterness without any sweetness as a set off” (1997:564).

Arnold in Yeats's earliest reviews, on Ferguson – and as we will see, it is truer still in the configuration of Yeats's ideal Phase 17 alongside Arnold's Phase 18 in *A Vision*.

* * * * *

Chapter Two

Nobility in Unity: Yeats's Recourse to Primitivism in Response to Arnold's Celt

Before we enter *A Vision* in chapter three, we will build, in chapter two, on our basic understanding of the Arnoldian element in Yeats by looking at some of the larger issues and implications arising from his recourse to primitivism in response to Arnold's portrayal of the Celt. This recourse is closely connected to Yeats's ideal condition of Unity of Being, which is the distinction of the Daimonic Man of Phase 17 in *A Vision*, but which is also, as we might expect, and as I will now endeavour to sketch, germane to his projections of unity elsewhere in his oeuvre, encompassing literature and politics, and involving what he refers to in his journal, on 7 March 1909, as "ideas of class" (1974:178). Although we are dealing throughout with all five aspects comprising the Arnoldian element in Yeats, which are ultimately inseparable from what Seamus Heaney has described as the "unifying drive... central to Yeats's mind" (2000:xxi), in poetry as well as politics, we will pay particular attention in this chapter to the interrelation of the Celtic and cultural aspects, and how this combination achieves a particular potency in Yeats's ideas of class, national unity, and the state.

i) A CLASS ABOVE: ARNOLD AND THE YEATSIAN DREAM OF THE NOBLE AND THE BEGGAR-MAN

In Yeats's 1901 essay "Magic", in which he fondly quotes from Arnold's "The Scholar-Gipsy", he also refers to Andrew Lang's *The Making of Religion* (1898); and it is Lang's article "The Celtic Renaissance" (1897) which, although not explicitly mentioned in Yeats's "The Celtic Element in Literature" (1897), is an influence strongly in play in that essay, in his emphasis on the "ancient religion" and usage of the single term "ancient" in response to Arnold.

However, given Yeats's longstanding preoccupation with the "ancient" – a single term not only arising frequently in his poetry collections up to that time, but which had long since served him in the appraisal of Ferguson to promote the Celtic genius to the high company of the genius of the ancient Greeks, thus rebutting Arnold – Lang's input might be seen as adding new currency to Yeats's old strategy, apparent in the appraisal of Ferguson, of connecting Celtic genius to a deeper or universal spiritual basis of humanity, and therefore an underlying unity. Moreover, perhaps surprisingly (although the connection is already evident in the appraisal of Ferguson), Yeats's emphasis in "The Celtic Element in Literature" on common roots among ancient peoples is closely related to his projections of unity in modern Ireland across his oeuvre. As the editors of Volume II of the collected letters highlight in section VI of their introduction:

In 1897 Andrew Lang argued... that what was dubbed 'Celtic' in poetry or superstition was 'really early human and may become recrudescant anywhere'. 'Comparative science', he maintained, 'dispels the Celtic illusion that anything whatever is particularly Celtic, or dependent on Celtic race and blood.' [In 'The Celtic

Element in Literature’] Yeats addressed Lang’s arguments, and began to distance himself from Arnold’s views, conceding that “our ‘natural magic’ is but the ancient religion of the world, the ancient worship of nature”. But he insisted that ‘Celtic’ qualities articulated themselves pre-eminently, and perhaps uniquely, in modern Irish writing, because the modern Irish shared ‘the actual habit of mind which the old Celts had’. This attitude towards Celtic primitivism enabled Yeats to keep alive his hopes for ‘Unity of Being’ long after he became aware of the centrifugal forces at work in Irish society, for it strengthened his belief in a cultural alliance between the peasantry and the ‘educated classes’.

(Gould, Kelly, Toomey 1997:lxv)

I will examine Yeats’s belief in such a cultural alliance shortly; but it must be registered right away that a range of critics have deemed Yeats’s attitude towards Celtic primitivism to be deeply problematic, in relation to Arnold. A small but important detail in “The Celtic Element in Literature” is Yeats’s substitution of not only the single word “ancient” but also the allied word “primitive” for “Celtic”; and both terms “ancient” and “primitive” – attaching to other significant terms – must be firmly situated within Yeats’s primitivist discourse in the essay. Marjorie Howes notes, for instance, that whereas “Arnold uses ‘Celtic melancholy’ Yeats prefers ‘primitive melancholy’” (1996:31); and it might be added that Yeats likewise refers to the “primitive imagination” (1972:182). Yet Arnold had himself explicitly portrayed the Celt as primitive, as we have seen in the references to Giraldus and the “primitive literature” (2008:27) of the Celt, or the description of the Celt “who in primitive times fills so large a place on earth’s scene” but “dwindles as history goes on” (2008:46). As Watson says, for Arnold “[t]he ‘Celtic nations’ were of purely antiquarian interest, and of significance in the present only because of what

their literature and art had contributed to an enchanting strand of ‘English’ literature” (2006:42).

Significantly, despite Yeats’s protestation to Moran in 1900, even “The Celtic Element in Literature” has been seen by critics to be powerfully shaped and circumscribed by Arnold’s portrait of the Celt. Gregory Castle, for instance, observes that Yeats “appears to grant Arnold’s claims a certain legitimacy as a scholarly description of Celticism at the same time that it subtly reinterprets his central argument about the Celtic imagination and its relation to English literature and the British Empire” (2008:49). Castle argues, albeit with self-confessed uncertainty, that even though Yeats “challenges the cultural superiority of the English and offers a kind of prophylactic for the madness of colonial domination”, that he “does so without seriously questioning Arnold’s primitivist assumptions indicates either a subtle strategy or a blind spot” (2008:50). Given the careful terminological substitution of such terms as “ancient” and “primitive” for “Celtic”, Castle finds that Yeats “reconfigures primitivism, shifting its *locus* from a racial to a temporal plane, in order to make a bold claim for the spiritual superiority of a ‘timeless’ people” (2008:50).

Castle notes that Yeats does not take issue with Arnold’s key definition of the Celtic sensibility in terms of a “reaction against the despotism of fact”. Instead, he says, Yeats rejects “any racial stigma attached to the reaction against ‘facts’” (2008:50) and claims that the Celt “reacted against ‘fact’ in order to embrace that which was superior to facts, the timeless, spiritual substratum of folk traditions” (2008:51). The overall effect of Yeats’s arguments, he judges, is “to refute on literary-historical grounds the subaltern status of the Celtic people that Arnold presupposes on racial grounds” (2008:151). However, Castle also casts doubt on the efficacy of Yeats’s response to Arnold. He reflects that while Yeats “subtly reverses Arnold’s call for Celtic submission to the British

Empire”, this nevertheless “raises an important question: does it generate an anti-colonialist discourse capable of resisting the discriminatory effects of primitivism, or does it in fact fail to avoid a remystification of the Celt, thus reinscribing Arnold’s strategies of binomial racial and cultural typing?” (2008:51).

In a brief departure from Yeats’s essay, Castle concurs with Kiberd’s claim (which we will consider in more detail in chapter four) that in his “rewriting of Arnold as an elaboration of his father’s idea ‘of uniting Catholic imagination with Protestant efficiency’”, Yeats managed to retrieve “‘a potentially insulting cliché... in a subtle and subversive fashion, to underwrite the very separatist claim that Arnold sought to deny’” (2008:51). Castle concludes, however, “that this subversion is by no means complete, that a residual reliance on primitivist discourse – implicit in his appeal, in ‘The Celtic Element,’ to an ‘ancient worship of Nature’ and surfacing more explicitly in his folklore projects – prevents Yeats from offering a decisive critique of imperialist Celticism and its anthropological assumptions about the Irish ‘race’” (2008:51). Castle’s conclusion intersects with a similarly intriguing question put forward by Watson: “If Yeats did understand the imperialist implications of Arnold’s portrait of the Celt, why did he nevertheless flirt with something so risky?” (2006:42). Watson reports that there has been a critical consensus “after the impact of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) that Yeats’s early Celticizing poetry and prose show him trapped in colonialist contradiction” (2006:42). Watson does not provide an answer, but he helpfully proceeds to argue that among the facets of Arnold’s Celticism that Yeats found so useful was Arnold’s assertion of “the reality of racial difference” (2006:42).

As Watson explains: “Ethnological and racial theories saw their great flourishing in the Victorian period, and no word appears more often in Arnold’s

writings than ‘race’... Arnold embraces the whole of the racial assumption” (2006:42/43). The opportunity for Yeats, Watson argues, was that “the best known and perhaps most prestigious literary critic of his day acknowledged a racial type called Celtic, and the distinctiveness of its literature... The confidence of the young Yeats’s propaganda for the Irish Literary Revival was based not only on his own great talents, but on the Celtic gene-pool” (2006:43). Therefore, Watson says, Yeats “did not have to rely on a substantial record of achievement; all he had to do was to raise to consciousness the creative characteristics of the Celtic race” (2006:43). By the same token, I wish to add, all Yeats had to do was supply the measure lacking in Arnold’s Celt, as he does in the appraisal of Ferguson, to raise the Celtic genius to the highest echelon of creative achievement, in the company of the genius of the ancient Greeks. Yet as we have just seen, Castle observes that Yeats shifts the primitivism of the Celt from a racial to a temporal plane, in “The Celtic Element in Literature”; and as Castle also appreciates, this manoeuvre does not necessarily subvert Arnold’s strategies of both “binomial racial and cultural typing?” (2008:51). This is partly because the category of race itself in the nineteenth century was never purely about biological race but strongly about culture, as we will see in more detail shortly in regard to Yeats’s eugenicist views. Both the ‘racial’ and the ‘cultural’ were part and parcel of the complex typology of the Arnoldian Celt.

Unsurprisingly, in his recourse to primitivism in “The Celtic Element in Literature”, Yeats does not actually dispense with race per se. As we have seen, Yeats’s own summation of the essay in his letter to Moran is that “I have argued that the characteristics [Arnold] has called Celtic, mark all races just in so far as they preserve the qualities of the early races of the world” (Gould, Kelly, Toomey 1997:568). Moreover, what Castle calls Yeats’s “residual reliance” on primitivist discourse implies a residual reliance on both racial and cultural

typing. While Yeats's emphasis is on the underlying commonality of ancient roots, he still implies racial and cultural distinctness in his argument in section IV that "of all the fountains of the passions and beliefs of ancient times in Europe, the Slavonic, the Finnish, the Scandinavian, and the Celtic, the Celt alone has been for centuries close to the main river of European literature" (1972:185). Having thus resurrected the distinct Celtic type, the term "Celtic" itself becomes interchangeable with the term "Gaelic". Yeats later writes that "a more abundant fountain than any in Europe, is being opened, the fountain of Gaelic legends... 'The Celtic movement,' as I understand it, is principally the opening of this fountain..." (1972:186/87).

As Watson says, Moran's opposition to Yeats and the Celtic movement at the turn of the century "reflects a key shift in the balance of patriotic power between the terms 'Celtic' and 'Gaelic,' in which, during the 1890s, use of the Irish language began to be the authentic marker of nationalist integrity" (2006:42). Yeats's seamless usage of these terms would seem in turn to reflect, in keeping with his metaphor of a fountain, the fluidity of race and culture in his conception of the Irish as a distinctive people who have maintained a strong connection to the "ancient" past. Yeats's Celtic twilight between inclusivity and exclusivity helps to explain, in part, the slippery nature of his own racial and cultural typing, which is conspicuously in evidence across his oeuvre even after "The Celtic Element in Literature", perhaps most notably in "The Fisherman" (1916) where he expresses his ambition to "write for my own race/And the reality" (Allt, Alspach 1989:347). I will consider the continuing critical uncertainty over the rather ambiguous figure of "The Fisherman" later in this chapter, and for the moment wish merely to emphasize that Yeats's recourse to primitivism in order to challenge Arnold is tantamount to positioning himself within rather than 'outside' of his Celticist and, more specifically, Arnoldian

heritage. As Howes comments, the “connection is hardly startling, and, on one level, indicates how much Celticism owed to primitivism” (1996:30).

That Yeats should feel compelled to respond to Arnold, above all, is illuminated by Robert Young’s contextualization of Arnold’s Celticist analysis in “Matthew Arnold’s Critique of ‘Englishism’” in *The Idea of English Ethnicity* (2008), as is the complexity of the formation of Arnold’s Celt in terms of racial and cultural typing. Young writes that while Arnold’s essay “represented only one of a range of different responses [to the ideology of Saxon supremacism] that had emerged since the 1840s from critics, anatomists, ethnologists and physiognomists” it was Arnold who was “by far the best known of them, and what was distinctive about his essay was that he brought to bear on the issue the whole range of different disciplinary knowledges – literary, historical, philological, ethnological and physiognomical – all assembled together for the first time” (2008:141). Castle observes that Yeats “seemed instinctively to understand that his own ideas about the Irish primitive had to be defined more or less overtly against those of Arnold and Ernest Renan” (2008:46), but Arnold had himself, as both Castle and Young indicate, drawn upon the works of Renan, and of others such as W.F. Edwards and Henri Martin, in formulating his own highly influential stereotype of the Celt.

Yeats quotes various “well-known sentences” (1972:173) from Renan firstly and then from Arnold, in section I of “The Celtic Element in Literature”, placing the weight of his response on Arnold’s analysis: “How well one knows these sentences, better even than Renan’s, and how well one knows the passages of prose and verse which he uses to prove that wherever English literature has the qualities these sentences describe, it has them from a Celtic source” (1972:174). Therefore, these sentences and passages call attention to themselves in the labyrinth of Arnoldian terminology which we will seek to trace in A

Vision. Moreover, when the editors of volume II of the collected letters say that Yeats's "attitude towards Celtic primitivism enabled [him] to keep alive his hopes for 'Unity of Being' [through 'Unity of Culture']" and "strengthened his belief in a cultural alliance between the peasantry and the 'educated classes'", we have every reason to recall not only the effort to distance himself from Arnold in "The Celtic Element in Literature", which they highlight by reference to Lang, but also the general credence that Yeats nevertheless grants to Arnold's ideas about the primitive Celt in that essay; and to consider Arnold's bearing on Yeats's approach to unity in the Irish context, and how this might relate to *A Vision*.

The editors' quotation of "educated classes" is from Yeats's letter to Alice Milligan, dated 23 September 1894, which appears in volume I of the collected letters; and even here we may find confirmation of how well Yeats knows Arnold's works. "As early as 1894," the editors say in section IV of their introduction (to volume II), Yeats "had grasped that the creation of a 'Unity of Culture' was going to be more difficult than he had anticipated, and told Alice Milligan... that Ireland was so demoralized that his work 'must be not so much to awaken or quicken or preserve the national idea among the mass of the people but to convert the educated classes to it' and 'to fight for moderation, dignity, & the rights of the intellect'" (Gould, Kelly, Toomey 1997:lxiii). In the letter, to be more precise, Yeats asserts that "an Irish man of letters" must convert the educated classes "to the best of his ability" (Kelly, Domville 1986:399). This might seem merely colloquial and a tenuous link to Arnold's preoccupation with the best in literary production, and within one's self, society, and state in *Culture and Anarchy*, but the extent to which the single term "best" proliferates throughout Yeats's letters, from the 1880s to the final months of his life, in reference to his own latest works, and in evaluating the work of others, is quite remarkable, not so much in itself as when we consider this in tandem with

his increasing tendency after Synge's death to insist, as we will see, on the rule in Ireland of the "best", a term he therefore repeatedly uses, like Arnold, in reference to high achievement in both literature and politics.¹²

Of course, within the labyrinth of influence, the Romantics would also have confirmed Yeats in his insistence on the best. As we have seen, Wordsworth favoured communion "with the best objects, from which the best parts of language are derived" (Gibson 2000:19). In "A Defence of Poetry", Shelley argues that poetry "makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world" (1973:759) and that a poet "ought personally to be the happiest, the best, the wisest, and the most illustrious of men" (1973:760). Arnold, then, cannot be seen to have solely shaped Yeats's preoccupation with the "best". Nevertheless, more striking in the letter is Yeats's report soon thereafter that "I am doing what I can by writing my books with laborious care & studied moderation of style" (1986:399). Moderation of style is precisely Arnold's recommendation in *On Translating Homer*; and Arnold's explicit equation of "moderation" with "simplicity", which is the hallmark of what he calls the "grand style" of the likes of Homer and Dante, can be correlated with his championing of the "simplicity" or "grand style", as he calls it even then, of the genius of the ancient Greeks in the 1853 preface; as well as his pronouncements on the perfect "simplicity" of the masters of style such as Pindar and Dante in *On the Study of Celtic Literature*; and Hellenistic "simplicity" of style, associated with intellectual freedom and the eliciting through culture of one's best self, in

¹² Examples of Yeats's declarations, throughout his career, of his most recent work as his "best" yet (or work in progress as likely to be his "best" yet) and his usage of this term in evaluating the work of fellow writers, are far too numerous to detail here. However, a good, encompassing example arises in a letter to Katharine Tynan, dated 2 March 1892: "No poetry has a right to live merely because it is good. It must be *the best of its kind*. The best Irish poets are this & every writer of imagination who is true to him self absolutely, may be so" (Kelly, Domville 1986:289). Another good example occurs in a letter to an unidentified correspondent, dated 26 January 1909. Yeats affirms that "a taste for reading & for reading the best literature... that is the one thing that matters" (Kelly, Schuchard 2002). Given that *A Vision* is the principal text in focus in this thesis, we might register a last example, in Yeats's letter to Olivia Shakespear dated 12 October 1937: "I send you *A Vision*... As I turn the pages I find here & there the best prose I have written & much passion" (Kelly, Schuchard 2002).

Culture and Anarchy; which can all be seen to partly inform, in turn, the Mask-as-style, as we will see, of the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision*.

Recognition of Yeats's usage, in reference to himself, of the single term "moderation" in a positive sense, on style, echoing Arnold's usage of this term in relation to what is one of the major themes of Arnold's oeuvre – that of style – is important given that, as we will see, Yeats muddies the waters in his Blakean criticism of "tepid moderation" in life and art in "Blake's Illustrations to Dante" (1897) and allied defence in "The Celtic Element in Literature" of the excess of the Celt described by Arnold. In these essays, Yeats obfuscates his own dedication to achieving Arnoldian moderation of style, in the Irish context. Besides noting this clue, in the letter, to Yeats's close study of Arnold on style, we might also question what Yeats means exactly when he speaks of the "educated classes" in Ireland? It might be answered that, as Deborah Fleming has argued, "the ferocity of Yeats's attacks on the middle class is based on his being a product of this class: he was anti-middle class in the most middle-class way; that is, he identifies himself with the Ascendancy, the class immediately above his own, as the Ascendancy did with an aristocracy. Like all middle-class people, he lived his dream through aristocratic imagery, and like many essentially urban people, he idealized the life of the country" (1998:74). The "educated classes" would seem to refer, then, to these upper classes, but not the middle class. In this vein, Marjorie Howes has argued that Yeats "over-estimated both the literary productiveness of the Irish aristocracy and the aristocratic status of the Ascendancy, conflating the terms 'Ascendancy' and 'aristocracy'" (1996:107). Notably, she also highlights, quoting Yeats, that he saw the middle class as "an attitude of mind more than an accident of birth" (Yeats 1975:241). This quotation is from the letter to Moran in which Yeats denies Arnold's Celticist influence but evidently endorses Arnoldian cultural

“sweetness”. Notably, too, as Howes says, “some critics have made similar assertions about his notions of ‘aristocracy’” (1996:106).

Howes insists on the “interdependence of Yeats’s ideal and material aristocracies” but in doing so she quotes Augustine Martin’s observation, in response to Seamus Deane’s portrayal of Yeats, that “current Yeats criticism is characterized by ‘a widespread misconception of what Yeats understood by words like ‘aristocracy’... and ‘class’” (Howes 1996:207). “Such an argument,” she comments, “provides a valuable reminder that Yeats’s construction of such terms was often highly idiosyncratic” (1996:207). A striking parallel with Yeats’s identification with the aristocracy and view of social class as involving, in a vital sense, an attitude of mind, is Arnold’s acknowledgement in *Culture and Anarchy*, which has been overlooked by critics (including Fleming and Howes) in relation to Yeats, that he is “properly a Philistine” (2008:133). While he has “broken with the ideas and tea-meetings” of his own class, Arnold says, he has not “on that account, been brought much the nearer to the ideas and works of the Barbarians [aristocracy] or of the Populace [working class]” (2008:133). Nevertheless, Arnold is acutely conscious that culture might have flourished more readily with the material privileges of the aristocracy were it not for the mere exteriority, he says, of their gifts. He concedes: “I never take a gun or a fishing-rod in my hands without feeling that I have in the ground of my nature the self-same seeds which, fostered by circumstances, do so much to make the Barbarian; and that, with the Barbarian’s advantages, I might have rivalled him” (2008:133).

As we will come to appreciate more fully, however, Arnold does not dream of being an aristocrat so much as he aspires to a higher form of aristocracy than the Barbarian who, according to Arnold, is in fact wanting in the ability to fetch sweetness and light from within. As Arnold affirms: “I am, above all, a believer

in culture” (2008:97). So too was Yeats, albeit in the markedly different Irish context, as his approach to what he calls the “educated classes”, recognising how conducive wealth, leisure, and social status could be to national cultural achievement, ultimately confirms. Yeats also refers to the “educated classes” in his projection of Irish unity in section XXIII of “Four Years: 1887-1891”; and the longevity of his hopes for Irish unity is underscored in that he refers again to the “educated classes” in his letter to Olivia Shakespear dated 13 July 1933, in which he enthuses about local politics:

Politics are growing heroic. De Velera has forced political thought to face the most fundamental issues. A Fascist opposition is forming behind the scenes to be ready should some tragic situation develop. I find myself constantly urging the despotic rule of the educated classes as the only end to our troubles.

(Kelly, Schuchard 2002)

We will look more closely at what Brenda Maddox has called Yeats’s “Fascist flirtation” (2000:263), in chapter four, but an indication of what Yeats is ultimately driving at when he talks of the “educated classes” can be found in what Foster describes as the later “rationalization which [Yeats] offered to the *Spectator*’s readers when [his “Three Marching Songs”] were published on 23 February 1934”, in which Yeats affirms his belief in the necessity of “the rule of educated and able men” (2003:478). This brings us closer to an important term – “noble” – which Elizabeth Cullingford (and long before her, Richard Ellmann) has singled out in relation to Yeats, Nietzsche, and the issue of “the morality of the noble man... of the ruling class” (Ellmann 1964:96). As we will see, Yeats’s idiosyncratic conception of the “noble” bespeaks his higher hopes for the rule of the educated and able in Ireland, and informs his longstanding view – before he had read Nietzsche – expressed in the letter to Moran, with a

cultural nod to Arnold, that the general life of Ireland might be “sweetened” by the influence on what he similarly refers to there as the “leisured classes”, of lofty and beautiful Irish writing in the English language – “through its influence over a few governing minds” (Gould, Kelly, Toomey 1997:564).

As Cullingford says, the “idea of a ‘company of governing men’, a politics based not upon ideology but upon noble individuals, dominated Yeats’s last years” (1984:217). Cullingford proceeds to quote from Yeats’s *On the Boiler* (1938):

Do not try to pour Ireland into any political system. Think first how many able men with public minds the country has, how many it can hope to have in the near future, and mould your system upon those men. It does not matter how you get them, but get them. Republics, Kingdoms, Soviets, Corporate States, Parliaments, are trash...
These men, whether six or six thousand, are the core of Ireland, are Ireland itself.

(Cullingford 1984:217)

Significantly, although we might presume that Yeats has in mind men drawn, ideally, from the “educated classes” (i.e. Ascendancy/aristocracy), he does not explicitly specify here any particular social class in which such able men might be found, but rather their (collective) state of mind. Surprising as it might be, initially, this is strikingly reminiscent of Arnold’s view in *Culture and Anarchy* of there being geniuses in every class who, against the grain of their particular class, naturally seek to become their best selves and are those best embodied in the state, rather than those who remain merely their ordinary selves within their social class, whom he associates with democracy. Cullingford’s prior reference to a company of governing men is drawn from “Michael Robartes Foretells”, an

unpublished typescript probably composed in 1936, for the revised *A Vision*, but rejected, as Walter Kelly Hood tells us in “Michael Robartes: Two Occult Manuscripts” (1975). The character Daniel O’Leary reports a prediction by Robartes – who has developed, as Hood points out, into an “aristocratic social commentator” (Hood 1976:217). Cullingford quotes two key sentences: “Yet the State would be but little in men’s minds, for the State as an idea, whatever definition we make of it, is but a degree less abstract than that of the Proletariat. Men’s minds will dwell upon some company of governing men whom, though they seem every man’s, even every base man’s very self, it is natural to call noble” (Hood 1976:220).

Yeats’s belief in a natural nobility, not necessarily arising from the aristocracy itself (i.e. defined strictly as a social class), can be traced all the way back to the appraisal of Ferguson. Prefiguring his article on Philistine scholasticism at Dowden’s Trinity College, Yeats complains in the second published review on Ferguson that “[a]lmost all the poetry of this age is written by students, for students” (2004:24). Yeats adds: “But Ferguson’s is truly bardic, appealing to all natures alike, to the great concourse of the people, for it has gone deeper than knowledge or fancy, deeper than the intelligence which knows of difference... to the universal emotions that have not heard of aristocracies, down to where Brahman and Sudra are not even names” (2004:24). Again, the reference to “fancy” would appear to allude to Coleridge, effectively linking Celtic genius to unifying Romantic imagination. Despite the apparent dismissal of aristocracies here, by reference to the caste system of India, Yeats is not dispensing with aristocracy at all, in what he sees as its true sense. As Deborah Fleming conveys (quoting from Seán Ó’Faoláin), for the Celts “both letters and society were graded upwards to a caste, and both ‘bards’ and ‘chiefs’ had the aristocratic outlook...” (Fleming 1998:45). Yeats’s claim, however, is that the Celtic bard exemplifies a truly aristocratic outlook, for though he inhabits a

privileged position within the hierarchical structure of Celtic society, he strikes a deep chord with ‘the people’ and thereby, in a sense, transcends his own caste in unity with them.

Yeats goes on to declare that Ferguson “is the greatest poet Ireland has produced, because the most central and most Celtic” (2004:26). Clearly, Yeats is proclaiming Ferguson’s Celtic genius by recourse to an underlying commonality or humanity, tapped into, paradoxically, by the aristocratic bard. The reference to “intelligence which knows of difference”, and emphasis on a much deeper basis of unity, informs the epigraph copied on a poetic manuscript before Yeats’s departure from Dublin for London in 1887: “Talent perceives Difference/Genius unity” (Foster 1998:58). Moreover, in the appraisal of Ferguson, having just echoed Arnold in recommending the study of Irish legends in order to deliver readers from “the leprosy of the modern – tepid emotions and many aims”, Yeats argues that for the ancient Irish “the personal perplexities of life grew dim and there alone remained its noble sorrows and its noble joys” (2004:27). This affirmation of the fundamental or universal, noble concerns and emotions of the Celt proceeds to what could be seen as the emergence of Yeats’s belief, undeveloped at this early stage, in the special few, who are not confined to any particular social class, and only a short step from cultural upliftment to, by implication, political independence. Yeats appeals not to “the professorial classes” but “to those young men clustered here and there throughout our land, whom the emotion of Patriotism has lifted into that world of selfless passion in which heroic deeds are possible and heroic poetry credible” (2004:27).

Yeats’s appeal, in 1886, to such clusters of passionate and patriotic men inspired by Irish legends and Ferguson’s poetry, and therefore tending towards unity and harmony through high company with the genius of the ancients,

foreshadows his belief in political self-rule in Ireland by a company of noble individuals. Along this long-term trajectory, the description by the editors of volume II of the collected letters, of Yeats's ideal of a "cultural alliance between the peasantry and the 'educated classes'", can be correlated with stanza VI of "The Municipal Gallery Revisited" (1937):

John Synge, I and Augusta Gregory, thought
 All that we did, all that we said or sang
 Must come from contact with the soil, from that
 Contact everything Antaeus-like grew strong.
 We three alone in modern times had brought
 Everything down to that sole test again,
 Dream of the noble and the beggar-man.

(Allt, Alspach 1989:603)

Yeats's vision of a cultural alliance between noble and beggar-man, or "educated classes" and peasantry, might appear to be far removed from Arnold's Celticist analysis, in which the Celt is contrasted to the (middle-class) Philistine, but Marjorie Howes has sketched Yeats's peculiar inscribing, in the Irish context, of Arnold's approach to unity:

Arnold's Celticism had produced a version of Irish nationality whose cultural uniqueness and value demanded its political erasure. Yeats's Celticism offered a similar construction of Irish cultural difference, but claimed that it demanded political expression instead. Yeats's vision of an harmonious alliance between a peasantry whose material impoverishment made them rich in the raw materials of national culture and an Anglo-Irish aristocracy capable of transforming those raw materials into finished cultural artifacts, evidence of

the genius of the race, gave him a stake in the cultural logic of Arnoldian Celticism. Yeats's Celticism took up the imperialist construction of complementarity between Irish and English and mapped it onto his construction of the relationship between 'noble and beggar-man.'

(1996:42)

Howes relates Arnold's conciliatory approach to unity, to Yeats's early reviews on Ferguson: "Ferguson was a unionist, and many of his prose works offer a conception of the ameliorative and integrative possibilities of Irish culture that prefigures Arnold strikingly. Yeats, however, claims Ferguson for Irish nationalism, an appropriation that suggests both how much Yeats's Celticism owed to the Arnoldian tradition and how boldly he was willing to alter aspects of it that did not suit his purpose" (1996:26).

However, Celticism is just one of the five interrelated aspects which must be taken into collective consideration in viewing Yeats against the backdrop of his Arnoldian heritage. Across these aspects, we can see Yeats approving or revising Arnold according to his own agenda, even down to single terms which might otherwise seem unrelated and innocuous, rather than special literary usage. A shortcoming of Howes's summation is that while culture is yoked to Celticism, it is only Arnold's *On the Study of Celtic Literature* that is in focus, with no consideration of Arnold's closely related *Culture and Anarchy*. Similarly, Yeats's vision of a cultural alliance between noble and beggar-man, in the Irish context, might appear to be far removed from Arnold's very different class categorization, in the English context, of Barbarians (aristocracy), Philistines (middle class), and Populace (working class) in *Culture and Anarchy*, as well as from Arnold's vision of transcending the limitations of these categories by locating authority instead in a supreme,

collective best self to be embodied in the state. Nevertheless, Yeats's recourse to a common "ancient" basis in refiguring the Arnoldian Celt is not dissimilar to the strategy employed by Arnold in order to posit the Hellenised best self.

As Arnold asserts in Chapter III, "under all our class divisions, there is a common basis of human nature, therefore, in every one of us, whether we be properly Barbarians, Philistines, or Populace, there exists, sometimes only in germ and potentially, sometimes more or less developed, the same tendencies and passions which have made our fellow-citizens of other classes what they are" (2008:133). As we will see, the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision* and the best self in *Culture and Anarchy* confirm the association, by Yeats and Arnold respectively, of unity and harmony – poetical and political – with the ideal of ancient Greek genius, although for Yeats his emphasis on the "ancient" permits the Celtic genius to coincide with that of the ancient Greeks (and Italians). All the while, although shrewdly altering elements which do not suit his purpose, Yeats is working within the Arnoldian tradition. Both Arnold and Yeats take a dim view of the modern in comparison to the ancients. In Yeats's poem, the reference to "modern times" suggests that such unity is an ancient ideal; and the reference to Antaeus is drawn, of course, from ancient Greek mythology. Yet such unity is firmly rooted by Yeats in the Irish context. Significantly, Yeats appears to cut out the middle class from his vision of cultural union between noble and beggar-man. Both Arnold and Yeats are especially disinclined to pin their hopes for political authority and national unity on the predominant and, in their view, materialistic as well as politically misguided middle class, which bears the brunt of their long-running social critiques in their respective contexts.

Arnold and Yeats sought to transcend the deficiencies and divisiveness of class difference, and the Philistinism of the middle class in particular, through the

high ideal of genius, the achievement of which they both envisaged as the emergence of a higher form of aristocracy than the historical aristocracies of their respective countries, namely Arnold's Barbarians and Yeats's Anglo-Irish. This would be akin to what Burke had called in his *Appeal from the new to the old Whigs* (1791) a "natural aristocracy" (Goodrich 2005:33) serving rather than undermining the cause of true excellence of rule. I will conclude this chapter with a brief look at the relation between Burke, Arnold, and Yeats on this point; but we can see Yeats's exceedingly complex and idiosyncratic mapping of the interrelated Celtic and cultural aspects onto the Irish context more clearly in Yeats's last will and testament, as it were, in verse: "Under Ben Bulbin" (1939). A range of critics have linked this poem to *On the Boiler* (1938), with which it can be illuminatingly cross-referenced. Foster, for instance, explains that "the degeneration [Yeats] denounced in *On the Boiler* was – as for so long – the coarsening and decadence of Irish culture through the infection of English materialism and the philistinism of a *native petit bourgeoisie*. Nietzschean 'transvaluation', anti-democratic rage, uncompromising eugenicism, and a kind of frantic class feeling are all there..." (2003:630/31). Although the link is perhaps implicit in the parenthetical "for so long", what Foster does not explicitly mention, and what I wish to bring to the fore, is that Arnoldian anti-Philistinism is there too, and had taken root in Yeats long before he first read Nietzsche in 1902.

Indeed, the complex relationship between Victorian ethnography and early twentieth-century eugenics can be seen to inform Yeats's ideas of class, and of national unity through cultural renewal, partly but powerfully in relation to Arnold. As Robert Young tells us in "Matthew Arnold's Critique of 'Englishism'": "It is in order to claim that the English population is preserved as a mixture of Celt and Saxon, that Arnold invokes the work of the first person to link history with ethnography: W.F. Edwards" (2008:150). Arnold, he says,

“develops a new formulation of the older historical myth that the English were made up of a composite of Celtic and Saxon races”; and Arnold does so “by giving an Emersonian twist to the standard Arthurian account: instead of an integrated fusion of the Celts, Saxons and Normans, Edwards allowed him to argue that the English were made up of a dialectic of still distinct Celts and Saxons” (2008:151). It is precisely this, what Young later calls Arnold’s “dialectical model” (2008:152), that I wish to highlight in relation to Yeats. Young explains that “Arnold’s version of British history argues for a dialectical continuity between the races” and “it was only in the realms of English literature that a cultural fusion took place between Celt and Saxon; the task of the literary critic was to detect and chart the harmonious literary, strictly textual resolution of this racial dialectic” (2008:151).

This dialectical model underpins both Arnold’s Celticist and cultural analyses, as Young also explains. In *Culture and Anarchy*, “Celt and Saxon give way to the Hellene and Hebrew (to which they are already linked in passing in *Celtic Literature*)... Arnold has simply extended the gendered race-character associations of Celt and Saxon into the cultural origins of the English – now classical civilization and the Bible” (2008:152/153). “Only culture,” Young says, “offers a harmonious and aesthetic resolution to the fractured historical ethnographic genealogy of the English nation” (2008:152/153). As this suggests, Arnold’s dialectical model was never purely about biological race. In his earlier chapter “New Theory of Race: Saxon v. Celt”, Young explains that “[u]ntil the eugenics movement got under way [pioneered by Darwin’s cousin Sir Francis Galton in the 1860s and becoming institutionalized as a practice in the late nineteenth century], ‘race’ was always in some sense a popular science” (2008:40). He later elaborates that “[race] in the nineteenth century was always about more than just biology... [race] never came unalloyed, it always appeared dressed in full panoply, a *bricolage* of cultural, religious and historical values”

(2008:48/49). He adds: “Even the ‘pure’ racism of eugenics always carried its own ideological baggage – the only difference was that it was more deftly hidden behind the objectivity of ‘science’” (2008:48/49).

Arnold’s racial dialectic of Saxon and Celt, closely related to that of his Hebrew and Hellene, entails the more expansive project of bringing into stark relief the opposed poles of cultural degeneration (tending towards anarchy) and the potential for cultural regeneration – a fundamental opposition which can be readily related to the biological-racial, intelligence, and evolutionary investigations of eugenics. The key link between Arnold and Yeats in this regard is the early confirmation by Yeats, as we have seen by reference to Watson, of Arnold’s association of modern middle-class Philistinism “with lumpen Saxonism, the antithesis of which is the passionate idealism of the Arnoldian (and Yeatsian) Celt”. As we are about to see, “Under Ben Bulben” shows that Yeats’s early inheritance of the Arnoldian dialectical model remained firmly in place even in his late life, despite his careful reconfiguration many years before, in “The Celtic Element in Literature”, of Celtic primitivism from a racial to a temporal plane.

As Castle says, in *On the Boiler* Yeats addresses “the idea of the degeneration of racial continuity” (2008:92). Castle situates Yeats’s polemic in the context of class: “Though there is scarcely any overt mention of the Catholic Irish, it is clear from the tone of the piece, and from the bitter sense of lost Anglo-Irish greatness recorded in the short play *Purgatory* included in *On the Boiler*, that Yeats’s new interest in education and eugenics was a response to the isolation and irrelevance of the Anglo-Irish class within the Catholic confessional state that Ireland had become after Eamon de Valera’s rise to power in the 1930s” (2008:91). By the 1930s Yeats had, of course, compiled a long track record of targeting the Catholic middle class. Edward Larrissy, for instance, highlights in

his Introduction to *W.B. Yeats: A Critical Edition of the Major Works* (1997) that Yeats's "profound ambivalence about certain aspects of Irish nationalism... is famously expressed in 'September 1913' [first published in *The Irish Times* on 8 September 1913], during a period when he was tempted to despair of the possibility of an independent Ireland and was repelled by what he saw as the narrow philistinism and materialism of the Catholic middle class" (1997:xxi).

As we have seen, however, Arnold's anti-Philistinism also lends force to Yeats's early attacks on Dowden and Anglo-Irish Protestant attitudes. The overarching importance of Arnold's anti-Philistinism (and related disparagement of provincialism) to Yeats's aspirations for national unity in Ireland can be gauged from section XXIX of "Reveries over Childhood and Youth", where Yeats recalls – controversially, as Foster's account in *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making It Up In Ireland* (2001) of domestic responses to this passage shows – that he "began to plot and scheme how one might seal with the right image the soft wax before it began to harden" (Yeats 1991:101). Yeats adds: "I had noticed that Irish Catholics among whom had been born so many political martyrs had not the good taste, the household courtesy and decency of the Protestant Ireland I had known, yet Protestant Ireland seemed to think of nothing but getting on in the world. I thought we might bring the halves together if we had a national literature that made Ireland beautiful in the memory, and yet had been freed from provincialism by an exacting criticism, a European pose" (1991:101/102).

Increasingly frustrated by the entrenchment of the Catholic ethos of the newly independent state, Yeats's longstanding Arnoldian anti-Philistinism, closely related to his Arnoldian ideal of ancient Greek genius (associated with wholeness and harmony) evident as early as his 'Hellenised' portrayal of the Celtic genius of Ferguson, reaches its exacerbated eugenicist zenith in his late

life. As Castle argues in regard to *On the Boiler*, in “the evidence that [Yeats] marshals for his argument about the degeneration of culture, we see the ideal of cultural redemption [and therefore Yeats’s early Revivalist commitment to a redemptive ethnography in his treatment of the Irish peasant] transformed into a project of eugenics that calls, on the one hand, for an elite of ‘six or six thousand... the core of Ireland... Ireland itself’ and, on the other hand, the restriction in education and social advancement of those who fail to maintain strong racial continuity” (2008:93). Yeats’s eugenicist concern with racial continuity is carried through into “Under Ben Bulben”. Having linked Yeats’s denouncement of Irish cultural degeneration in *On the Boiler* with his diagnosis of the contagion of English materialism and consequent middle-class Philistinism, Foster adds that “[e]ugenicist preoccupations continued to penetrate every aspect of his thought and activity” (2003:631). Foster proceeds to refer to Yeats’s letter to Edith Shackleton Heald on 4 September 1938 in which he tells her that he has penned “a long poem” (Kelly, Schuchard 2002), at that point entitled “A Crier”. As Foster says: “This was ‘Under Ben Bulben’, designed partly to express his views on degeneration and partly as his own epitaph” (2003:631).

In her perceptive account of this poem, Brenda Maddox writes that it is “best known for its final verse (which starts ‘Under bare Ben Bulben’s head/In Drumcliff churchyard Yeats is laid’)” but she adds that “the penultimate stanza, with its irresistible rhythm and pounding rhymes, is more revealing, biographically and politically” (2000:355). Maddox observes that “Under Ben Bulben” is “*On the Boiler* poeticized and detoxified; the landed gentry and the peasantry are idealized, the growing middle class dismissed with the finest phrase the pseudo-science of eugenics is ever like to enjoy: ‘Base-born products of base beds’” (2000:355). Notably, Yeats’s denouncement of Irish cultural degeneration appears to conflate biology, poetry, and personal psychology:

Irish poets, learn your trade,
 Sing whatever is well made,
 Scorn the sort now growing up
 All out of shape from toe to top,
 Their unremembering hearts and heads
 Base-born products of base beds.

(Allt, Alspach 1989:639)

In “Yeats and Modernism” (2006), Daniel Albright sees Yeats’s scorn of misshapeness as a reflection of Yeats’s longstanding judgment on poetical form when he argues that “[a]gain and again, Yeats flogs the Modernist poets for their sloppiness of construction (“All out of shape from toe to top”...) and flatness of diction” (2006:63). This scorn for misshapeness in poetry can be related in part to Yeats’s early approval of Arnold’s 1853 preface, in which Arnold insists on whole and unified poetical construction such as that exemplified by the works of genius of the ancient Greeks; as well as to his reading of Arnold’s Celticist analysis, in which Arnold similarly finds the Celt sorely lacking in the architectonics required to produce great works, such as those exemplifying the genius of the ancient Greeks (and Italians like Dante). As we have seen, as early as 1886 Yeats subversively appropriates Arnold’s arguments in order to portray Ferguson as a Celtic genius displaying full mastery of the art of holistic and beautiful poetical construction, thereby elevating Celtic genius to the high company of the genius of the ancient Greeks.

We might also recall, on the issue of shape, that Yeats had asked in “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” (1929):

The finished man among his enemies? –

How in the name of Heaven can he escape
 That defiling and disfigured shape
 The mirror of malicious eyes
 Casts upon his eyes until at last
 He thinks that shape must be his shape?

(Allt, Alspach 1989: 479)

In this vein, the penultimate stanza of “Under Ben Bulben” would seem also to imply that Irish poets must resist disfigurement of identity in the face of hostility and slander from one’s enemies – a commentary which might be easily related to Yeats’s own interminable running battles with Catholic nationalists. For Yeats, Irish poets are to be psychologically self-determining, bolstered by bringing to memory a noble past, and therefore partaking in the habit of mind of the ancients. However, while we must take stock of Yeatsian “shape” as a metaphor for poetical form and psychological well-being in “Under Ben Bulben”, we cannot ignore the fact that Yeats is also being candidly ‘biological’ or eugenicist. In his letter to Edith Shackleton Heald, in which he tells her of the poem he has written, Yeats applies his eugenicist aesthetic to the bodily form of Catholic actors and actresses: “The new players, who join us through our school, have such misshapen bodies that one of the old players, a man who incarnates our traditions, threatens to go to America because he cant stand rehearsing them” (Kelly, Schuchard 2002).

These poetical, psychological, and biological or eugenicist attitudes are linked, I wish to underline, to Yeats’s ideal of Unity of Being in *A Vision*, which we will consider in more detail in chapter four. At this stage, it suffices to note that Yeats describes Unity of Being in biological terms, as a metaphor for the ideal condition of self and society, by reference to Dante’s *Convito*, as “a perfectly proportioned human body” (1990:131). This is the ideal condition enjoyed by

the Daimonic Man of Phase 17, exemplified by Dante, and Yeats himself, in *A Vision*; and this is the simultaneously poetical, psychological, and biological or eugenicist standard by which Yeats finds modern poets and the growing Catholic middle class in Ireland to be in especially bad shape, in more ways than one, in “Under Ben Bulben”. This may seem to have everything to do with Yeats’s reading of Dante, and nothing to do with Arnold, but Yeats’s exaltation of Dante is partly but powerfully informed by Arnold’s high praise of Dante across his oeuvre – not least in *On the Study of Celtic Literature*. Moreover, Arnold’s argument that the Celt lacked measure personally, poetically (contrasted with masters of architectonics such as Aeschylus and Dante), and politically, would not do for Yeats, who had promptly elevated the Celt – from his first reviews, on Ferguson, in 1886 – to the high company of the genius of the ancient Greeks, blessed with beauty and form, “a law of harmony presiding over the whole”. The close link to the Arnoldian best self, exemplifying the genius of the ancient Greeks, can be readily appreciated in that Arnold had asserted in the Preface to *Culture and Anarchy* that “what the man is, depends upon having more or less reached the measure of a perfect and total man” (2008:90).

What we are encountering, in “Under Ben Bulben” in Yeats’s late life, is the Arnoldian dialectical model, still at the core of Yeats’s combined Celticist and cultural outlook, but within which key elements have been rearranged by Yeats to suit his own purpose, much as he had done in his early appraisal of Ferguson. Yeats’s eugenicist dismissal of the growing Catholic middle class is inseparable from his longstanding Arnoldian anti-Philistinism in the Irish context, stemming from his diagnosis (via Arnold) of the contagion of lumpen Saxonism. The antithesis for Arnold, as for Yeats, is the Celt. The dialectic of Saxon and Celt, closely related to that of Hebraising Philistine and genius Hellene, with the modern opposed unfavourably in each case to the ancient, shines through in this

excoriation by Yeats of the modern Catholic middle class, lumped together with modern poets, and in Yeats's concomitant rallying call to Irish poets who, true to form, maintain their connection to the ancient past. Significantly, too, we can see Yeats's ideal of a cultural alliance between noble and beggar-man referred to in "The Municipal Gallery Revisited" projected once again, as fit subject for Irish poets:

Sing the peasantry, and then
Hard-riding country gentlemen...

Cast your mind on other days
That we in coming days may be
Still the indomitable Irishry

(Allt, Alspach 1989:639/640)

Yeats's reference to "coming days" chimes with his early poem "To Ireland in the Coming Times", originally entitled "Apologia addressed to Ireland in the coming days", and which we will consider in more detail in chapter four. As Foster comments, "the echo of the original title of 'To Ireland in the Coming Times' is surely intentional" (2003:635). As we will see, the revised "To Ireland in the Coming Times" (published in 1925) incorporates both Arnoldian sweetness (the cultural aspect) and measure (the Celtic aspect) – fittingly, given that Yeats had always wished in the poem to "be counted one,/With... Ferguson" (Allt, Alspach 1989:138). This poem is also indicative of Yeats's Arnoldian determination to keep up communications with the future, in hopes of saving it from the Philistines; and coincides with the finalization of the original *A Vision*, in which the embryonic Daimonic Man of the Ferguson appraisal emerges at last fully and perfectly formed, framed by a time of anarchy.

In this circuitous vein, we might also single out in “Under Ben Bulbin” the ringing term “indomitable”, which can be related to Arnold’s Celticist analysis, and which clearly punctuates Yeats’s eugenicist projection of Irish cultural resurgence. That this comes towards the end of the last of the *Collected Poems*, as part of Yeats’s last will and testament in verse, is indicative of the powerful and enduring influence of Arnold on Yeats’s work, and troubles a tendency in the critical field to suggest that Yeats somehow left his Arnoldian Celticism of the 1880s and 1890s behind in the 20th century. The ‘Celtic’ resonance of this single term is supported by Yeats’s earlier usage of the single term “ancient”, which he had substituted for “Celtic” in “The Celtic Element in Literature”, in stanza II, where he asserts that “ancient Ireland knew it all” (Allt, Alspach 1989:637); and his later assertion, in stanza IV, that “Measurement began our might” (1989:638). As I have indicated, Arnold’s claim that “the Celtic imaginativeness and melancholy are alike ‘a passionate, turbulent, indomitable reaction against the despotism of fact’” (Yeats 1972:173/4) is among Arnold’s well-known sentences quoted by Yeats in the opening section of “The Celtic Element in Literature”. Significantly, in Yeats’s appraisal of Ferguson, Yeats quotes from *Congal* (1872) and comments enthusiastically: “Still on they go, these indomitable pagans” (2004:7).

Although they do not relate the term “indomitable” to Arnold, the extraordinary longevity but also problematical nature of Yeats’s Arnoldian Celticism can be gauged from John Frayne and Madeleine Marchaterre’s comment on the second published review on Ferguson that its ferocious opening attack on Dowden “and its concluding clarion call to a rebirth of the Gael are magnificent and a fitting opening for a man who would sing the ‘indomitable Irishry’” (2004:10). Arnold also uses the single word “indomitable” as well as, notably, the word “noble” in Chapter VI of his Celticist analysis, where he says the Celt’s “quick feeling for what is noble and distinguished gave his poetry style; his indomitable

personality gave it pride and passion” (2008:66). This echoes Arnold’s characterization of the Celt, in Chapter IV, as having “so passionately, so nobly loved” poetry and “shown... splendid genius” (2008:45), though ultimately lacking the necessary measure or architectonics to produce great works, exemplified by the genius of the ancient Greeks and Italians.

If we shift back again, from the Celtic to the cultural aspect, we will also recall that the singling out of “sweetened” and “sweeten” by the editors of volume II of the collected letters relates to Arnold’s formulation of “sweetness and light”, which Arnold borrows from Swift: “the two noblest of things” (2008:104), by which Arnold means beauty and intelligence. I present these correspondences to suggest, again, that Yeats did not treat Arnold’s Celticist and cultural analyses in isolation, as many critics have done, but as the interrelated, complementary texts they in fact were from Yeats’s subversive perspective. The convergence for Yeats of Arnold’s indomitable and noble Celt, and the noblest Hellenistic qualities of beauty and intelligence which distinguished Arnold’s poetical and political best self from the Philistine mass, helped to shape in Yeats a eugenicist aesthetic in which the true Celt, in the high company of the genius of the ancient Greeks (and Italians such as Dante), could never be base-born and all out of shape from toe to top, but instead always and evermore in top form.

ii) NATURAL ARISTOCRACY AND THE STATE FROM BURKE THROUGH ARNOLD TO YEATS

Yeats’s labyrinthine and powerfully formative Arnoldian heritage must give us pause, then, to consider afresh the nature of the “noble” man he dreamed could

be in cultural alliance with the beggar-man – or more accurately, the nature of the noble man doing the dreaming. Mindful of primitivism as a feature of Romanticism through to Modernism, Gregory Castle has pointed more specifically to Yeats’s complicated relation to the primitive given his “ambivalent social status as an Anglo-Irishman in colonial Ireland and his involvement in the cultural nationalism of the Revival” (2008:46). Echoing a range of critics, Castle argues that although Yeats’s “ethnographic imagination” (2008:54) was expressly anti-imperialist in that he sought to proffer more authentic representations of the Irish peasant than the stereotypes created by Anglo-Irish compilers such as T. Crofton Croker and Samuel Lover – reflecting what Yeats describes in his introduction to *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888) as “the dash as well as the shallowness of an ascendant and idle class” (Yeats 1988:7) – Yeats may nevertheless “be said to harmonize with colonial thought in his construction of an idealized peasant” (2008:52). Substantiating his view, Castle quotes Richard Loftus’s comments in *Nationalism in Modern Anglo-Irish Poetry* (1964) “that ‘Yeats often uses a peasant mask when arguing his belief in the intuitive way of life’; but when he tries ‘to represent the rustic as a personification of simple nobility and dignity, the result is usually less than satisfactory’” (Castle 2008:52).

However, what I wish to bring to the fore is that Yeats did not restrict his idealization of “simple nobility” to the Irish peasant or beggar-man. As we have seen, he portrays his own father, i.e. an Anglo-Irish gentleman (albeit one having opted for the life of a bohemian artist), facing down “that howling mob” at the *Playboy* debate “with sweetness and simplicity. I fought them, he was nobler – he forgot them” (1974:161). That is to say, Yeats’s cultural dream was underpinned by his idealization of both the noble and the beggar-man as sharing, and being unified by, the quality of “noble simplicity”; and as the textual clue of “sweetness” also suggests, Yeats’s dream is partly informed by

his Arnoldian heritage. This helps to explain what has seemed to many critics Yeats's startling turn in later life to his Anglo-Irish precursors. Foster, for instance, observes that the idea that "echt-Irishness necessitated cradle-Catholicism" was "in line" with Yeats's view in the 1880s and 1890s – "all the more striking", he says, because "in later life [Yeats] repudiated this belief so completely" (2001:118). Castle observes that there is from about 1897 – the year "The Celtic Element in Literature" is dated – a shift in Yeats to "a greater interest in the nature of mystical consciousness itself, rather than the folkways of those who possess it" (2008:76). Moreover, after the *Playboy* riots in 1907, Castle argues, Yeats "began to turn his attention away from the Irish-speaking peasantry to a new 'indigenous' group, the Anglo-Irish or, as Yeats put it in 'Under Ben Bulbin,' the '[h]ard-riding country gentlemen" (2008:43).

Castle speculates that the *Playboy* riots may have been "the point at which Yeats realized that he had failed to capture the 'essence' of Irish folk culture" (2001:88); and he claims it is in "The Fisherman" (1916) that Yeats "frankly admits the imaginary status of the peasant he had celebrated in the 1890s: he is a 'man who does not exist,' a man 'who is but a dream,' who stands as an emblem of a 'cold/And passionate' poetry" (2008:88). Deborah Fleming highlights, however, a peculiar facet of "The Fisherman". She comments that readers "may be uncertain as to whether the poem actually speaks of a landless peasant or an Anglo-Irish gentleman; this intentional ambiguity in the poem emphasizes the similarity of the predicaments of peasant and aristocracy: neither exists except as an image" (1998:7). This insight leads her into a brief survey of responses to "The Fisherman" by leading critics:

The ambiguity... may lead us to a deeper understanding of Yeats's symbols. John Unterecker maintains that 'the fisherman' is Yeats's image of himself, and certainly Yeats fished as a boy in Sligo...

[In “The Stirring of the Bones”] Yeats also discusses his notion of Unity of Being, ‘where all the nature murmurs in response if but a single note be touched,’ found ‘by the rejection of all experience not of the right quality’. Impossible without ‘Unity of Culture’, this Unity of Being Yeats otherwise describes as a ‘[d]ream of the noble and beggar-man’: dream, that is, of aristocrat and peasant. Edward Hirsch sees the fisherman as a type of Yeats’s ideal, imagined peasant, while Seamus Heaney regards him as the pattern of the aristocrat who turned away from the Dublin audiences which had rejected great Art, the aristocrat whose qualities included ‘solitude, the will towards excellence, the courage, the self-conscious turning away from that in which he no longer believes’. Edward Said compares this poem with Neruda’s ‘El Pueblo’: ‘in both poems the central figure is an anonymous man of the people, who in his strength and loneliness is a mute expression of the people, a quality that inspires the poet in his work.’ Declan Kiberd reads the figure as an Anglo-Irish gentleman, perhaps even J.M. Synge, who is mentioned in the first stanza as ‘The dead man that I loved’ and whose plays *The Playboy of the Western World* and *The Shadow of the Glen* were reviled by Dublin audiences. That the peasants fished with nets from the shore, not with rod and fly, as did country gentlemen, buttresses this reading.

(1998:8)

As we will see in chapter three, Arnold exercises an important bearing on this poem, beyond the curious parallel between Arnold dreaming himself an aristocratic hunter and fisherman in *Culture and Anarchy*, and Yeats’s idealization of an aristocratic fisherman in the poem, chiming with his portrayal of aristocratic hunters in “Under Ben Bulbin”. While I concur with Kiberd, we must still allow that Yeats leaves room for the ambiguity which has led critics in

seemingly contrary directions, and that he saw aristocratic qualities not only in the Anglo-Irish gentleman but also in the Irish peasant. We might recur once again to Yeats's appraisal of Ferguson, in which Yeats reconciles the aristocratic bard with the great concourse of the people through the figure of Ferguson himself, representative of the measured genius of the Celts, in the high company of the genius of the ancient Greeks. In this vein, similarly to "The Fisherman", Brenda Maddox has noted the room that Yeats leaves for ambiguity in "Under Ben Bulbin", on whether we are encountering a vision of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy or a vision from Irish peasant mythology. As Maddox says: "Condescending as it may be, the [penultimate] stanza offers a unifying vision of 'Irishry', a people linked by common inheritance of an ancient tradition of superlative warriors. (Some would draw the snobbish sting from the poem by arguing that the riders who are asked to cast a cold eye on the modern world are not the hunting-and-fishing Anglo-Irish aristocracy but rather the horsemen of the mythical Queen Maeve)" (2000:355).

Maddox rightly pinpoints that the ambiguity centres on "hunting-and-fishing"; but what I wish to highlight is that, puzzlingly, these aristocratic pursuits in such poems as "Under Ben Bulbin" and "The Fisherman" have not been related by critics to Yeats's "The Celtic Element in Literature". In section IV, the substitution of "ancient" for "Celtic" is explicit in Yeats's response to Arnold's reflection in Chapter IV of his Celticist analysis, as we have seen, on the ideal man of genius: "Matthew Arnold asks how much of the Celt must one imagine in the ideal man of genius. I prefer to say, how much of the ancient hunters and fishers must one imagine in the ideal man of genius" (1972:184). I will return to this crucial passage in chapter four, and wish simply to signpost here that we can correlate this reference to "hunters and fishers" in "The Celtic Element in Literature" with the description of the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision*, who is aligned in the 'System' with the antithetical or aristocratic gyre

rather than the opposing primary or democratic gyre. Yeats covertly continues in *A Vision* this dialogue with Arnold in “The Celtic Element in Literature” on the nature of the ideal man of genius. As we might expect, this leads us to a deeper understanding of Yeats himself, via his symbolical ideal man of genius: the Daimonic Man.

Yeats’s attitude towards Celtic primitivism is an aristocratic attitude, allied with his ideal of Unity of Being – the condition which is the distinction of the Daimonic Man, above all, in the ‘System’. The textual and symbolical evidence suggests that Yeats has closely identified with and, in a sense, reconciled both the aristocrat and peasant within himself: the noble individual and poet. He has thus sought to rise above his own Anglo-Irish middle-class background in pursuing, even aspiring to embody, Irish national unity, though he is acutely aware of belonging, nevertheless, to “a tragic minority” (Ellmann 1960:241) – affirmed in his controversial Senate speech on divorce in 1925, as we will see shortly.¹³ His projections of a cultural alliance between aristocrat and peasant elsewhere in his oeuvre circle, therefore, to the key projection of his ideal self in *A Vision*. As Fleming says, for Yeats “poet, peasant, and aristocrat were indissolubly and organically linked because they had nothing to do with the commercial bourgeois world, and the aristocracy became the means of holding onto hope for unity of culture in the face of increasing mercantilism” (1998:71). This rejection of the commercial bourgeois world is tied to Yeats’s longstanding Arnoldian anti-Philistinism; and as I have suggested, Yeats’s dream of the noble in league with the beggar-man is not unrelated to his cross-referencing of Arnold’s noble and indomitable Celt, with Arnold’s best self distinguished by the noblest qualities of sweetness and light, despite the lack of any obvious

¹³ Yeats is a poet of Phase 17, born into the age of Phase 22, and therefore “doomed to belong to ‘a tragic minority’” (Ellmann 1960:241).

resemblance between this Yeatsian dream and Arnold's very different formulations on class.

Focusing on Yeats's conception of the noble man, Elizabeth Cullingford has argued that Yeats's annotations to a volume of selections from Nietzsche, sent by John Quinn in 1902, show Yeats "supplying the generosity which Nietzsche so signally lacks" (1984:73). She later writes that Yeats "responded to Nietzsche's arrogance of expression with his own emphasis on service and generosity: 'In the last analysis the 'noble' man will serve... the weak as much as the 'good' man, but in the first case the 'noble' man creates the *form* of the gift in the second the weak'" (1984:74). Cullingford adds:

Yeats accepts distinctions between superior and inferior, but his attitude is one of noblesse oblige. The great man is genuinely the servant of his people, although he alone determines the form his service will take. For Nietzsche the 'noble' man has rights but no obligations: for Yeats rights entail duties.

(1984:74)

As Yeats's annotations indicate, Nietzsche is strongly in play in refining his ideal of the noble man. However, as the annotations also indicate, Yeats's position, notably emphasizing form, is ultimately in line not so much with Nietzsche as with the largesse and balancing of rights with duties which we can see to be pivotal to Arnold's Hellenised best self, exemplifying ancient Greek genius. A main argument in Arnold's cultural analysis is that claiming the right to do as one's ordinary self likes is a false conception of liberty and tends towards anarchy, so that there is a duty not only to keep such a tendency firmly in check, but "the duty... of extricating and elevating our best self" (2008:187) to be embodied in the state, securing a harmonious and cultured rather than

largely Philistine society. Indeed, “best” is precisely the single term employed by Yeats, in regard to the noble, in the concluding lines of “To a Wealthy Man who promised a Second Subscription to the Dublin Municipal Gallery if it were proved the People wanted Pictures” (1912). In contrast to “what the blind and ignorant town/Imagines best to make it thrive” (Allt, Alspach 1989:287), the anti-Philistine Yeats affirms what, in his estimation, is truly cultured and “best”:

Look up in the sun’s eye and give
 What the exultant heart calls good
 That some new day may breed the best
 Because you gave, not what they would,
 But the right twigs for an eagle’s nest!

(Allt, Alspach 1989:287)

These lines are quoted by Ellmann in “The Pursuit of Spontaneity” to show that Yeats “discarded the brutal implications” (1964:97) of Nietzsche’s ethics, in regard to “the morality of the noble man... of the ruling class” (1964:96). Yeats’s usage of the term “best” here (and elsewhere) in the Irish context suggests that the notion of the noble man is another instance in which room might have been made for Arnold in Ellmann’s series of comparisons of Yeats with Nietzsche and Blake. The anti-Philistinism of these lines, targeting the Catholic middle class, is illuminated by Yeats’s comment, in his letter to Hugh Lane dated 1 January 1913, that “I shall quite understand if you think it would be unwise to draw attention to the possible slightness of ‘Paudeen’s’ (little Patrick) desire for any kind of art” (Kelly, Schuchard 2002). The kind or standard of art that Yeats ultimately thinks best is evident, even towards the end of his life, among lines added to *On the Boiler* in November 1938, which Foster has pointed to as illustrating Yeats’s differentiation of himself from Modernism. Yeats asserts that he seeks “in words & in art what the Greeks sought” (Foster

2003:642): perfection. Yeats places himself not among the “romantics but classicists” (2003:642), which we can read as an emphasis on measure rather than a disavowal of Romanticism per se. Yeats had always approved of Arnold’s championing of the study of perfection, of the best that has been said and thought in the world, in particular those works exemplifying the measured genius of the ancient Greeks and Italians – and, for Yeats, of the Celts.

Moreover, Arnold’s Hellenised best self is effectively a higher form of aristocracy, in the Burkean tradition; and the textual evidence would appear to confirm that Yeats largely follows Arnold in the first instance, rather than Nietzsche (or even Burke, as we will see), in envisaging rule by the “best” or noblest individuals in Ireland. That Arnold’s recurrent emphasis on the best had long since helped to shape Yeats’s later advocacy of the rule of educated and able men can be glimpsed in his letter to the editor of the *Chicago Daily News*, dated 16 March 1903, by which time he had immersed himself in Nietzsche:

I think the question you asked me was: “What is the greatest need of Ireland just now?” The greatest need is more love for thoughts for their own sake. We want a vigorous movement of ideas... But if we are to have an able nation, a nation that will be able to take up to itself the best thought of the world, we must have more love of beauty merely because it is beauty, of truth merely because it is truth.

(Kelly, Schuchard 1994:327)

A few years before this, in a letter to the editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, dated 27 January 1899, Yeats refers to the “best” in envisioning the aristocrat and peasant being brought closer together through literature: “The best among the leisured class have begun to read Irish books and Irish history with a curious

passionate interest, and the un leisured class has always had its ballads and legends, which are the beginnings of literature and the arts” (Gould, Kelly, Toomey 1997:351). The location of Edmund Burke in the labyrinth of influence on both Arnold and Yeats, on the point of the noble man or “best” to lead culturally and govern politically, gains particular importance in that Kiberd, as we will see in chapter four, links Burke to the placement in *A Vision* of Whitman at Phase 6. Yet as Kiberd says in his early chapter “Ireland – England’s Unconscious?”: “Matthew Arnold, like his exemplar Burke, was never an Irish nationalist: indeed, in 1886, during the Home Rule crisis he proclaimed himself a staunch critic of Gladstone’s proposal, arguing that the ‘idle and imprudent’ Irish could never properly govern themselves” (1996:31). It is all the more puzzling, then, that Kiberd, having briefly linked Arnold’s Celticist influence to the framework of *A Vision*, as we have seen in the introduction, should link Burke to the placement of Whitman at Phase 6 rather than Arnold at Phase 18, alongside Yeats at Phase 17. It is therefore useful, in closing this chapter, to cover some of Yeats’s Burkean heritage, through Arnold, before we enter *A Vision*.

As Marjorie Howes says, Arnold had insisted, in *On the Study of Celtic Literature* in 1867 and his later essays on Ireland, in the 1880s, that Ireland must remain firmly within the imperial collective, but he also “criticized England’s treatment of the Irish and urged the British to become a people capable of ‘attaching’ Ireland and the other Celtic territories under British dominion in order to form a peaceful union with ‘its parts blended together in common national feeling’” (1996:19). Arnold’s imperialist approach to unity and harmony is, we might say, architectonics writ large: his poetical ideal of wholeness rather than separated parts in the 1853 preface, modelled on the genius of the ancient Greeks, is carried through into his Celticist and cultural analyses. Linking both analyses, Howes observes that there is “a close

relationship between his criticism of English attitudes towards Ireland and his criticism of British Philistinism”; and she adds that the “position Arnold and other liberal Victorian thinkers adopted [towards Ireland] was deeply indebted to the works of Edmund Burke” (1996:19). Dublin-born Burke, we might note, constitutes a rather ambiguous model whose largesse was apparently ready-made in having been raised a Protestant at his father’s behest, in part as a necessary gateway to a career, while his mother and sister remained Catholics.

Howes refers generally to Burke’s works, rather than specific texts, but she draws upon Seamus Deane’s tracing, in “Arnold, Burke and the Celts” (1985), of Burke’s unionism from its first formulation in the *Tracts on the Popery Laws in Ireland* (1760-65). Howes summarizes Deane’s overview in explaining that Burke’s attitude to colonial rule in Ireland “involved criticizing the corruption and brutality of the Protestant Ascendancy, calling for a ‘true aristocracy’ to replace it, and protesting against the penal laws and other forms of Catholic oppression”, elements which “became central to nineteenth-century efforts to kill Home Rule with kindness” (1996:19/20). As Deane says, Burke felt that “the misguided policies which were to lead to the loss of the Colonies [of America] could lead to the loss of Ireland. British support for the Protestant Ascendancy was, in his view, the crux of the problem” (1987:22). Pointing to Arnold’s many citations of Burke across his oeuvre, and editing of the anthology *Edmund Burke on Irish Affairs* (1881), Deane draws what he calls “a line of filiation from Burke’s early *Tracts* to Arnold’s essays of 1878-81”, explaining that “Burke’s attack on the Protestant Ascendancy is incorporated into Arnold’s attack on the English middle classes and the Protestant garrison in Ireland” (1987:27). Deane proceeds to reflect that “Burke and Arnold seem to be unlikely grandparents to the Irish Literary Revival. But the facts of the case seem to warrant this conclusion” (1987:27). He adds: “As a result, our idea of

the Celtic tradition, in so far as it affects our reading of Yeats, Synge, and others, is modified” (1987:27).

Certainly, our view of Yeats’s advocacy of rule in Ireland by noble individuals, closely tied to his anti-Philistinism, is enlarged by drawing a line to Burke through Arnold. As Amanda Goodrich tells us in *Debating England’s Aristocracy in the 1790s: Pamphlets, Polemics and Political Ideas* (2005), a letter to Earl Fitzwilliam of 1791 shows that aristocracy was “for Burke essential to government and society, as historians are fond of saying, both as ‘a bulwark of good rulership’, and ‘a bulwark of the social order’. But he condemned those members of the aristocracy who did not behave as they should as leaders” (2005:32). In his renowned *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), she adds, Burke had “accused ‘individuals’ amongst the French nobility of betraying that order and leading the revolution”, and here he had defined aristocracy “primarily as a political term for a sector of government” (2005:32/33). However, it is Burke’s *Appeal from the new to the old Whigs* (1791) which, as Goodrich says, “brings together Burke’s definitions [of aristocracy] and suggests that he viewed ‘aristocracy’ as interchangeable with ‘nobility’ and, loosely, as a class of the ‘landed interest’” (2005:33). “Nevertheless,” she adds, “Burke’s ambiguous definition of a ‘natural aristocracy’ in the *Appeal* has left historians divided as to whether Burke was advocating a hereditary aristocracy or a meritocracy” (2005:33).

Goodrich then offers a crucial clarification:

But to view Burke’s ‘natural aristocracy’ in such terms is to miss the point. In fact Burke’s definition of a ‘natural aristocracy’ incorporates both a hereditary aristocracy and a meritocracy. What Burke was defining here was not ‘aristocracy’ in terms of the peerage

or the nobility but a broader category. Burke's 'natural aristocracy' incorporated all the best suited to govern, in both the House of Lords and the House of Commons. That is the nobility and the gentry, together 'gentlemen', the governing elite, the primary landowners in the nation. Burke's 'natural aristocracy' can loosely be described as comprising 'virtuous gentlemen', with all the problems of definition that term might bring with it.

(2005:33/34)

Burke's conception of the state as ideally the domain of a "natural aristocracy" best suited to govern, an elite which might also be described as a meritocracy, is strikingly similar to Arnold's projection of a collective and authoritative best self in *Culture and Anarchy* and his ongoing advocacy of rule by the naturally excelling remnant (notably even abroad, and towards the end of this life, in his lecture "Numbers, or the Majority and the Remnant" in the United States, in 1883); as well as Yeats's vision of the emergence of educated and able men, of noble individuals, to rule Ireland. The complex historical specificities informing the evolving conception of the state from Burke to Arnold to Yeats are not to be seen as uniform and coterminous; and therefore, nor are their individual visions of the state to be seen as in any sense always-identical. As Deane says: "Arnold, learning from Burke, recognizes that good government could stifle the Irish demand for self-government. But his version of killing Home Rule by kindness was an old Burkean policy adopted more than a century too late" (1987:25). Yeats, we might add, differs radically from the other two, ultimately, in that he posits the embodiment of noble individuals in an independent Irish state rather than an ably-ruled colony within the imperial collective.

Nevertheless, as such crucial differences indicate, what many historians have called "the Irish Question" (Hegarty 2011:222), on what should be done to

address “the fact that a large proportion of the Irish population was chafing under rule from London” (2011:222), can be seen as vital to all three thinkers faced with the particular historical events and social challenges of their respective times, in formulating their ideal of the state. Some of the major historical specificities informing Yeats’s conception, in relation to Burke, of what an independent Irish state should best entail, have been well summarised by Donal Torchiana in the context of Yeats’s turn to his Anglo-Irish precursors in the 1920s:

... the excitement Burke at his great moments could fire in Yeats seems to be based on a large analogy. Yeats remembered him for the crises he faced in India, America, France, and Ireland – but especially for his attack on the French Revolution. The dangerous aftercourses that modern revolution had brought to Ireland after 1916 struck Yeats as swirling back to those of 1789 and gaining new momentum from the Russian Revolution of 1917. Small wonder then that Yeats chose, in his warnings to the new peasant democracy, to emulate the Burke who asked that England be governed by able men; who saw the slow growth of his country symbolized in the British oak; and who questioned the abstractions, manners, and morals of the revolutionary government in France. These were the chief themes in Burke’s great melody against Whiggery.

(1992:171)

I will touch upon Yeats’s anti-democratic approval, in “Blood and the Moon” (1928), of Burke’s symbol of the oak tree, in chapter four; but it must be immediately appreciated that Arnold had long since relayed, in a sense, a range of Burkean ideas to Yeats at a formative stage of his career, including the ideal of noble individuals best suited to govern, much as the Swiftian formulation of

“sweetness and light” impacted upon Yeats via Arnold in renovated form. While Arnold does not explicitly portray the state symbolically as an oak tree in *Culture and Anarchy*, he nevertheless employs horticultural language throughout in projecting his own vision of the state as the embodiment of the collective and noblest best self. He describes “our present unsettled state, so full of the seeds of trouble” (2008:155); and Hebraism as leading to “a narrow and twisted growth of our religious side itself, and to a failure in perfection” (2008:81), with the predominance of Hebraism producing a “contravention of the natural order” (2008:154). As this suggests, the Burkean Arnold is concerned with a state – personal, poetical, and political – of natural order, growth, and maturity.

Arnold’s horticultural or ‘cultivated’ language also applies, then, to the reverse: preoccupied with “man’s total spiritual growth” (2008:90), he advocates the “true and smooth order of humanity’s development” (2008:156). “Everything,” he says, “teaches us how gradually nature would have all profound changes brought about” (2008:174). Accordingly, he affirms that “a State in which law is authoritative and sovereign, a firm and settled course of public order, is requisite if man is to bring to maturity anything precious and lasting now, or to found anything precious and lasting for the future” (2008:187). Arnold’s emphasis is on maintaining stability, or law and order, in revolutionary times, asserting that “however great the changes to be accomplished, and however dense the array of Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace, we will neither despair... [nor] threaten violent revolution and change. But we will look forward cheerfully and hopefully to ‘a revolution,’ as the Duke of Wellington said, ‘by due course of law’” (2008:189).¹⁴ Closely related to Arnold’s insistence on law and order is his ideal of the achievement of “perfection”, a key single term which proliferates throughout his cultural analysis. In line with

¹⁴ That the Dublin-born Duke serves Arnold as a model would not have escaped Yeats’s notice.

his definition of culture as “the study and pursuit of perfection” (2008:100) which “leads us... to conceive of true human perfection as a harmonious perfection, developing all sides of our humanity; and as a general perfection, developing all parts of our society” (2008:79).), it is clear that Arnold envisions the state as an expression of a “full, harmonious perfection” (2008:80) achieved by “the full and harmonious development of our humanity” (2008:161).

Arnold is conspicuously absent, therefore, from Cullingford’s account of Yeats’s Burkean conception of the state as organic (just as he is missing from Cullingford’s entire thesis that Yeats was not a fascist). Pointing to Yeats’s description of the ideal condition of Unity of Being as a Dantesque or perfectly proportioned human body, Cullingford reflects that “[a]cceptance of organic theories may be simply metaphorical: a way of expressing the interrelatedness of individuals in society” (1984:154). However, having highlighted that Fascism “took advantage of certain respectable political theories, most notably the concept of the organic state”, she warns that if “organicism becomes prescriptive, it can have unpleasant consequences. Implicit in the theory is the subordination of parts to the whole, which can lead to that sacrifice of the individual to the idea characteristic of totalitarian regimes” (1984:154). Subordination of the parts to the whole is, however, also the logic of empire. It is therefore hardly surprising and still problematical that, claiming Yeats’s “ideas about the nature and role of the organic State have little relation to the fascist doctrines which superficially they resemble” (1984:154), Cullingford proceeds to argue that Yeats’s “real affinity was not with Mussolini but with Burke” (1984:155). Cullingford quotes Burke’s oft-quoted description of the state as a partnership in perfection: “... a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. And as the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it

becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born” (1984:155).

As I am endeavouring to show, however, Yeats’s affinity with Burke is in fact partly by way of Arnold, whose entire notion of culture and conception of the state is reminiscent of the Burkean ideal of a partnership in perfection, and thus long-term stability through inevitable times of change, even necessary revolution. Arnold’s esteem for holistic poetical construction or architectonics, which he sees best exemplified in the works of genius of the ancient Greeks and Italians, and as entailing the subordination of the parts to the whole, is writ large in his domestic and inseparable imperialist politics, where his emphasis is likewise on organic unity. This is not far removed from the Romantic conception of the imagination. In “A Defence of Poetry”, for instance, Shelley writes of compelling “modern forms of manners and opinions... into a subordination to the imaginative and creative faculty” (1973:762). Having disqualified the “three candidates for authority” (2008:120), or the aristocratic, middle, and working classes, Arnold locates authority instead in the best self, in both an individual and collective sense. We can see his enthusiasm for poetical “action” writ large, in what might seem merely usage of the conventional verb, when he relates the best self to the state, asserting that “the question is, the action of the State being the action of the collective nation, and the action of the collective nation carrying naturally great publicity, weight, and force of example with it, whether we should not try to put into the action of the State as much as possible of right reason, or our best self, which may... come back to us with new force and authority, may have visibility, form, and influence, and help to confirm us, in the many moments when we are tempted to be our ordinary selves merely, in resisting our natural taste of the bathos rather than in giving way to it?” (2008:143).

Again, his policy of subordination of the parts to the whole can be seen in his recommendation that “when we want to make right reason act on individual reason, our best self on our ordinary self, we seek to give it more power of doing so by giving it public recognition and authority, and embodying it, so far as we can, in the State” (2008:143). Except for the explicit symbolism of the tree, Arnold might easily have been substituted for Burke in Cullingford’s comparison with Yeats:

A profound difference exists between Yeats’s conviction, also learnt from Burke, that the State must develop slowly like a tree, and the radical measures adopted by the fascist dictators. They chose a period in the distant past, when the balance in the State was supposedly perfect or the race was pure, and in the interests of this myth they dismembered the political structure which they found on achieving power. Burke would have classed them, not with the preservers of a living organism, but with the French Revolutionaries.

(1984:155)

The very different historical specificities, but strikingly comparable issues, which can be seen to inform Arnold’s conception, in relation to Burke, of what the state should best entail, have been well described by J. Dover Wilson as “the shadow of domestic anarchy under which the book was written” (Arnold 1960:xxxviii) stemming from the events “of the years 1866-70, which were some of the most critical in modern English history” (1960:xii) and which “represent a great turning-point in the history of both Europe and of England” (1960:xxii). Wilson points to the rise of Prussia in conquering Austria in 1866 and France in 1870 but explains that *Culture and Anarchy* is “mainly concerned with internal affairs, the chief of these being the passing of the Second Reform Act of 1867, the immense discussion and agitation, together with rioting, which

preceded this, and the spate of radical legislation which threatened to follow” (1960:xxii). Arnold recommends culture “as the great help out of our present difficulties” (2008:77); and not least of these events to which, as Wilson says, “*Culture and Anarchy* makes constant reference” (Arnold 1960:xii) were the mass gatherings around the country led by the left-wing Quaker radical John Bright; days of rioting in Birmingham incited by the inflammatory anti-Catholic speeches of “a certain Mr Murphy” (1960:xxix); and demonstrations at the behest of the Reform League led by, among others, the “extreme radical and violent agitator” (1960:xxvi) Charles Bradlaugh, giving rise to – a particular flashpoint – the so-called Hyde Park Riots.

Although amounting to little more than a pulling down of railings and trampling of flower-beds by lingering “rougher portions” of a demonstration which had been shifted instead to Trafalgar Square, with no actual physical harm befalling the “well-to-do citizens” utilising the park as their own middle-class “pleasure garden” (1960:xxvi), Wilson explains that the incident nevertheless “produced an immense effect upon public opinion” (1960:xxvi). “It is scarcely too much to say,” he remarks, “that the fall of the Park railings did for England in July 1866 what the fall of the Bastille did for France in July 1789. The shooting of Niagra was seen to be inevitable” (1960:xxvi). As Wilson also explains, the Home Secretary Spencer Walpole was forced to resign owing to his handling of “the Hyde Park affair with such culpable gentleness” (1960:xxix); and public outrage was compounded the following year, just a week before the Murphy riots began in Birmingham (on 16 June), when troops of the Royal London Militia, being led on a route march in Hyde Park by Alderman-Colonel Samuel Wilson, did not intervene, for fear of being overpowered and losing their rifles, when “a number of roughs” (1960:xxx) began following them and set about knocking off

people's hats.¹⁵ Over the top as the comparison with the fall of the Bastille evidently was, Arnold's rejection, in *Culture and Anarchy*, of the idea of liberty as doing as one's ordinary self likes, and his fears that this misconception of liberty tended towards anarchy, exemplified by the fall of the Hyde Park railings, can be readily related, for instance, to Burke's "speech in parliament when *Reflections* was being written" in which, Goodrich reports, Burke argued that the French had "made and recorded a sort of institute and digest of anarchy, called the rights of man... By this mad declaration they subverted the state" (2005:35).

Moreover, placing Arnold's Celticist analysis (1867) in its historical context, Marjorie Howes points to "an increase in 'Fenian fever'" in Ireland and the US, "an outbreak of Fenian violence in Ireland and England, an English crackdown on Irish unrest, and a rise in popular and media attention to the Fenian movement" (1996:20). Howes details the various flashpoints of the "Fenian threat" from 1865 to 1867, which can be seen to dovetail with the historical context of *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), as we might expect given the close proximity of dates of publication. "Finally," she writes, the Fenian threat "coincided with a period of civil unrest in England over such issues as manhood suffrage and trade unionism, making the English middle and upper classes all the more concerned about various forms of rebellion and the English government all the more anxious to assert its authority and deal harshly with disturbers of the peace" (1996:191). This complex historical backdrop involving the Fenian threat, which even in Arnold's lifetime extended well beyond the jailbreak attempt at Clerkenwell in December 1867 (at which point Howes ends her account), informs Arnold's portrayal of the sentimental, "undisciplinable,

¹⁵ Humorously, in defence of his ancestor, Wilson explains that "unknown to Arnold at the time" Alderman-Colonel Wilson was 75 years old and thought of his soldiers "as a gallant spectacle" (Arnold 1960:ix). "That so much gallantry should be jeopardized in a scuffle with a crowd of roughs," he concludes, "was not to be thought of, at any rate by a septuagenarian" (1960:x).

anarchical, and turbulent” Celt’s lack of measure, in *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, which can be cross-referenced with his juxtaposition, punctuated by ironic humour, of the Hyde Park rioter and naturally anti-Philistine Fenian in Chapter II of *Culture and Anarchy*, with the former doing as he likes and Arnold calling for tough measures to deal with him, too.

It makes sense, therefore, to view Yeats’s later enthusiasm, in the Irish context, for Burke’s conception of the state, as having been partly shaped by the powerful formative impact of, and Yeats’s long familiarity with, Arnold’s works. It was as late as 1918, I wish to underline, that Yeats “was seriously reading Burke” (1992:169), according to Torchiana, who adds: “In the 1920’s he purchased a set of Burke, probably with part of his Nobel Prize money. He vigorously marked passages in this set during his Senate days, confirming, it would seem, many of his already strongly held aristocratic biases” (1992:169). Significantly, the *Appeal*, Torchiana says, is Yeats’s “most thoroughly marked text” (1992:169) by Burke, not least those “passages celebrating the need to have in government intelligent and able men, who comprised, as Burke supposed, the collective genius behind the British constitution” (1992:170). This is precisely the model of national genius in practice which we find fixed, as it were, in the evolving conceptions of the state from Burke to Arnold to Yeats, geared towards coping with the respective historical specificities of their times – except that Yeats had immersed himself in Arnold’s works long before those of Burke. That is to say, in Yeats the line of filiation proceeds instead to Arnold and then Burke.

Compelling textual evidence that Yeats’s aristocratic notion of Ireland being ruled by noble individuals is strongly related to Arnold, and predates, and therefore deeply informs, his serious reading of Burke from 1918, arises not only in such writings as his letters, prose, and poetry, as we have seen, but also

in Yeats's public speaking. The single term "best" also surfaces in Torchiana's quotation from an *Irish Times* report headlined "Home Rule and Religion" and dated 25 January 1913, of Yeats telling a meeting of Anglo-Irish Protestants that he "was an Irish Nationalist" (1992:149) and proceeding to argue:

In no country were the best minds intolerant. It was the mediocre minds that were intolerant. (Applause). They [intellectual men] were asking nothing but an arena in which the best might come out, and the best might rule. (Applause.) The intolerance which he dreaded was the intolerance that existed among Catholics and Protestants, against ideas, against books, against European culture, and he saw nothing that would put down that intolerance but the obtaining of that arena that would teach them how to sift out the best men. (Applause.)

(1992:149)

Such sentiments strikingly echo Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*; and later, in Yeats's Senate speech on divorce in 1925, Yeats employs the term "best" in the same heated breath that he refers to Burke:

I think it is tragic that within three years of this country gaining its independence we should be discussing a measure which a minority of this nation considers to be grossly oppressive. I am proud to consider myself a typical man of that minority. We against whom you have done this thing are no petty people. We are one of the great stocks of Europe. We are the people of Burke; we are the people of Grattan; we are the people of Swift, the people of Emmet, the people of Parnell. We have created the most of the modern literature of this country. We have created the best of its political intelligence.

(Pearce 2001:10)

Arnold is not explicitly mentioned in Torchiana's book, but as he says, Yeats felt that "[t]o have regarded the purity of Berkeley's thought, to have heeded the light and sweetness advocated by Burke, Swift, and Goldsmith might have made Ireland a heaven for the wise" (1992:242). This passing reference to "light and sweetness", besides the relation to Swift, would seem to be indicative of Torchiana's instinctive linkage of Arnold to Yeats's engagement with the works of his Anglo-Irish precursors, but this is never explicitly articulated in Torchiana's book. Much that Torchiana covers in examining the great appeal of these precursors to Yeats – including antipathy to the masses and rule by the few and able – might easily have been related to Arnold, too, as an early and powerful influence.

Later still, as the reference in the divorce speech to "great stocks" presages, Yeats's eugenicist emphasis on the "best" shapes *On the Boiler* in which, as Foster reports, Yeats's views are "stridently reactionary, and he is unashamedly prepared to forecast conflict between the many and the few" (2003:631). By reference to David Bradshaw's "The Eugenics Movement in the 1930s and the Emergence of *On the Boiler*" (1992), Foster highlights that, in a deleted passage, Yeats wrote that "centuries of bloodshed may... [be] the only means of... setting in all places of authority of *power* 'the best born of the best'" (2003:631). Yeats is evidently quoting himself here. Among various extracts relating to Yeats's eugenicist views, A. Norman Jeffares and A.S. Knowland, in their *A Commentary on the Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats* (1975), quote from the Introduction to *Fighting the Waves* (1928): "States are justified, not by multiplying or, as it would seem, comforting those that are inherently miserable, but because sustained by those for whom the hour seems 'awful', and by those born out of themselves, the best born of the best" (Jeffares, Knowland 1975:278).

Yeats's usage of the single term and emphatic insistence on the "best" (poetically and politically) throughout his career might seem merely coincidental and colloquial were it not for the labyrinthine nature of the powerfully formative, combined impact of Arnold's works, in which ancient Greek genius is characterised as the "best" in association with such notions as joy, beauty, intelligence, nobility, order, unity, harmony, and perfection connected to form (or measure) in relation to poetry as well as individual and political self-rule. This Arnoldian heritage helped to shape the anti-Philistine Yeats's poetical and political ideals and therefore his "already strongly held aristocratic biases" prior to his serious study of Burke. In this regard, those "dangerous aftercourses that modern revolution had brought to Ireland after 1916", which Torchiana refers to as informing Yeats's reading of Burke, must be firmly situated, furthermore, in the specific historical context of the bloody and climactic revolutionary period in Ireland in the wake of both the Easter Rising of 1916 and end to World War I in 1918. Yeats's conception of the state, confirmed partly by way of his reading of Burke from 1918, is grounded in the immediate historical specificities of the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-1921 and ratification of the Anglo-Irish Treaty by the Dáil which precipitated the civil war of 1922-23, coinciding with the founding of the Irish Free State in which Yeats would serve as a senator from December 1922 to November 1928.

As Ellmann highlights, Yeats wrote "as early as 1919" that, if he were 24 instead of 54, he "would propose to the nation his new doctrine of Unity of Being" (1960:245). In tandem with his work on what became *A Vision*, the closely related instalments of his life story were "no longer a mere autobiography, but a 'political and literary testament...intended to give a philosophy to the movement...'" (1960:242). Ellmann is quoting from Yeats's letter to Lady Gregory dated 30 December 1920, in which Yeats adds: "Every

analysis of character, of Wilde, Henley Shaw & so on builds up my philosophic nationalism – it is nationalism against internationalism, the rooted against the rootless people” (Kelly, Schuchard 2002). Ellmann explains that from 1919 to 1922 Yeats “rewrote that first draft of his *Autobiographies*... with *A Vision* in mind” and “put reticence upon his narrative and suffused it with the serenity of the man who has achieved Unity of Being” (1960:241), turning himself “into that man of phase 17 whom, once he had posited, he had decided to resemble” (1960:242). Ellmann also tells us that Yeats had, in 1924, “still hoped to introduce *A Vision* directly into the political scene” (1960:249). However, though the phrase “Unity of Being” speaks for itself as an ideal condition of unity, it is never clear from Ellmann’s (or anyone’s) account exactly what Yeats might have hoped to recommend or achieve by doing so. It is abundantly clear, however, that the abstruse *A Vision* left Yeats in intellectual isolation, his anticipation of which is expressed in the epilogue to *A Vision* “All Soul’s Night” (1920): “It may be all that hear/Should laugh and weep an hour upon the clock” (Yeats 2008:208/11).

As Foster humorously says, the treatise “has found few followers since Frank Pearce Sturm”; and he adds candidly that “it is hard to believe that it deserves them” (2003:606). Nevertheless, as Yeats explicitly advertises in *A Vision*, his account of the Great Wheel was “FINISHED AT THOOR BALLYLEE, 1922, // IN A TIME OF CIVIL WAR” (2008:94).¹⁶ This was a time of full-blown anarchy. The civil war and preceding Anglo-Irish War, routinely detailed by his biographers and critics, are key to understanding the particular Irish historical context which informs his most acclaimed poetry collection *The Tower* (1928); but it is also precisely this context which frames Yeats’s projection of the Daimonic Man of Phase 17, distinguished by the ideal condition of Unity of Being, in *A Vision*. Oddly, this is a fact which has been taken no notice of by

¹⁶ The upper case becomes lower case, but the words remain the same, in the 1937 version.

biographers and critics in relation to the presence of Arnold at Phase 18, alongside Yeats at Phase 17. Yet so strikingly comparable are the issues at stake in the evolving conceptions of the state from Arnold to Yeats that the title of Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* has ably served, as we have seen, as shorthand for the complex historical context attending the founding of the independent Irish state, analysed by F.S.L. Lyons in *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland* (1979). Though he all but divorces Arnold entirely from his thesis, Lyons asserts that "the connection between culture and anarchy is fundamental to the understanding of modern Ireland" (1982:2); but it is also fundamental, I wish to underline, to our understanding of the relation between Yeats, Arnold, and *A Vision*.

It must be stressed that the scale of anarchy and bloodshed of the Irish civil war, even without pointing to the preceding Anglo-Irish War, far exceeds that of the mere "shadow of anarchy", as Wilson puts it, under which Arnold produced both his Celticist and cultural analyses. This is not to minimise the gravity of events in Arnold's time – the Hyde Park riots may have been a mere walk in the park, as it were, but the Murphy riots at Ashton under Lyne (May 1868) and in Manchester (September 1868), for instance, both caused real bloodshed, while the explosion during the Fenian jailbreak attempt at Clerkenwell a year earlier killed at least a dozen people and injured approximately 120 others. However, the more immediate historical specificities informing Arnold's conception of the state, and those informing Yeats's, are quite different. As Donald R. Pearce says in his introduction to *The Senate Speeches of W.B. Yeats* (1960), the "first few years of the Free State were years of fundamental political and moral reconstruction. The nation had just passed through a tragic period of guerrilla warfare with England, only to be plunged into a two-year civil war involving shooting of civilians, reprisals, burning of famous houses, bitterness and slander

in the opposed presses, and damage to property in the amount of 30 million pounds sterling” (1960:1).¹⁷

Still, while we must recognise that Yeats’s reading of Burke’s conception of the state was also increasingly in play from 1918, we must also appreciate that it is small wonder, then, that Yeats would recur chiefly to his formative exemplar Arnold in fashioning himself as a bulwark against anarchy in Ireland, which is inseparable, I wish to signpost, from the projection of his own ideal self and, by extension, ideal ‘body politic’ and Irish state, in *A Vision*. Yeats was greatly encouraged by Arnold’s many pronouncements on the best self and the need for its embodiment in the state rather than succumbing to the ill-effects of revolutionary anarchy. At a moment,” Arnold says, “when it is agreed that we want a source of authority”, the “right source is our best self” (2008:135). By “our ordinary selves,” Arnold says, “we are separate, personal, at war; we are only safe from one another’s tyranny when no one has any power; and this safety, in its turn, cannot save us from anarchy” (2008:127). Thus, when “anarchy presents itself as a danger to us, we know not where to turn” (2008:127). Arnold poses the question, however: “[W]hat if we tried to rise above the idea of class to the idea of the whole community, the State, and to find our centre of light and authority there?” (2008:126). “We want,” Arnold says, “an authority, and we find nothing but jealous classes, checks, and a deadlock; culture suggests the idea of the State” (2008:127). “We find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves,” he says, but “culture suggests one to us in our best self” (2008:127). “We are,” Arnold says of the best self, “in no peril from giving authority to this, because it is the truest friend we all of us can

¹⁷ The total death toll is unclear. In *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923-2000* (2003), explaining that “the republicans stopped fighting” on 24 May 1923, Anne Dolan says that “[i]n winning [the Free State] had proved itself as brutal as any British army. It had executed seventy-seven men, sacrificed two leaders, hundreds of soldiers and countless civilians” (2003:6). Dolan draws upon several sources with differing figures, including the highest estimate by Commandant Peter Young of the Irish Military Archives of a total death toll “between 1,500 and 2,000” (Dolan 2003:6).

have; and when anarchy is a danger to us, to this authority we may turn with sure trust” (2008:127).

We can see in part how amenable Arnold’s Celt and best self were to a subversive merger by Yeats when we consider Arnold’s anti-Philistine assertion in *Culture and Anarchy*, in Chapter III, that if “our habits make it hard for us to come at the idea of a high best self, of a paramount authority, in literature or religion, how much more do they make this hard in the sphere of politics!” (2008:137). This is almost identical to Arnold’s argument in Chapter IV of *On the Study of Celtic Literature*: “If his rebellion against fact has thus lamed the Celt even in spiritual work [including music and poetry], how much more must it have lamed him in the world of business and politics!” (2008:45). Arnold describes the Celt as “undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature” (2008:47); whereas in his cultural analysis he speaks, in strikingly similar language, of “perfect freedom” as “an elevation of our best self, and a harmonising in subordination to this, and to the idea of a perfected humanity, all the multitudinous, turbulent, and blind impulses of our ordinary selves” (2008:176). Again, we can see Arnold’s poetical ideal of subordination of the parts to the whole writ large in his political stance. “[B]y our best self,” Arnold explains, “we are united, impersonal, at harmony” (2008:127).

Before we enter *A Vision*, then, and encounter the exceedingly complex specificities of the ‘System’ itself, I wish to posit my thesis: Yeats’s symbolical Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 is a version – indeed, revision – of both the Arnoldian Celt and best self, projected as arising from opposed universal forces in a time of anarchy; and it is in the crucial configuration of Yeats’s Phase 17 and Arnold’s Phase 18 that we may appreciate the pre-eminence of Arnold in Yeats’s subversive formulation of his own unified, harmonious, and noblest self in the high company of the genius of the ancients, to be embodied in the modern

Irish state. Yeats's politics are not, of course, divorced from poetry. The projection of his ideal self in *A Vision* confirms his approval, though subversively so, of Arnold's position in the 1853 preface that those who hold commerce with the genius of the ancients "want to educe and cultivate what is best and noblest in themselves" (1992:181). While we must continue to bear Burke strongly in mind in relation to the 'System', it is Arnold – and not Burke – who is explicitly incorporated into the Great Wheel, next to the Daimonic Man Yeats, echoing the convoluted distinction from Arnold, not only poetically but politically, in the appraisal of Ferguson decades earlier. Still, in addition to scarce mention of Arnold, there is a curious silence across the two volumes of George Harper's study of the Automatic Script, and across the four volumes of the *Vision Papers* (under his general editorship), in that the only Burke who is mentioned at all – in volume 1 of the former, and volumes 1 and 3 of the latter – is in relation to Yeats's ancestral investigations: John Burke, "author and compiler of *A Genealogy and Heraldic History of the Peerage and Baronetage of the United Kingdom* (1826, published annually since 1847" (Martinich, M Harper 1992:213).

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Chapter Three

In Search of the Arnoldian Element in *A Vision*

Having covered the necessary preparatory ground, in chapters one and two, we are now well equipped to enter the ‘System’ of *A Vision* in search of the Arnoldian element. We can now appreciate something of the powerful formative nature and complicated, lasting effects of Arnold’s impact on Yeats arising from extensive rather than narrow engagement with Arnold’s works; as well as some of the perhaps surprisingly far-reaching repercussions, poetical and political, of the Arnoldian element in Yeats, relevant to the treatise. In this chapter, we will consider, firstly, just the basic framework of the ‘System’: Yeats’s two types of man aligned with the principal symbol or interpenetrating primary and antithetical gyres respectively. As I will endeavour to demonstrate, this framework echoes, strikingly, Arnold’s two types of man aligned with the interlocked forces of Hebraism and Hellenism in *Culture and Anarchy* – a parallel that Yeats biographers and critics, puzzlingly, have never interrogated, given that the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 is posited in a time of anarchy, alongside Arnold at Phase 18. I will situate the gyres in philosophical and literary tradition, and therefore in relation to Yeats’s broad Arnoldian heritage, showing how not only the cultural but also the Romantic, morbid, and Celtic aspects can all be seen to be accommodated in the principal symbol of the ‘System’, leading up ultimately to the over-arching fifth aspect: the ideal of ancient Greek genius. We will then enter the Great Wheel, examining Synge’s

Phase 23 but, primarily, the morbid Phase 13, in contrast to the ideal Phase 17, with the latter phase the main focus of chapter four.

i) LITTLENESSE UNITED IS BECOME INVINCIBLE: IN-BUILT ANTI-PHILISTINISM IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE 'SYSTEM'

As we have seen in the preceding two chapters, Arnold's frequent disparagement of what he influentially branded the middle-class "Philistine" powerfully shaped Yeats's own anti-Philistinism in the Irish context from the earliest stages of his long career. Upon entering *A Vision*, Yeats's concomitant Arnoldian esteem for the ancients is evident almost immediately when, in part II of the Dedication to Vestigia (in the first version), he says the "Greeks certainly had such a system [which leaves the imagination free to create], and Dante... and I think no man since" (2008:lv); and says, in part III, that he "can now... find the simplicity I have sought in vain" (2008:lv). Encountering in Book I ("What the Caliph Partly Learned") Yeats's elucidation of the Great Wheel, and in Book II ("What the Caliph Refused to Learn") his explanation of the gyres, we should not be surprised, then, to apprehend, if we maintain critical distance across his detailed but nevertheless abstruse exposition of the fundamentals of his occult 'System', involving myriad diagrams and tabulations, that his longstanding Arnoldian anti-Philistinism inhabits the core components of the broad framework. At this stage, I wish merely to foreground Yeats's two types of man – one a distinctly Philistine-like figure, labelled "primary man" and represented in disparaging terms, in contrast to a creative, formidable, and clearly favoured individual, labelled "antithetical man" – with each man aligned respectively with the opposed primary and antithetical gyres comprising the principal symbol of the 'System. Each gyre and man is aligned, in turn, with the

respective primary and antithetical sequences of lunar phases of the Great Wheel.

In chapter four, we will take a closer look at Declan Kiberd's speculative theory of "Anglo" (primary) and "Celtic" (antithetical) gyres, but for the moment his comments on Yeats's two types of man serve to bring Arnold's influence on the broad framework of the 'System' to the fore. Kiberd quotes from the revised *A Vision*:

The stage-manager, or *Daimon*, offers his actor an inherited scenario, the *Body of Fate*, and a *Mask* or rôle as unlike as possible to his natural ego or will, and leaves him to improvise through his *Creative Mind* the dialogue and details of the plot. He must discover or reveal a being which only exists with extreme effort...
But this is *antithetical* man.

(Yeats 1990:132)

This passage follows Yeats's likening of the life experience of "the being" (1990:133) proceeding around the Great Wheel to an improvised theatrical performance: "When I wish for some general idea which will describe the Great Wheel as an individual life I go to the *Commedia dell' Arte* or improvised drama of Italy" (1990:132). Kiberd also quotes the description of the opposite type of man:

For *primary* man I go to the *Commedia dell' Arte* in its decline. The *Will* is weak and cannot create a rôle, and so, if it transform itself, does so after an accepted pattern, traditional clown or pantaloon... and substitute[s]

a motive of service for that of self-expression.

(Yeats 1990:132)

Kiberd comments that the “clown of ‘The Cap and Bells’ had been castrated, because he was a mere entertainer rather than an exponent of self-expression: he was like Wilde or Shaw when at their weakest, embodying the norms of Primary England” (1996:321). Strictly speaking, however, Yeats does not use the word “clown” but rather the similar “jester” in “The Cap and Bells” (1894); and the likening of primary man to a clown in *A Vision* may therefore also bring to mind a poem such as “The Fisherman” (1916) in which Yeats specifically uses the word “clown”. Moreover, Kiberd leaves out an important portion of Yeats’s text, in his quotation on primary man. After the sentence ending with “pantaloon”, Yeats continues: “It has perhaps no object but to move the crowd, and if it ‘gags’ it is that there may be plenty of topical allusions” (1990:132). As we will see shortly, these references to “move the crowd” and “gags” are reminiscent, along with “clown”, of “The Fisherman”.

If we recall Arnold’s denouncement of the Hyde Park riots in *Culture and Anarchy*, we should not be surprised to find a link to Arnold in “The Fisherman”, in which Yeats condemns the *Playboy* riots of early 1907. After all, as we will see, Arnold was a figure crucial to the artistic sensibility of Synge, owing in part to the advocacy of Yeats on the issue of morbidity in modern literature. Again, we may gauge something of Yeats’s long familiarity with Arnold’s works, and their complex interrelation, if we consider these lines spoken in Act II by the central character of “Empedocles on Etna” who has moved towards “the edge of the crater” and listened to Callicles “below singing” (1905:461):

He fables, yet speaks truth!

The brave, impetuous heart yields everywhere
 To the subtle, contriving head;
 Great qualities are trodden down,
 And littleness united
 Is become invincible

(1905:463)

The importance of these lines from Arnold's morbid poem to the anti-Philistinism of Yeats can be seen in his letter to Florence Farr dated 6 October 1905, in which he derides Irish nationalist opposition to Synge's *The Well of the Saints* (1903-1908). Arnold's formulation of "littleness united/Is become invincible" is paraphrased by Yeats:

Did I tell you that the Well of the Saints has been accepted by a principal Theatre in Berlin? It is a great triumph for us here as I foretold European Reputation for Synge at the Catholic College and have been mocked for the prophecy. All the incompetency united in making little of that play and now its German acceptance comes just in time to prepare for the production of his new play an even wilder business.

(Kelly, Schuchard 2005:203)

This Arnoldian link to Yeats's later alleged fascist as well as eugenicist views, impelled by his anti-Philistinism, can be appreciated when Donal Torchiana tells us that "especially after 1927" Yeats denounced what he saw as the Republican appeal "to mass instinct and democratic representation... for delivering Ireland to 'the incompetent'" (1992:205), as Yeats puts it in *On the Boiler* (1938). In "The Fisherman", Yeats fittingly inverts the 'order' of the last three lines I have quoted from "Empedocles on Etna", offering a studied

portrayal of “littleness united/Is become invincible” before closing the stanza with a line closely resembling Arnold’s “Great qualities are trodden down”. We should note Yeats’s reference to the “catch-cries of the clown” in this sketch of a rogues’ gallery, as it were, at the Abbey; and bear in mind the associations of “move the crowd”, “gags” and “clown” with the primary man of *A Vision*:

The living men that I hate,
 The dead man that I loved,
 The craven man in his seat,
 The insolent unreprieved,
 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.

(Allt, Alspach 1989:347/8)

“The Fisherman” is itself a kind of beating down by Yeats of his Philistine foes, and an advancing of his friend Synge. Yeats might therefore also have had Arnold’s “Empedocles on Etna” in mind from another angle. In Act 1, in his long reflection on life, Empedocles asks: “Is it so small a thing... To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling foes[?]” (1905:456). It is important to recognise this Arnoldian anti-Philistine input from both angles, given that “The Fisherman” is among the works cited by Edward Said to show that Yeats is a poet of decolonization. As we have seen, in Deborah Fleming’s summary of critical responses to this poem, Said argues that there is a striking

resemblance to Pablo Neruda's "El Pueblo" (1962), with their national "poetic calling [developing] out of a pact made between people and poet; hence the power of such invocations to an actual poem as those provided by the figures both men seem to require" (1994:282). However, "The Fisherman" is indicative of Yeats's antipathy to the people in the context of the *Playboy* riots; and the turning to an ideal imaginary man, rather than the people themselves, in hopes of writing him a "Poem maybe as cold/And passionate as the dawn" (Allt, Alspach 1989:348), speaks for itself.

Moreover, "The Fisherman" has even been interpreted, in line with Said's portrayal of Yeats as a poet of decolonization, as a rejection of Arnold. Gregory Castle argues that Yeats is "repudiating the Arnoldian rustic of redemptive Celticism" (2008:88/89) and points to Yeats's "ratification of the poet's artistic autonomy that we see increasingly in the later work" (2008:89). However, while we can agree that Yeats ratifies the poet's autonomy, it remains that "The Fisherman" underscores, rather than relinquishes, Yeats's longstanding Arnoldian anti-Philistinism. Again, as this shows, we cannot ultimately separate the Celtic aspect from the collective Arnoldian element in Yeats. His "scorn of this audience" (1971:167) as an artist is effectively ratcheted up to national proportions, in accordance with his effort to "write for my own race/And the reality" (Allt, Alspach 1989:347). Little wonder, then, that in his late life, disillusioned by the entrenchment of the Catholic ethos of the new state, a reverse beating down of the "clown" is exuberantly envisioned by Yeats in the original chorus of the first of the "Three Marching Songs", which were written for the Blueshirt movement in 1933 and 1934:

... down the clown;
 Down, down, hammer them down,
 Down to the tune of O'Donnell Abu.

(Foster 2003:477)

In *Romantic Image* (1971), Frank Kermode quotes the same lines from “Empedocles on Etna” and relates them to Yeats’s “The Second Coming” – the poem most famously associated with Yeats’s descriptions of changes of dispensation in the literary-historical survey of “Dove or Swan” in *A Vision*. Kermode writes: “‘Great art beaten down... the best lack all conviction...’ All that has happened, on this view, between Arnold and Yeats, is that the wicked have discovered the lost intensity of the good; the world has become, as no one could foresee, more murderous as well as darker” (1976:29). We might also notice, in “The Second Coming”, Yeats’s important reference to even the “best” being less than their best, so to speak, and powerless to stop (and perhaps even being partly culpable for) the blood-dimmed tide of apocalypse; as well as Yeats’s nevertheless elevated view of “Mere anarchy... loosed upon the world” (Allt, Alspach 1989:402). Moreover, while Kermode connects Arnold’s “Empedocles on Etna” to Yeats’s “The Second Coming”, on a cosmic level relating to world events, we must also situate Yeats’s Arnoldian anti-Philistinism, confirmed in part by his recastings of such key lines from “Empedocles on Etna”, in the Irish context specifically. As we have seen, Watson includes the *Playboy* riots among Yeats’s running battles with Irish Philistinism; and in “The Fisherman” we are witness to Yeats’s disdain for the breakdown of law and order – “no knave brought to book” – and for mob rule at the expense of great art. That is, his Arnoldian opposition to anarchy in favour of high culture.

As we have also seen, the historical context of the Irish civil war, i.e. a time of anarchy, frames the Great Wheel of *A Vision*, in which the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 – Yeats himself – is posited. Such a man, as we might expect, is

the ultimate antithetical man opposed to primary man.¹⁸ In considering these two types of man of *A Vision*, we might also recall that Arnold had similarly described two types of man in *Culture and Anarchy*. In Chapter I, Arnold explains that the “the Greek words *aphuia*, *euphuia*, a finely tempered nature, a coarsely tempered nature, give exactly the notion of perfection as culture brings us to conceive of it” (2008:104). He adds that the “*euphyes* is the man who tends towards sweetness and light; and *aphyes* is precisely our Philistine” (2008:104). It is clear that the *euphyes* is aligned with poetry, for Arnold also tells us that it is “by thus making sweetness and light to be characters of perfection, that culture is of like spirit with poetry, follows one law with poetry” (2008:104). In the course of his essay, the poetical is virtually indistinguishable from the political. Along this trajectory, Arnold’s two types of man become synonymous with the best self and the ordinary self (doing as it likes) respectively. The *euphyes* or best self, and the *aphyes* or Philistine, are aligned by Arnold with what he calls the “two forces” (2008:146) of Hellenism and Hebraism respectively.

Over and over again, Arnold expressly favours Hellenism over Hebraism as the force most needed, as a corrective, in his time. Arnold asserts: “Now... is a time to Hellenise, and to praise knowing; for we have Hebraised too much, and have overvalued doing” (2008:94). “To say that we work for sweetness and light,” he later explains, “is just another way of saying that we work for Hellenism” (2008:156). Describing these opposed, interlocked universal forces, Arnold says that “between these two points of influence moves our world” so that at “one

¹⁸ Here we must recur to the finer details of the ‘System’. Yeats explains in section V of “The Great Wheel” that the “*antithetical tincture* (*Will and Mask*) opens first because the phases signified by odd numbers are *antithetical*, the *primary tincture* at Phase 12 because those signified by even numbers are *primary*. Though all phases from Phase 8 to Phase 22 are *antithetical*, taken as a whole, and all phases from Phase 22 to Phase 8 *primary*; seen by different analysis the individual phases are alternately *antithetical* and *primary*” (1990:135). Yeats also says each phase is “in itself a wheel” (1990:136). We are therefore presented with wheels within wheels, as it were. The Daimonic Man of Phase 17 inhabits an odd-numbered phase within the broad antithetical sequence: a ‘double antithetical’ phase.

time it feels more powerfully the attraction of one of them, at another time of the other; and it ought to be, though it never is, evenly and happily balanced between them” (2008:146). In “The Last *Aisling* – A *Vision*”, Kiberd loses sight of Arnold but we should note his clarification of the relationship of the gyres in terms of his own Anglo-Celtic theory: “In actual practice, the opposed values are not exactly balanced since the system is so manipulated as to favour the antithetical Celtic over the primary English elements” (1996:325).

The resemblance to Arnold’s twin forces and two types of man, applied to both man and history, in *Culture and Anarchy*, is therefore so striking that we can hardly ignore the likelihood that Arnold’s cultural analysis not only prefigures but partly and powerfully informs Yeats’s interpenetrating gyres – the principal symbol of the ‘System’, and therefore a pivotal parallel with Arnold – extending to the respective alignment with each gyre of a contrasting type of man as well as the application of the gyres to both man and history. Moreover, the striking resemblance on the cultural aspect should rouse our suspicion that all five interrelated aspects of the Arnoldian element are involved. As we have seen, Yeats’s anti-Philistinism draws energy and substance from a range of Arnold’s works, including “Empedocles on Etna” (the morbid aspect), “The Scholar-Gipsy” (the Romantic aspect), and both the Celticist and cultural analyses (the Celtic and cultural aspects). The cultural connection alone could not be more important in the context of the critical field, in particular the construction of Yeats as a poet of decolonization. As John Gardiner says in *The Victorians: An Age in Retrospect* (2002): “The Victorians were, famously, an imperial people” (2007:8). Resoundingly, in this imperial spirit, Arnold explains that “we may regard [Hebraism and Hellenism] as in some sense rivals, – rivals not by the necessity of their own nature, but as exhibited in man and his history, – and rivals dividing the empire of the world between them” (2008:146).

ii) DIALECTICAL PROGRESSION: ECHOES OF THE ARNOLDIAN ELEMENT IN THE PRINCIPAL SYMBOL

In Book I (“What the Caliph Partly Learned”) in the original *A Vision*, Yeats introduces the dichotomy of objectivity and subjectivity which forms the basis of the broad framework of the ‘System’. Quoting from Murray’s dictionary, he elaborates that objective “means ‘dealing with or laying stress upon that which is external to the mind, treating of outward things and events rather than inward thought’, ‘treating a subject so as to exhibit the actual facts, not coloured by the opinions or feelings of the writer’” (2008:14). Amusingly, he says “[t]he volume of Murray’s dictionary containing the letter S is not yet published, but as ‘subjective’ is the contrary to ‘objective’ it needs no further definition” (2008:14). In the revised *A Vision*, he repeats the quotation from the dictionary almost verbatim in regard to “objective”, in Book I (“The Great Wheel”), and the dictionary definition of “subjective” is still not forthcoming.¹⁹ Nevertheless, having revealed in the new introduction the “incredible experience” (1990:75) of his wife’s automatic writing, Yeats describes the principal symbol or interpenetrating gyres in terms of this dichotomy. “My instructors,” he says in section IV, “used [a] single cone or vortex once or twice but soon changed it for a double cone or vortex, preferring to consider subjectivity and objectivity as intersecting states struggling one against the other” (1990:122).

Referring to a diagram of the gyres, Yeats explains that “[b]y the antithetical cone... we express more and more, as it broadens, our inner world of desire and imagination”, and he proceeds to quote from the dictionary as part of his explanation that “by the *primary*... we express more and more, as it broadens, that objectivity of mind...” (1990:123). He adds, succinctly: “The *antithetical*

¹⁹ According to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* website, the “*OED* was completed in 1928” (Burchfield 2004).

tincture is emotional and aesthetic whereas the *primary tincture* is reasonable and moral” (1990:122). Therefore, with even just these few explanatory sentences, furnishing qualities broadly in accord (as we will see) with traditional definitions of the romantic and classical, we can detect, I wish to suggest, that Yeats’s principal symbol parallels – even accommodates – the basic qualities of both the Arnoldian Celt and Hellene, on the antithetical side, as well as Saxon and Hebraising Philistine, on the primary side. As we have seen, Arnold specifies that the Greek has the same “emotional temperament” as the Celt but has the advantage of “measure” (2008:44/45). Moreover, as Yeats reports in “The Celtic Element in Literature”, emphasizing how well he knows Arnold’s analysis, Arnold argues that “the Celtic imaginativeness and melancholy are alike ‘a passionate, turbulent, indomitable reaction against the despotism of fact’” (2008:64). Arnold’s repeated references to the emotional and imaginative Celt’s reaction against fact, not least this particular instance in Chapter VI, can be seen to be encapsulated symbolically – and circumspectly – in the opposed gyres “struggling one against the other”.

This almost imperceptible harmonization with the gyres, on the Celtic aspect, is matched on the cultural aspect. Arnold effectively pits the Hellenised best self, too, against fact. Although he does not use the word “imagination” but rather “intellect” (a single term also used by Yeats in *A Vision* as synonymous with imagination, as we will see), it is clear that Arnold’s notion of a disinterested free play of the mind entails an untrammelled exercise of the imagination, best conducted by a person of vision. Targeting “facts” taken hold of from the limited perspective of Hebraism, Arnold suggests that “what we want is Hellenism, the letting our consciousness play freely and simply upon the facts before us...” (2008:183). Thoughts of progressing towards perfection, he says, “are surely the spontaneous product of our consciousness, when it is allowed to play freely and disinterestedly upon the actual facts...” (2008:184).

Significantly, though his Celt lacks measure, Arnold ultimately opposes both the emotional Celt and emotional but measured Greek or Hellene to the modern Saxon Philistine, and therefore Hebraistic morality. Yeats can be seen to accommodate this opposition in further defining his primary gyre as “reasonable and moral”. As we will see in chapter four, it is precisely on the point of measure that Yeats effectively ‘corrects’ or revises the Arnoldian Celt on the antithetical side of the principal symbol, reimagined as the Great Wheel, in the figure of the now fully and perfectly formed Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17, echoing his appraisal of Ferguson long ago.

My purpose in this section is to illustrate how the Arnoldian element in Yeats can be seen to harmonize with the gyres, facilitated by their common underlying basis: the mode of dialectic, whereby the Arnoldian element reaches its apotheosis, in full measure, in the figure of the antithetical Daimonic Man. The striking parallel between the two forces of *Culture and Anarchy* (the cultural aspect) and two gyres of *A Vision* can be registered in a range of ways. Again explaining the nature of these forces, in Chapter IV, Arnold says that “by alternations of Hebraism and Hellenism, of man’s intellectual and moral impulses [the “moral” associated with Hebraism, the “intellectual” with Hellenism], of the effort to see things as they really are, and the effort to win peace by self-conquest, the human spirit proceeds, and each of these two forces has its appointed hours of culmination and seasons of rule” (2008:152).

Schematizing history, he holds that just “[a]s the great movement of Christianity was a triumph of Hebraism and man’s moral impulses, so the great movement which goes by the name of the Renaissance was an uprising and re-instatement of man’s intellectual impulses and of Hellenism” (2008:152). We may readily see the similarity with Yeats’s ‘System’ by way of Ellmann’s succinct explanation, in *The Identity of Yeats*, that “[a]ny antinomial conflict can be registered in terms of the waning or waxing of the moon, just as it can be

expressed in terms of the preponderance of one or the other gyre. Yeats preferred, however, to limit the lunar symbol to the description of the self as it shifts through a multitude of lives, in some of them tending towards the energetic personality, which Yeats calls ‘subjectivity’ [the antithetical], of a Renaissance hero, and sometimes towards the sheering away of personality and the assertion of undistinguished equality, which he calls ‘objectivity’ [the primary], of Christ...” (1964:157).

Broadly, Arnold’s force of Hebraism and Yeats’s primary gyre can be associated with Christian morality, while Arnold’s force of Hellenism and Yeats’s antithetical gyre can be associated with Renaissance imagination and distinction (indeed, the achievement of genius, as we will see), in both of their schematizations of art and history. The similarity between Arnold’s two forces and Yeats’s two gyres is again evident in Arnold’s emphasis, while admitting that “it is not easy so to frame one’s discourse concerning the operation of culture”, on “the essential inwardness of the operation” as opposed to “our worship of... external doing” (2008:77). The dichotomy of inner and outer, or subjective and objective, is fundamental to Arnold’s cultural thesis, as it is to the ‘System’ of *A Vision*. Arnold later says that culture “is a study... of harmonious perfection... which consists in becoming something rather than in having something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances” (2008:101). Such a statement might largely be taken as an excellent description of the Great Wheel of *A Vision*, in which becoming the antithetical Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 signifies the achievement of the harmonious condition of Unity of Being.

Arnold’s anti-Philistinism, directed at the outer half of the dichotomy, which he associates with an overdevelopment of Hebraism, is also apparent in his insistence that culture serves a “particularly important [function] in our modern

world, of which the whole civilization is, to a much greater degree than the civilization of Greece and Rome, mechanical and external, and tends constantly to become more so” (2008:101). Scathingly, he argues that “above all in our own country has culture a weighty part to perform, because here that mechanical character, which civilization tends to take everywhere, is shown in the most eminent degree” (2008:101). Again accentuating the dichotomy, he says the “idea of perfection as an inward condition of the mind and spirit is at variance with the mechanical and material civilisation in esteem with us” (2008:101). In addition to the relentless anti-Philistinism here (attacking “mechanical” civilization, as we will see, in the Romantic tradition), it can be easily appreciated that Arnold favours an identification with subjectivity over rampant objectivity – a rebalancing of his emphasis, in the 1853 preface, on overly subjective modern poets’ need for objectivity. In both cases, balance is exemplified by the genius of the ancient Greeks – just as it is in Arnold’s differentiation, in his Celticist analysis, between Greek “measure, balance” and the Celt who lacks these qualities. Notably, in imperial spirit in the preface, Arnold says that those who hold “commerce with the ancients... are like persons who have had a very weighty and impressive experience: they are more truly than others under the empire of facts” (1992:181).

In tandem with his anti-Philistinism, Arnold’s notion of the achievement of an inward, harmonious condition of the mind and spirit partly explains the great occult but also nationalist appeal of his cultural analysis to Yeats. The Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17, distinguished by the harmonious condition of Unity of Being, confirms Yeats’s own Arnoldian ideal, though posited subversively on behalf of Irish independence and unity, of cultivating, as the Burkean Arnold puts it towards the end of *Culture and Anarchy*, “through the help of that culture... a frame of mind out of which really fruitful reforms may with time grow” (2008:185); or as he similarly words it soon thereafter, accentuating

practical action only on this basis: “a condition of mind out of which really fruitful and solid operations may spring” (2008:185). The association of the favoured antithetical gyre and man of *A Vision* with the “subjective” or “inner world of desire and imagination”, and emotion, over the primary gyre and man associated with the “objective” or external facts, reasonableness, and morality, echoes Arnold’s privileging of Hellenistic free play of the mind over Philistine rationality, morality, and facts, and is reminiscent, therefore, of Arnold’s privileging of the *euphyes* over the *aphyes*.

The *euphyes*, we will recall, is the “man who tends towards sweetness and light”, a man of “finely tempered nature” who exemplifies perfection, whereas the “*aphyes* is precisely our Philistine”, a man of “coarsely tempered nature” (2008:104) and a failure in perfection. For Arnold, the *euphyes* is best suited to achieving such a frame of mind in a time of anarchy, effectively translating the poetical individual into, politically, a best self to be embodied in a powerful state; and we might say much the same of the Daimonic Man, albeit from Yeats’s subversive perspective in the markedly different Irish context. The Daimonic Man is most readily able, as we might expect, to express Daimonic thought, in a time of anarchy and, by Arnoldian implication, founding of a revolutionary state by due course of law and order. We will briefly consider what the “Daimon” is, exactly, a little later in this section; but broadly, we can see that the framework of Yeats’s ‘System’, for all its occult jargon (or chameleon-like camouflage), nevertheless closely resembles that of Arnold’s cultural analysis: the Arnoldian best self and the Yeatsian Daimonic Man arise from opposed universal forces in a time of anarchy, as the ideal self to be embodied in a unified state.

In their preoccupation with subjectivity and objectivity, and in the centrality of the apparatus of dialectic to their most considered thoughts on poetry and

politics, Arnold and Yeats can be seen to be beneficiaries of a rich intellectual heritage. Within the vast labyrinth of influence in this regard, we can locate Arnold as a key figure in relation to *A Vision* via the more recognized bearing of figures such as Blake and Nietzsche. In both versions of *A Vision*, Yeats explicitly credits Blake for aiding his understanding of the dialectical nature of the gyres. In the revised edition, Yeats explains: “I had never read Hegel, but my mind had been full of Blake from boyhood up and I saw the world as a conflict – Spectre and Emanation – and could distinguish between a contrary and a negation. ‘Contraries are positive,’ wrote Blake, ‘a negation is not a contrary’” (1990:123). In *Mask & Tragedy: Yeats & Nietzsche 1902-10* (1987), Frances Nesbitt Opper highlights that Yeats and Hegel are in fact “in agreement” and argues that this is a “defensive misinterpretation” (1987:13) of Hegel by Yeats. “Hegel’s dialectic,” Opper asserts, “fundamentally explains the symbolism of Yeats’s gyres” (1987:12). Moreover, Opper writes that “Nietzsche’s idea of the birth of tragedy at the moment when Apollonian form (being) meets Dionysian formlessness, producing tragic affirmation (becoming), has its roots in Hegel’s theory. Yeats’s poles of objectivity and subjectivity in *A Vision* share the same philosophical heritage” (1987:12).

This heritage may also, however, wheel us back to Arnold, even as we acknowledge at all times the extensive labyrinth of influence on Yeats in this regard.²⁰ As Fraser Neiman says in “A Reader’s Guide to Arnold” (1975), Arnold’s “habit of rhetorical antithesis... is expressive of an intelligence that sought meaning through the dialectic of the mind and the dialectic of history” (1975:21). Yeats, too, sought meaning through the dialectic of the mind and of history, as his explicitly Blakean conception of the gyres suggests. As Edward Malins says, Yeats “found in Blake’s writing the idea of paired opposites – soul

²⁰ In elucidating the gyres in the revised *A Vision*, Yeats mentions a wide range of thinkers, including Simplicius, Aristotle, Heraclitus, Thomas Aquinas, Macrobius, Swedenborg, Berkeley, Plotinus, Boehme, Gentile, Kant, and Hegel.

and self, body and soul, love and death, chance and choice, ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’, conflicting yet establishing a unity in a man’s life and in history. A passage from ‘The Marriage of Heaven and Hell’ states: ‘Without Contraries is no progression...’ (1974:61). Yet in regard to dialectic, the labyrinth of influence on Yeats can be seen to veer towards Arnold on the morbid aspect, which is but a short step from the cultural aspect.

Oppel explains that Hegel can be seen to follow Heraclitus; and as Malins has pointed out, “Nietzsche’s ancestors were Empedocles and Heraclitus, with a view of history as an endless recurring flux...” (1974:63). At the mention of Empedocles we should recall the importance to Yeats of Arnold’s morbid poem and the preface justifying its suppression, which we can readily discern when Malins adds: “It is a depressing philosophy in its view of the world as ungoverned by a purpose, being but an eternal, senseless play, and we find ourselves in the orbit of Samuel Beckett, rather than of Yeats, who saw joy in man’s will to perfect himself” (1974:63). However, Yeats was, as this indicates, in the orbit of Arnold – endless recurring flux, joy, play, a will to perfection, and all with a sense of purpose and a deliberate steering away from the morbid and depressing – which impacted upon Yeats through such works as “Empedocles on Etna”, the 1853 preface, and *Culture and Anarchy*. Oddly, Yeats’s biographers and critics have not associated the appearance of Empedocles in *A Vision* as a philosophical touchstone for the gyres with Arnold’s famous poem and preface, and Yeats’s high regard for both. Nevertheless, Yeats’s philosophical discourse is not divorced from literature, as his references to the contraries of Blake or to Flaubert’s “La Spirale”, and the subsequent presence of writers and poets as examples of many of the lunar phases of the Great Wheel, clearly indicate. We might also bear in mind that, as M.I. Finley mentions in *The Ancient Greeks* (1963), the philosophical Empedocles “wrote only in poetic form” (1991:96).

Yeats repeatedly refers to Empedocles in expounding upon the gyres. In section II, “Expanding and Contracting Gyres” in Book II (“What the Caliph Refused to Learn”) in the original *A Vision*, Yeats writes:

If now we consider these opposing gyres... as
 expressing Man and Daimon – those two first portions
 of being that suffer vicissitude into which Anima Hominis
 and Anima Mundi resolve – we can explain much in
 Parmenides and Empedocles, but especially this in
 Heraclitus: ‘I shall retrace my steps over the paths of
 song that I have travelled before, drawing from my saying
 a new saying. When Strife was fallen to the lowest depth
 of the vortex... and love has reached the centre of the
 whirl, in it do all things come together so as to be one
 only; not all at once, but coming together gradually from
 different quarters; and as they came together Strife
 retired to the extreme boundary... but in proportion as
 it kept rushing out, a soft immortal stream of blameless
 love kept running in.’

(2008:106)

As Catherine Paul and Margaret Harper point out, Yeats “mistakenly attributes the quotation to Heraclitus” when it is, in fact, “from Empedocles” (Yeats 2008:270/71). Moreover, we should mark closely Yeats’s alignment here of Man with Anima Hominis and Daimon with Anima Mundi, linking his poetic theory or doctrine of the Mask in *Per Amica* to his conception of the gyres. Paul and Harper have remarked that the “Daimon is one of the more confusing Yeatsian terms...” (Yeats 2008:239). However, while generations of Yeats

biographers and critics have written copiously about Yeats's Daimon, I wish simply to highlight at this stage that our understanding of Yeats's Daimonic Man in relation to the gyres, and the Daimonic Man and gyres in relation to Arnold, is aided far more than most accounts by the clarity provided by Bloom in the *Anatomy of Influence*, on how the concept of the "Daimon" has been defined, historically. Bloom draws attention to what he describes as the "truest" or "deepest Yeats":

Forty years and more into my explication of influence, I still had not clarified my idea of the poet-in-a-poet. But I think I can manage it now... When we recite 'The Second Coming' or 'Leda and the Swan' it is difficult not to yield to the incantatory violence, though you can teach yourself to question it. That addiction to a powerful pride of antithetical annunciations is crucial to Yeats, but it is not what I would call the poet-in-a-poet, the deepest Yeats. 'Cuchulain Comforted,' Yeats's truest death poem, fuses heroism and cowardice into a single song. 'They had changed their throats and had the throats of birds.' That is the voice of the poet-in-a-poet, free of all ideologies, including the occult kinds Yeats largely made up for himself, relying on Mrs. Yeats as medium for the spooks...

(2011:11)

Puzzlingly, however, Bloom overlooks Mrs Yeats and the spooks in relation to *A Vision* and the Daimonic Man Yeats. Bloom proceeds to highlight the traditional definition of the Daimon:

E.R. Dodds... distinguishes the psyche from the daimon, relying first on Empedocles and then on what is most

mysterious in Socrates. The psyche is the empirical self or rational soul, while the divine daimon is an occult self or nonrational soul. From Hellenistic times through Goethe, the daimon has been the poet's genius. In speaking of the poet-in-a-poet, I mean precisely his daimon, his potential immortality as a poet, and so in effect his divinity... Influence stalks us all as influenza and we can suffer an anguish of contamination whether we are partakers of influence or victims of influenza. What remains free in us is the daimon.

(2011:11/12)

Similarly, although their explanation is not specifically in relation to Yeats, Chic and Sandra Cicero link the Daimon to Empedocles, in the first instance, in their survey of "Hermeticism and the Western Esoteric Tradition" in *The Essential Golden Dawn* (2003): "Empedocles... supported the notion that the universe was composed of two worlds, one spiritual and good, the other material and evil. Empedocles believed that human beings had two souls – the *psyche* or Lower Soul, which is finite, and the *daimon* or Higher Soul, which is immortal" (2003:9). Yeats's usage of the term "Daimon", for all its occult overtones, is just another way of saying "ancient Greek genius". We might readily suspect, therefore, that the Daimonic Man of *A Vision* reaffirms Yeats's old Arnoldian ideal, evident as early as the appraisal of Ferguson, of the genius of the ancient Greeks (and to this we may add the Latin genius of Dante) with the crucial proviso that the Celtic genius coincides, too, with this ideal, which is to be seen, more accurately, as that of the genius of the ancients. Andrew Robinson reports in *Genius: A Very Short Introduction* (2011) that the English "word *genius* has its roots in Roman antiquity; in Latin, *genius* described the tutelary (guardian) spirit of a person, place, institution, and so on, which linked these to the forces of fate and the rhythms of time. Like the Greek *daimon*, the

Roman *genius* followed a man from cradle to grave...” (2011:2). Ancient genius shades seamlessly, then, from the Greek to the Latin; and the role of Empedocles in providing key structuring principles for *A Vision* can be seen, therefore, to extend from Yeats’s gyres to the ideal man of genius or Daimonic Man – Yeats, in the company of Dante – arising therefrom, in a condition of Unity of Being.

For Yeats himself, this is the “truest” or “deepest Yeats”. However, that the Daimonic Man Yeats is not, in fact, free from the “contamination” (as Bloom puts it) of influence, in particular that of Arnold, can be appreciated, in part, in that this is akin to the achievement of unity with “our only true, deep-buried selves” projected in Arnold’s “Empedocles on Etna”. As we might expect, Empedoclean ideas circulate in Arnold’s poem, such as when Empedocles, addressing Pausanias in Act 1 Scene II, refers to “the sure revolutions of the world” (1905:459); or in the same scene, to how “Heaven is with earth at strife” (1905:447), and how “All things the world which fill/Of but one stuff are spun” (1905:453). In Act II, Empedocles foresees, though he is a votary of Apollo, being “bandied to and fro/Like a sea-wave, betwixt the world and thee” (1905:467); and he speaks of how “only death/Can cut his oscillations short” (1905:467); how he “must subsist/In ceaseless opposition” (1905:469); and as we have seen, how we may seek to “poise our life at last” and “be true/To our own only true, deep-buried selves” (1905:472), failing which, he says, “we shall sink in the impossible strife” (1905:473). In Arnold’s poem, as I have argued, the locus of genius is not Empedocles but the buried self. Bandied about by opposed cosmic forces, achieving unity with the buried self is the pinnacle of achievement and deliverance from a recurring pattern of failure, from the “meadow of calamity”.

In “Empedocles on Etna”, then, we are encountering similar structuring principles to those of *A Vision*, but also of *Culture and Anarchy* in which, amid the opposition of Hebraism and Hellenism (the latter synonymous with the pursuit of sweetness and light), and in a time of anarchy (calamitous, in Arnold’s eyes), the best self is to be elicited from within (and is therefore by implication a buried self) in order to achieve unity and harmony, and therefore personal and political success. Yeats’s account of the alternating preponderance of the gyres echoes Arnold’s Empedoclean conception of opposed universal forces in *Culture and Anarchy* which, as we have seen, each have in turn their “appointed hours of culmination and seasons of rule” (2008:152). In “Expanding and Contracting Gyres”, Yeats proceeds to quote, again, from Empedocles (albeit mistakenly attributed to Heraclitus): “For of a truth they (Love and Strife) were afore time and shall be, nor ever can... boundless time be emptied of the pair, and they prevail in turn... and pass away before one another and increase in their appointed time” (2008:106/107).²¹

The locus of genius in *Culture and Anarchy*, corresponding with the locus of genius or buried self of “Empedocles on Etna”, is the similarly termed “best self”. Likewise, the locus of genius in *A Vision* is the antithetical Daimonic Man – a man possessed by the Daimon, which Yeats similarly defines as the “ultimate self” (1990:132). Both “Empedocles on Etna” and *Culture and Anarchy* can thus be seen to parallel, even harmonize with, the fundamental Empedoclean framework of *A Vision*. We should note the more revealing passage on the antithetical man in the original *A Vision*: “He must discover a being which only exists with extreme effort, when his muscles are as it were all taut and all his energies active, and for that reason the Mask is described as ‘A form created by passion to unite us to ourselves’. Much of what follows will be

²¹ As Paul and Harper point out, Yeats “corrected Heraclitus to Empedocles” (Yeats 2008:271) in the revised edition.

a definition or description of this deeper being, which may become the unity described by Dante in the *Convito*” (2008:18), as a perfectly proportioned human body. This “deeper being” is the occult or Daimonic self, synonymous with ancient Greek genius and thus blessed with form, residing within the deep recesses of the poet’s mind. “His body moulded from within his body/Grows comelier” is how the eugenically-minded Yeats describes the arising of the Daimonic self from within the being as “the moon is rounding towards the full” (2008:4) in the poem “The Wheel and the Phases of the Moon” which opens Book 1 of the original *A Vision*, or “The Phases of the Moon” as it is entitled in the revised version.

As we will see in chapter four, Yeats’s notion of a “deeper being” cannot be said to be a product of exclusively Arnoldian influence. Nevertheless, I wish to suggest, at this stage, that the achievement of genius through “extreme effort” is reminiscent of Arnold’s Celt “straining human nature further than it will stand” in reacting “against the despotism of fact” (2008:46), but also of Arnold’s Hellenised best self: Arnold asserts, for instance, that “excellence dwells among high and steep rocks, and can only be reached by those who sweat blood to reach her” (2008:139). Moreover, in addition to their respective projections of the locus of genius, the expansion and contraction of the gyres which Yeats seeks to illustrate by reference to Empedocles (or Heraclitus), is thus paralleled not only in “Empedocles on Etna” (the morbid aspect) but in *Culture and Anarchy* (the cultural aspect), where Arnold asserts that aristocracies, “those children of the established fact, are for epochs of concentration” (2008:120). In “epochs of expansion,” he says, “epochs such as that in which we now live... aristocracies, with their natural clinging to the established fact, their want of sense for the flux of things, for the inevitable transitoriness of all human institutions, are bewildered and helpless” (2008:120). Corresponding with the “great qualities are trodden down” of “Empedocles on Etna”, which we see

echoed in “great art beaten down” in Yeats’s “The Fisherman”, Arnold writes that their “serenity, their high spirit, their power of haughty resistance, – the great qualities of an aristocracy, and the secret of its distinguished manners and dignity, – these very qualities, in an epoch of expansion, turn against their possessors” (2008:120).

Arnold is taking issue here with Carlyle who backs the aristocracy as the source of authority in society. Drawing a contrast with Philistinism, Arnold emphasizes that he has repeatedly “said how the refinement of an aristocracy may be precious and educative to a raw nation as a kind of shadow of true refinement; how its serenity and dignified freedom from petty cares may serve as a useful foil to set off the vulgarity and hideousness of that type of life which a hard middle-class tends to establish, and to help people to see this vulgarity and hideousness in their true colours” (2008:120). However, the Burkean Arnold effectively idealizes a higher form of aristocracy in that “the true grace and serenity”, he says, is not that of the Barbarians (aristocracy) but rather “that of which Greece and Greek art suggest the admirable ideals of perfection, – a serenity which comes from having made order among ideas and harmonised them; whereas the serenity of aristocracies, at least the peculiar serenity of aristocracies of Teutonic origin, appears to come from their never having had any ideas to trouble them” (2008:120). Notably, this echoes Arnold’s account of the Teutonic origins of Philistinism in *On the Study of Celtic Literature*. In this vein, Arnold proceeds to posit the Hellenised best self (exemplifying the genius of the ancient Greeks) as the true source of authority, ideally, in society – truly aristocratic individuals to be collectively embodied in the state.

We might pause to recall at this point Yeats’s journal entry in 1909 in which he discloses that he has sought to “shape my style to sweetness and serenity” (1974:161) and refers scornfully to the enemies of Synge. We might also recall

Ellmann's explanation that Yeats revised his "*Autobiographies with A Vision in mind*" and "suffused [the narrative] with the serenity of the man [of Phase 17] who has achieved Unity of Being" (1960:241). Arnold does not feature among his selection of major influences on Yeats, but we can point to Arnold in the first instance when Malins writes that Nietzsche "admired Greek art for its aristocratic qualities, which fitted some of Yeats's political leanings" (1994:61). Moreover, the anti-Philistinism of Arnold can be seen to harmonize with Yeats's gyres and two types of man from another angle: the Romantic aspect. As Oppel says, "the cultural history to which both Yeats and Nietzsche belong before their thoughts intersect in 1902 is the Romantic tradition" (1987:4). Although he does not mention Arnold in *Yeats and Nietzsche: An Exploration of Major Nietzschean Echoes in the Writings of William Butler Yeats* (1982), Otto Bohlmann points to Blake in highlighting that Yeats "was an incipient Nietzschean (in so far as one can use the term) long before he encountered Nietzsche" (1982:xii). As I have been arguing all along, however, Yeats was an incipient Nietzschean, and Blakean, owing in part to his extensive prior immersion in Arnold's works. It is fair to say that Arnold is imbricated with the likes of Blake and Nietzsche, among many others (not least Empedocles), in the labyrinth of influence on Yeats's conception of the gyres and two types of man.

In considering the Arnoldian element in the basic framework of the 'System', we have shifted between Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (the cultural aspect) and "Empedocles on Etna" (the morbid aspect), but the interrelated Romantic aspect brings us round to another of Arnold's works important to Yeats from the earliest stages of his career: "The Scholar-Gipsy". As we have seen, the titular figure is the locus of genius in Arnold's poem, and has been correlated by William A. Madden with the buried self or locus of genius in "Empedocles on Etna"; which can be correlated, in turn, with the "best self" as locus of genius in

Culture and Anarchy. Kermode points out that Arnold “was a very influential transmitter of Romantic thought” (1976:24/25). The appearance of Nietzsche, Blake, and Arnold as examples in the antithetical sequence of phases of the Great Wheel (Nietzsche at Phase 12, Blake at Phase 16, and Arnold at Phase 18) can be partly explained by the age-old classical-romantic dialectic in literary history to which Yeats’s representation of the gyres accommodates itself, along with the philosophical tradition of dialectic itself. It is not surprising that the gyres echo paired oppositions in the works of Nietzsche, Blake, and Arnold (among many others) given their common denominator or underlying template of the classical-romantic dialectic.

In his introduction to *The Penguin Book of English Romantic Verse* (1968), David Wright captures Arnold’s key role as a propagator of Romantic thought, in terms of this dialectic. He says that although “the Romantic Revival in English poetry was sometimes reckoned to have begun with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 and to have more or less ended with the death of Byron in 1824”, it is actually the case that the “Romantic Movement manifested itself before Wordsworth and Coleridge collaborated to produce *Lyrical Ballads*, and went on long after Byron died” (1973:xi). He adds: “Under many and various metamorphoses it may even be said to have continued to our own day” (1973:xi). He explains that the “term ‘Romantic’... asks for comparison, always partisan, with its mirror-image, the ‘Classical’; the first being seen as the antithesis of the second”, and a “ding-dong battle – so far as writing about writing is concerned – has gone on between Romantic and Classical” (1973:xi). Remarking that “perhaps it would not be too much to claim that the Classical is an essentially Romantic concept largely introduced, so far as England is concerned, by Matthew Arnold”, he observes that the “glosses given to the two epithets have been many and confusing” and these “have become, as often happens in the field of literary criticism and poetic theory, terms of abuse”

(1973:xi). Generally, however, “the Romantic is held to signify the daemonic, subjective, personal, irrational, and emotional; the Classical to indicate whatever is objective, impersonal, rational, orderly” (1973:xi).

We can readily appreciate that, broadly, the qualities assigned to Yeats’s gyres are in accord with this romantic-classical formulation; and that Yeats’s own Romantic bias is evident in the alignment of the antithetical man, above all the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17, with the antithetical or subjective gyre, struggling against the primary or objective gyre and man. Relating the emergence of the Romantic Movement and its “new kind of sensibility” to “the Industrial Revolution and its consequences”, Wright elaborates: “If the individual was on the way to being regimented, then poets and artists... began to seek to balance the scale by giving the greatest value to individual consciousness. In doing so they exalted Imagination as the noblest of human faculties” (1973:xiv). Wright later reiterates that “the poets seem intuitively to have foreseen the threat posed by the growth of a mass-society with its necessary regimentation of the individual, or at the very least its heavy pressure towards spiritual and intellectual conformism” (1973:xix). Wright also points to Arnold’s influential role, as poet, in transmitting Romantic imagery. He observes that the “figure of the Solitary begins to occur in poetry about the same time as the advent of the Industrial Revolution which produced Ortega y Gasset’s ‘Mass-man’”(1973:xxii). Further refining the categorisation to include “the Solitary-Outcast”, Wright explains: “This figure, either rejected or rejecting – and sometimes both – haunted the imagination of the nineteenth-century poets” (1973:xxii), and he cites Arnold’s “The Scholar-Gipsy” as an exemplary case.

Bearing Yeats’s early fondness for Arnold’s Scholar-Gipsy in mind, Yeats’s Romantic bias may be gauged in various ways by his Empedoclean conception

of the gyres. In section II of Book 1 (“The Great Wheel”) in the revised *A Vision*, returning to his explanation of the gyres in the original treatise in terms of Empedoclean philosophy, Yeats writes: “According to Simplicius... the Concord of Empedocles fabricates all things into ‘an homogenous sphere’, and then Discord separates the elements and so makes the world we inhabit...” (1990:119). In section IV, Empedocles is referred to again, in Yeats’s explanation that “the subjective cone is called that of the *antithetical tincture* because it is achieved and defended by continual conflict with its opposite; the objective cone is called that of the *primary tincture* because whereas subjectivity – in Empedocles, ‘Discord’ as I think – tends to separate man from man, objectivity brings us back to the mass where we begin” (1990:122). Relating the gyres to the respective two types of man, primary man, we might say, is a version of the mass man; and antithetical man is a version of the solitary individual – which echo, respectively, Arnold’s *aphyes* or Philistine, or the ordinary self of the majority, and his *euphyes* or Hellenised best self, naturally elicited by gifted individuals who set up a fire which enfilades their particular social class. Moreover, Arnold had also opposed the imaginative and emotional Celt to the Philistine; and as we have seen, Yeats cross-referenced the magical Celt and Scholar-Gipsy as Romanticized figures “at home in wild landscapes far from the metropolitan centres” of modern life, who “could cure anxious Europe of the woes inherent in Progress” (Deane 1987:25). Antithetical man is reminiscent, too, of these solitary individuals.

Remarkably, then, as we will consider again in chapter four, the anti-Philistine Yeats’s ideal man of genius or antithetical Daimonic Man in *A Vision* can be seen to resemble all of these singular yet interrelated Arnoldian figures, covering the full spectrum of the Arnoldian element in Yeats: the Romantic, morbid, cultural, and Celtic aspects, as well as the over-arching fifth aspect: the ideal of ancient Greek genius. This labyrinthine Arnoldian influence is largely

facilitated and accommodated through the underlying classical-romantic dialectic whereby these figures are posited by Arnold, and whereby Yeats posits his own two types of man. I will revisit the anti-Philistinism of Arnold and Yeats, in the political sense of their negative attitude to the mass, in chapter four; and wish to close this section by briefly considering Arnold's bearing on Yeats and *A Vision* in regard to one more important factor – the Romantic exaltation of the Imagination “as the noblest of human faculties”.

As we have seen, “imagination” is a key defining term of Yeats's favoured antithetical gyre. Tracing the long-term trajectory from the embryonic but already harmonious Daimonic Man, as I have called him, of the Ferguson appraisal, posited in distinction to Arnold's definition of poetry as “a criticism of life”, to the fully and perfectly formed (and properly named) Daimonic Man in an harmonious condition of Unity of Being at the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision*, in distinction to Arnold at Phase 18, we should not be surprised to find, as we will see in more detail in chapter four, that the antithetical Daimonic Man of *A Vision* exhibits the full measure of Romantic imagination, under the aegis of the genius of the ancient Greeks. In “What the Caliph Partly Learned” in the original *A Vision*, Yeats provides definitions of the Four Faculties moving within the gyres – Will, Mask, Creative Mind, and Body of Fate – which, as Ellmann has suggested, resemble “the Four Zoas of Blake” (1960:230), among many other possible influences and correspondences. “By Creative Mind,” Yeats explains, “is meant intellect, as intellect was understood before the close of the seventeenth century – all the mind that is consciously constructive” (2008:15). Paul and Harper comment that this “refers less to seventeenth-century epistemology than to a conception of the intellect as something that shapes, formulates, constitutes, and is equivalent to the imagination (rather than the fancy) of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*...” (Yeats 2008:235).

The opposition of subjectivity and objectivity encapsulated in Yeats's gyres is strikingly reminiscent, too, of Coleridge's dialectical approach. The gyres can be readily related to the fact that, as Richard Holmes reports in *Coleridge* (1982), the "essential terms of Coleridge's reconciling system are dialectical" (1991:52), in part owing to his reading of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). Holmes adds that in the *Aids to Reflection* (1825) Coleridge "urged, as the greatest assistance to clear thinking, the re-introduction into English of 'subjective' and 'objective' reality – terms which are now in completely current use" (1991:52). In the description of the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17, Yeats refers to "the intellect (*Creative Mind*), which in the most *antithetical* phases were better described as imagination..." (2008:64). Likewise, as we have seen, Arnold chiefly associates with "intellect" his favoured force of Hellenism, essential to the constitution of the unified and harmonious best self, and by extension state. Arnoldian "intellect" might also be described as equivalent to the (Romantic) imagination which, as Coleridge says in the *Biographia*, in regard to the ideal poet, "forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole" (1973:649). Significantly, too, as we have seen, both Arnold (in the 1853 preface) and Yeats (in the second published review on Ferguson) describe the masterful poetical construction by the ancient Greeks in distinction to unsatisfactory "fancy". This is a single literary term which would seem to be indicative of Yeats's awareness that Coleridge's Imagination-Fancy antithesis partly informs Arnold's conception of the shaping power, exhibited in the art of architectonics, necessary to the production of exemplary works of genius such as those of the ancient Greeks, in which poetical construction is holistic, unified, and beautiful.

This is an imaginative shaping power and skill in poetical construction which Yeats subversively arrogates to Celtic genius in the figure of Ferguson, in 1886. As we have seen, Arnold suggests that the imaginative and emotional Celt

would have qualified as his ideal man of genius were it not for the Celt's fatal flaw of a lack of "balance, measure" and therefore the lack of "a law of harmony presiding over the whole", as possessed by the genius of the ancient Greeks (and Italians), which Yeats effectively counters in depicting the Celtic genius of Ferguson as possessing all of these desirable qualities, and thereby situating Celtic genius in the high company of the genius of the ancients. In 'correcting' Arnold's stereotype of the imaginative but unbalanced Celt, Yeats is simultaneously restoring to the Celt a Coleridgean or Romantic conception of poetical imagination, associated with balance and unity, which we can also see in Arnold's portrayal of ancient Greek genius in the 1853 preface and of the Hellenised best self (again, ancient Greek genius) in *Culture and Anarchy*. We must not be thrown off track, then, by Yeats's explanation in section 1, "Antithetical and Primary", in the original *A Vision*, that "[u]nder the Sun's light [primary] we see things as they are" – which is strikingly reminiscent of Arnold's formulation of culture, with its Hellenistic sweetness and light, as endeavouring to "see things as they are" (2008:99); and which would seem to echo Yeats's apparent rejection of Arnold in "The Autumn of the Flesh" (1898) in referring to poetry that calls "itself a critic of life and an interpreter of things as they are" (1972:192).

As I have argued, the anxious Yeats shrewdly splits Arnold in two, as it were. While Yeats might appear, once again, to be targeting Arnold's dictum that poetry is "a criticism of life" (by which he had distinguished himself from Arnold and "morals" in the appraisal of Ferguson) and closely related notion of "seeing things as they are", this time as being consistent with the undesirable primary gyre and man, Yeats's own position is in fact remarkably consistent with that of Arnold. The eminent Victorian's projections of unifying Romantic imagination in repeatedly extolling the genius of the ancient Greeks and Italians such as Dante are very much in tune with the antithetical gyre and man, above

all the imaginative Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17, in an harmonious condition of Unity of Being. Conversely, the primary gyre and man are consistent with Arnold's Romantic view of mechanical materialism, which underpins his anti-Philistinism. Basil Willey observes in *Nineteenth Century Studies: Coleridge to Matthew Arnold* (1949) that the "Fancy-Imagination antithesis is... a vital stage in [Coleridge's] life-and-death struggle against the mechanical materialism of the eighteenth century" (1949:27). This continuing struggle informs Arnold's entire cultural analysis, in which he champions "turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically, vainly imagining that there is virtue in following them staunchly which makes up for the mischief of following them mechanically" (2008:77). This is a position emphatically reaffirmed by the anti-Philistine, Daimonic Man Yeats in *A Vision*, continuing this Romantic struggle well into the twentieth century.

iii) ENTERING THE GREAT WHEEL: THE MORBID PHASES 23 AND 13

As we have seen, Yeats's Romantic bias is bound up with his Empedoclean conception of the gyres – a key insight which we can now carry into our analysis of specific lunar phases of the Great Wheel. We start, in this section, with two of what could be called the "morbidity phases": Phase 23, that of Synge, escaping from morbidity, and Phase 13, that of Baudelaire, Beardsley, and Dowson, who are prone to it. The latter is the first of the antithetical phases where Unity of Being is possible (extending to the ideal Phase 17); and as I have outlined, Ronald Schuchard has highlighted the appearance of Arnoldian morbidity at this phase, which is effectively that of Yeats's ill-fated fellow Rhymers of the 1890s. In "The Tragic Generation" (1922), as Schuchard says,

Yeats “writes painfully of his association with... that accursed group of 1890s poets and artists whose lives were consumed by dissipation and despair and whose careers were wrecked early by madness, suicide, drunkenness, and melancholia” (1985:88). Schuchard relates Yeats’s view of his associates of the 1890s primarily to Arnold’s 1853 preface. He explains that Yeats had “read Arnold with his father, and struck by the deliberate exclusion of ‘Empedocles on Etna’ from *Poems* (1853), he immersed himself in Arnold’s Preface” (1985:89). Consequently, he says, Yeats inherited Arnold’s “dialectic of morbidity and joy” and “habitually brought Arnold’s critical attitude and authority to bear upon his analysis of the ills of modern literature” (1985:88/89). Thus, by 1895, he says, Yeats “had come to look upon the work of his suffering friends with disinterested objectivity, searching hard for literature that contains what he described to Nora Hopper in January [1895] as ‘that strange mystery, that sense of melancholy [sic] in which there is no gloom’, his own rephrasing of Arnold’s description of tragic joy in the Preface” (1985:93).

This was the “disinterested objectivity” which Arnold had argued was exemplified by the genius of the ancient Greeks, in distinction to the excessive subjectivity, passive suffering, and morbidity of modern poets. We will turn our attention to the Rhymers shortly, but the following year Yeats not only sealed his friendship with Lady Gregory but subsequently met Synge for the first time, which Yeats recalls in section XIX of “The Tragic Generation”. His fellow Irishman, he says, “had come lately from Italy, and had played his fiddle to peasants in the Black Forest... and was now reading French literature and writing morbid and melancholy verse” (1991:343). Yeats adds that Synge “told me that he had learned Irish at Trinity College, so I urged him to go to the Aran Islands and find a life that had never been expressed in literature, instead of a life where all had been expressed. I did not divine his genius, but I felt he needed something to take him out of his morbidity and melancholy” (1991:343).

This is strikingly reminiscent not only of Arnold's recommendation of seeking disinterested objectivity in the preface, but also of "Empedocles on Etna". In Act I Scene I, Empedocles's fatal flaw is described to Pausanias by Callicles:

There is some root of suffering in himself,
Some secret and unfollow'd vein of woe,
Which makes the time look black and sad to him.
Pester him not in this his sombre mood
With questionings about an idle tale,
But lead him through the lovely mountain-paths,
And keep his mind from preying on itself,
And talk to him of things at hand and common...

(1905:441/442)

Essentially, this was Yeats's approach to Synge: seeking with Arnoldian or Calliclean awareness to take his Empedoclean friend out of his excessively subjective and morbid self in order to (re)connect with the real, objective world. Later, as Schuchard explains by reference to "J.M. Synge and the Ireland of His Time" (1910), Yeats would describe "his discovery of 'a morbid melancholy' in the early poems of Synge, who had written *In the Shadow of the Glen* and *Riders to the Sea* in the summer of 1902" (1985:95/96). Prior to Lionel Johnson's death in October 1902, Schuchard says, Yeats "had set out to rescue John Synge from the morbid generation" (1985:95). "As O'Leary had done to him fifteen years earlier," Schuchard says, Yeats now "reproved Synge for his morbidity", telling Synge "that he found *Riders to the Sea*, 'for all the nobility of its end, its mood of Greek tragedy, too passive in suffering, and had quoted from Matthew Arnold's introduction to *Empedocles on Etna* to prove my point'" (1985:95/96). According to Yeats, as Schuchard reports, it "was only when Synge found Inishmaan and the Great Blasket Islands... that his writing

lost its old morbid brooding, that he found his genius and his peace”
(1985:95/96).

Given that, as we will see shortly, Schuchard briefly points to Arnoldian morbidity as a defining characteristic of Phase 13 in *A Vision*, it is puzzling that he does not briefly extend to the treatise, too, his identification of the Arnoldian link between Yeats and Synge on the same point of morbidity in modern literature. I wish merely, then, to logically extend Schuchard’s attention to this connection by highlighting that Synge is of course named as an example of Phase 23, that of “The Receptive Man” (Yeats 1990:187). Clearly indebted to Arnold’s preface for its dichotomy of morbidity and joy, as well as such descriptions in Arnold’s poem of the morbid Empedocles “in triple gloom” (1905:441) and “Alone!—/On this... melancholy waste” (1905:96), Yeats writes that “[w]hen out of phase... he is tyrannical, gloomy and self-absorbed. In phase his energy has a character analogous to the longing of Phase 16 to escape from complete subjectivity: it escapes in a condition of explosive joy from systematisation and abstraction” (1990:187). Yeats proceeds to recount once again Synge’s early morbidity and his dramatic change into a more objective, “audacious, joyous, ironical man” (1990:189) and writer:

In Synge’s early unpublished work, written before he found the dialects of Aran and of Wicklow, there is brooding melancholy and morbid self-pity... The emotional life in so far as it was deliberate had to be transferred from Phase 9 to Phase 23, from a condition of self-regarding melancholy to its direct opposite. This transformation must have seemed to him a discovery of his true self, of his true moral being...

(1990:189)

Yeats also writes that “Synge must fill many notebooks, clap his ear to that hole in the ceiling...” (1990:189). This recalls Synge’s preface to *The Playboy of the Western World* (1905-1907), dated January 21st, 1907, in which he acknowledges his great debt to the “folk-imagination” and language of the Irish peasantry, and discloses that while writing *The Shadow of the Glen* (1902-1905), “I got more aid than any learning could have given me, from a chink in the floor of the old Wicklow house where I was staying, that let me hear what was being said by the servant girls in the kitchen” (2008:96). Synge’s affinity with Arnold (or Arnold via Yeats) can be appreciated shortly thereafter, in his negative view of the modern, and in particular his insistence on the need for joy in art, connected to ‘real life’: “On the stage one must have reality, and one must have joy, and that is why the intellectual modern drama has failed, and people have grown sick of the false joy of the musical comedy, that has been given them in place of the rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality” (2008:96/97). Drawing attention to Synge’s preface, Schuchard comments that “it is clear that the pressure of Arnold and Yeats bears significantly upon Synge’s turn to ‘wild’ joy as a principle of his own art and criticism”; and Schuchard notes the continuation of “that language” (1985:96) in the preface to *The Tinker’s Wedding* (1902-1907), dated December 2nd, 1907.

In the latter preface Synge speaks of Baudelaire from a perspective that chimes with the appearance of the Frenchman, along with Dowson and Beardsley, at Phase 13 in *A Vision*: “... where a country loses its humour, as some towns in Ireland are doing, there will be morbidity of mind, as Baudelaire’s mind was morbid” (Synge 2008:28). This is not solely a characterisation of Baudelaire via Arnold’s preface, or via the Arnoldian Yeats – and I therefore wish to sound a note of caution in regard to the labyrinth of influence. As Stephen Calloway says, in “The Search for a New Beauty” (2011), by the mid-nineteenth century Gautier and Baudelaire “had established the concept of *l’art pour l’art* [art for

art's sake] as the central tenet of the Parisian literary avant-garde" (2011:15). Swinburne, he says, "seized eagerly upon Baudelaire's insistence that art should concern itself only with beauty, free from all religious, moral and ethical constraints" and "was the first to promote such daring and attractive French ideas in England" (2011:15). Calloway says the "general perception" following publication of Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* in 1866 "which, it has to be said, is for the most part entirely justifiable, was that Swinburne's verses, such as 'Laus Veneris', 'Dolores' and many others in similar vein greatly influenced by Baudelaire, dwelled to an unhealthy degree upon the subjects of sensual love, lust and cruelty and that their author, with his evidently degenerate obsessions with femmes fatales and themes of blood, punishment and death, lacked what the Victorians liked to describe as 'moral fibre'" (2011:16).

The link between Baudelaire and Swinburne and the "general perception" not just of Swinburne but of "art for art's sake" that Calloway elucidates, also helps to explain Synge's assessment. Moreover, in "Yeats and the Symbolist Aesthetic" (1983), A.J. Bate remarks that "Yeats must have seen some close association between French Symbolism, the Decadence and the Rhymers, for he lumps Baudelaire, Beardsley and Dowson together in the thirteenth phase of *A Vision*" (1983:1215). Leading up to this, Bate argues that "Arthur Symons is still an unjustly neglected figure" (1983:1215). Indeed, not only was Synge well acquainted with French literature, but in factoring in the Arnoldian bearing of Yeats on Synge we must also factor in the bearing on Yeats of his friendship with Symons, whose shared preoccupation with morbidity, and writings on Dowson and Beardsley (whom he explicitly associated with Baudelaire), also partly inform the trio's appearance at Phase 13 in *A Vision*. In "Yeats and Modernism" (2006), Daniel Albright has argued that Yeats "likes to correlate his phases of human personality with artistic movements" (2006:71) and proceeds to speculate on possible descriptions of Dadaists in the late primary

phases. In this vein, we might say that Phase 13, that of “The Sensuous Man”, is effectively a commentary on “art for art’s sake” and the Rhymers of the Decadence: “Phase 13 is a phase of great importance, because the most intellectually subjective phase, and because only here can be achieved in perfection that in the antithetical life which corresponds to sanctity in the primary: not self-denial but expression for expression’s sake” (1990:164).

It is this extreme subjectivity, however, which the Arnoldian Yeats repeatedly identifies across his oeuvre as the downfall of the Rhymers. Schuchard explains that, in the wake of Symons’s breakdown in 1908, Synge’s death in 1909 “triggered Yeats’s renewed preoccupation with what he began to call in public the ‘doomed generation’” (1985:98). Schuchard effectively draws a line from Yeats’s lectures in 1910, in which Yeats’s Arnoldian diagnosis of the Rhymers’ debilitating subjectivity is strongly evident, to *A Vision*. Schuchard examines the lectures, which were linked by the common themes of literature and personality, and morbidity and joy, particularly in the poetry of Johnson and Dowson, at some length. Schuchard quotes Yeats’s assertion that “[t]o give up everything but the inmost life of thought and passion, that was what my generation sought, that is why they were accursed” (1985:100). Schuchard proceeds to elucidate Yeats’s view of the relation between his friends’ Catholic mysticism and their subjectivity, concluding that for Yeats their undoing was “their submission ‘to that hidden meditation wherein they lost or saved their souls and certainly lost the world’” (1985:100/101).

What Schuchard calls “the central Arnoldian question” (1985:103) for Yeats is, he says, posed by Ille to Hic in “Ego Dominus Tuus”, which Yeats quotes in section IX of “The Tragic Generation” in attempting to “explain some part of Dowson’s and Johnson’s dissipation”:

What portion in the world can the artist have
 Who has awakened from the common dream
 But dissipation and despair?

(Yeats 1991:312)

This corresponds, in turn, with section V of “Anima Hominis” in *Per Amica*, where Yeats writes that “Johnson and Dowson, friends of my youth, were dissipated men...” (1990:40). It might be added that Yeats’s Arnoldian diagnosis of the debilitating subjectivity of the Rhymers, also corresponding with the description of Phase 13 in *A Vision*, is projected early in “Ego Dominus Tuus”:

HIC

And I would find myself and not an image.

ILLE

That is our modern hope, and by its light
 We have lit upon the gentle, sensitive mind
 And lost the old nonchalance of the hand;
 Whether we have chosen chisel, pen or brush,
 We are but critics, or but half create,
 Timid, entangled, empty and abashed,
 Lacking the countenance of our friends.

(Yeats 1990:33)

The “image” is the Yeatsian Mask, by which a measure of disinterested objectivity is achieved, facilitating the self-expression of the artist rather than

the overly subjective dead-end (literally in a number of cases, among the tragic generation) of a “dialogue of the mind with itself”. Schuchard argues that the lectures “represent [Yeats’s] first sustained attempt to formulate the doctrine of the mask” (1985:100). This “major poetic dialogue in Yeats’s canon” on modern artists’ subjectivity and dissipation, Schuchard says, “had its rough formulation in the lectures he was driven to write in 1910, and though it waited for its refined context in the prose of *Per Amica*... it was born a quarter of a century earlier in his fascination with the poems of Dowson’s despair” (1985:103). Schuchard then briefly refers to Yeats’s treatise:

The objective distillation of Ille’s dialogue with Hic, however, comes five years later in Phase 13 of *A Vision*... In this important phase, Yeats writes, ‘complete intellectual unity’ is possible, ‘Unity of Being apprehended through images of the mind,’ but if the Will... surrender[s] itself to sensation, it becomes morbid, it sees every sensation separate from every other under the light of its perpetual analysis’. Swayed by Fate rather than by Mask, Dowson became the victim of his False Mask, ‘Self-absorption,’ and his False Creative Mind, ‘Morbidity.’

(1985:103)

In drawing a line from the lectures in 1910 to *A Vision*, Schuchard also highlights Yeats’s explicit reference to Arnold on morbidity in section IX of “The Tragic Generation”, shortly after referring to Johnson and Dowson’s dissipation:

For more than thirty years [Yeats] had puzzled, like Matthew Arnold before him, over the ‘morbid effort’ of his religious friends, disturbed by the terrible waste of genius. ‘Had not Matthew Arnold,’

he asks by analogy, ‘his faith in what he described as the best thought of his generation?’ Drawing a line from Coleridge to Rossetti through Stenbock and Beardsley to Dowson and Johnson, he laments that their Christianity ‘but deepened despair and multiplied temptation’... In his dismay at the continued morbidity of modern poetry, he wistfully recalls his once-fervid belief that religion would bring round its [magical] antithesis...

(1985:88/89)

Arnold’s notion of “morbid effort”, and what Yeats paraphrases as his description of “the best thought of his generation”, arises in his letter to Mrs Forster dated August 6, 1858: “It is only in the best poetical epochs... that you can descend into yourself and produce the best of your thought and feeling naturally, and without an overwhelming and in some degree morbid effort; for then all the people around you are more or less doing the same thing. It is natural, it is the bent of the time to do it; its being the bent of the time, indeed, is what makes the time a *poetical* one” (1895:63).

Arnold’s ideal, here and elsewhere across his oeuvre, is the emergence of the “best”, which falls by the wayside in Schuchard’s preoccupation with the morbid. As I have indicated, Phase 13 is explicitly linked to Yeats’s Phase 17: “*Creative Mind* (from Phase 17). *True* – Subjective truth. *False* – Morbidity” (1990:164). Correspondingly, also signalling the bond between Yeats and the Rhymers even as they are ultimately contrasted, the Creative Mind of Phase 17 is “(from Phase 13). *True* – Creative imagination through *antithetical* emotion. *False* – Enforced realization” (1990:172). Though Arnold might seem to have little bearing on such definitions, beyond morbidity, what we are encountering could well be described, in Arnoldian terms, as a symbolical contrast between “morbidity” (Phase 13) and the “best” (Phase 17). Moreover, Arnold had

expressly defined the Celt in terms of emotion and imagination – a striking correspondence with the Creative Mind of Phase 17 which, as we have seen, is akin to Coleridgean or Romantic imagination: a shaping and unifying power. The striking correspondence is doubled up when we factor in Arnold's attribution of the qualities of emotion and "intellect" (imagination) to the ancient Greek or Hellene, too, but with the addition of the decisive qualities of "balance, measure" and "a law of harmony presiding over the whole".

I will revisit what we can readily see as a golden opportunity for Yeats to once again subversively 'correct' Arnold on the point of the Romantic Celt's imagination as a unifying rather than disabling force, harking back to the appraisal of Ferguson as a measured Celtic genius in the high company of the ancient Greeks, in the next chapter. What I wish instead to underline at this stage is that for Arnold, as we have seen in the letter to Mrs Forster, "morbid effort" is in contrast to the "best" – and by implication, this contrast underpins Yeats quotation, in "The Tragic Generation", of "morbid effort" in arguing that Christianity deepens poets' subjective suffering and ultimately undermines their life and art. Similarly, a contrast between the "morbid" and "best" arises in the 1853 preface, where Arnold censures morbidity in modern literature and his own "Empedocles on Etna" as a prime example, but also dwells at length on what he calls "the best models of instruction for the individual [modern] writer" (1992:181), which for Arnold were the ancient Greeks. The dichotomy arises, too, in *Culture and Anarchy*. The "best self" ultimately stands in contrast to the Empedoclean Philistine Mr Smith, for instance, whose "whole middle-class... conception of things" in being so preoccupied with religion and money takes "the distressing, violently morbid, and fatal turn" (2008:162) to his suicide.

Moreover, Arnold's famous and highly influential notion of "the best which has been thought and said in the world" appears in the Preface of *Culture and*

Anarchy. A little before this, Arnold refers to the “morbid”. He writes that “Monsieur Michelet makes it a reproach to us that, in all the doubt as to the real author of the *Imitation*, no one has ever dreamed of ascribing that work to an Englishman” (2008:76). He adds: “This would be more of a reproach to us if in poetry... our race had not done such great things; and if the *Imitation*, exquisite as it is, did not, as I have elsewhere remarked, belong to a class of works in which the perfect balance of human nature is lost, and which have therefore, as spiritual productions, in their contents something excessive and morbid, in their form something not thoroughly sound” (2008:76). Throughout *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold points to the lack of balance and ensuing ill-effects of an overdevelopment of Hebraism, which only Hellenism can put right. As we might expect, then, he portrays balance as central to the whole approach, indeed the nature of the mind-set, of culture. The “very desire to see things as they are,” the Burkean and Coleridgean Arnold says, “implies a balance and regulation of mind which is not often attained without fruitful effort” (2008:98). Although Arnoldian culture is expressly an “inward operation”, it seeks to maintain, therefore, a balanced concern with both the outer or objective and the inner or subjective worlds. As Lionel Trilling says: “Not that culture, Arnold makes clear, is what we would nowadays call ‘subjectivism;’ it is concerned with the inner life, but never to the exclusion of the realities of the outer world” (1949:242).

Earlier, Trilling explains that the “great value which Arnold sees in Hellenism’s response to the modern world lies in its sense of the wholeness of the human personality; it does not, perhaps, give quite sufficient weight to morality, but whatever consideration of morality it does make is always in relation to the rest of the human faculties” (1949:235). “Aware of the world without,” Trilling says, “Hellenism knows that the externality of living is a true index of the inner life and it knows that the quality of externality is as much determined by

intelligence, imagination and the sense of beauty as by morality. Hebraism, however, lacks exactly this insight” (1949:235). Arnold’s equation of “morbidity” with a loss of “balance” and unsoundness of form, and in fact his habitual insistence across his oeuvre on balance (synonymous with measure and harmony) as the hallmark of writers and works of genius, best exemplified by the ancient Greeks (and Italians such as Dante), are crucial to Yeats’s view of his fellow Rhymers as morbid, which is captured at Phase 13; as well as to the related projection of his own ideal self – the Daimonic Man – as a perfectly balanced, measured, and harmonious individual, at Phase 17.

Along with the Empedoclean structuring principles which underpin Arnold’s cultural analysis, his preoccupation with balance is an extension, into the social and political spheres, of his poetical concern with balance in “Empedocles on Etna” and the 1853 preface. In Act II of the poem, the central character refers, with Apollonian symbolism, to a grievous (Dionysian) loss of balance, tipping into excessive subjectivity and consequent morbidity:

And yet what days were those, Parmenides!
 When we were young, when we could number friends
 In all the Italian cities like ourselves,
 When with elated hearts we join’d your train.
 Ye Sun-born Virgins! on the road of truth.
 Then we could still enjoy, then neither thought
 Nor outward things were closed and dead to us...
 In the delightful commerce of the world.
 We had not lost our balance then, nor grown
 Thought’s slaves, and dead to every natural joy.

(1905:468)

In conjunction with the 1853 preface, Yeats's Arnoldian reading of his ill-fated friends of the 1890s, evident in "The Tragic Generation" and the corresponding Phase 13 in *A Vision*, can be readily discerned in such a passage: outward things were closed and dead to them; being thought's slaves they lacked a delightful commerce with the world; they had lost their balance. Over and over again in "The Tragic Generation", we can see this Arnoldian framing of Yeats's peers in terms of subjectivity and objectivity, and note Yeats's Calliclean theme tune on the vital importance of connecting to things at hand and common. Moreover, Arnold effectively means "balance" when he explains, towards the end of the 1853 preface, that "in the sincere endeavour to learn and practise, amid the bewildering confusion of our times, what is sound and true in poetical art, I seemed to myself to find the only sure guidance, the only solid footing, among the ancients" (1992:182). "I know not how," he says, "[but] commerce with the ancients appears to me to produce, in those who constantly practise it, a steadying and composing effect upon their judgment, not of literary works only, but of men and events in general" (1992:181).

Schuchard does not mention Walter Pater in his essay, but in section V of "The Tragic Generation" Yeats explicitly relates the "disaster" that befell the Rhymers to Pater's school of thought, and projects this metaphorically as a grievous loss of balance:

If Rosetti was a subconscious influence, and perhaps the most powerful of all, we looked consciously to Pater for our philosophy. Three or four years ago I re-read *Marius the Epicurean*, expecting to find I cared for it no longer, but it still seemed to me, as I think it seemed to us all, the only great prose in modern English, and yet I began to wonder if it, or the attitude of mind of which it was the noblest expression, had not caused the disaster of my friends. It taught

us to walk upon a rope tightly stretched through serene air, and we were left to keep our feet upon a swaying rope in a storm.

(1991:302/303)

With this “startling metaphor” (2006:50), as Watson describes it, Yeats is effectively telling us that the downfall of his friends was owing to a loss of balance; to their failure to gain a solid footing in the ‘real’ world, to steady and compose themselves. Yeats alludes to his metaphor of the swaying rope in the summary of Phase 13 in *A Vision*, where he explains that the “*Will* is now a mirror of emotional experience, or sensation, according to whether it is swayed by *Mask* or *Fate*” (1990:164). Watson does not explicitly relate Arnold to “The Tragic Generation” but this can be easily extrapolated from his essay via the connection he establishes between “The Tragic Generation” and “Art and Ideas” (1913), linking the latter in turn with Yeats’s appraisal of Ferguson and Arnold’s 1853 preface. Watson leads up to “The Tragic Generation” by drawing attention to what he describes as the “key essay... ‘Art and Ideas’, which looks back not just on [Arthur Henry] Hallam but on the ‘pure poetry’ movement of the nineties” (2006:49). Yeats, he reports, acknowledges “the usefulness of the ‘new formula’ derived from Hallam and Pater in freeing his generation from the moralizing ‘zeal and eloquence’ of the earlier Victorians... In the end, however, the poetry of sense impressions is not enough for Yeats” (2006:50). Watson explains that Yeats “was aware of the dangers of a disabling subjectivity inherent in the methods of the kind of poetry that he and his companion Rhymers committed themselves to write” (2006:50).

Recalling Yeats’s Romantic bias bound up with his Empedoclean conception of the gyres, it might be added that his Romantic heritage – which we can trace in part, within the labyrinth of influence, along an important line of Romantic conservative thinkers including Burke, Coleridge, and Arnold – is strongly in

play in Yeats weighing Paterian imagination in the balance, as it were, and finding it sorely wanting. It is vital that we recognize the nuance, in Yeats, between Romanticism and its kindred spirit Aestheticism given that the romantic-classical dialectic which harmonizes with the principal symbol of the ‘System’ also effectively encapsulates the literary-historical context, broadly, of Aestheticism and the Decadence of the 1890s: the antithetical gyre is defined by such terms as “emotional” and “aesthetic”, opposed to the “moral” primary gyre, each “struggling the one against the other”. Drawing a line to Arnold, Basil Willey highlights that Coleridge’s “central preoccupation was with the antithesis between a living whole or organism... and a mechanical juxtaposition of parts”, the latter associated with the eighteenth century which, Coleridge believed, “had reduced the universe to an assemblage of parts, the mind of man to an aggregate of sense-impressions...” (1949:30). Yeats’s approval of Romantic or Coleridgean imagination, partly through Arnold, could never have been compatible, ultimately, with Pater and his disciples on the issue of “the poetry of sense impressions”. Indeed, I wish to caution that Yeats’s Romantic reading of the Paterian Rhymers is far from exclusively Arnoldian, as the bearing of Coleridge indicates. Within the labyrinth of influence, we might also point to Shelley, for instance, who, in “A Defence of Poetry”, quotes Dante – “The mind is its own place, and of itself can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven” – and adds: “But poetry defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions” (1973:760).

Nevertheless, the Arnoldian element in Yeats plays a crucial role in that reading. Phase 13 is the phase of the poetry of sense impressions: “Though wax to every impression of emotion, or of sense...” (1990:164); while the ideal Phase 17 is indicative of the fact that the necessary drive towards objectivity for Yeats was Celtic and nationalist. As Watson reports: “Echoing Arnold’s rejection [in the 1853 preface] of an art based on ‘the dialogue of the mind with

itself' and his own critique [in the appraisal of Ferguson] of 'the sad soliloquies of nineteenth century egotism,' [Yeats] explains in 'Art and Ideas' how he had come early to turn away from the beautiful but chilly Palace of the Aesthetes to a more robust and more nurturing first world..." (2006:50). Yeats, as Watson says, "finds the antidote to the solipsism of Paterian impressionism in what in one of his late poems he was to call 'the book of the people'" (2006:50). Yeats explains in "Art and Ideas", in a passage quoted by Watson: "I filled my imagination with the popular beliefs of Ireland, gathering them up among forgotten novelists in the British Museum or in Sligo cottages. I sought some symbolic language reaching far into the past and associated with familiar names and conspicuous hills that I might not be alone amid the obscure impressions of the senses" (Yeats 2007:50).

Differentiating Yeats from the Rhymers on this basis, Watson says that the "resource of the legends and 'popular beliefs of Ireland' was not available to Johnson, Dowson, and the other Rhymers, alone amid the obscure impressions of the senses" (2006:50). In "The Tragic Generation", he adds, "Yeats suggests that Pater's philosophy, urging the pursuit of impressions, and a strenuous aesthetic contemplation freed from all public interests, produced the intolerable strains that led to the premature deaths or breakdowns of his contemporaries of the nineties" (2006:50). For Yeats, I wish to emphasize, it is Arnold who triumphs in a face-off, as it were, with Pater. It is in the notorious conclusion to the *Renaissance* that Pater had asserted: "To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life" (Pater 1998:152). As Calloway says, "Pater's particular take on the meaning of Art for Art's sake and his exhortation to 'burn always with this hard, gem-like flame' became rallying calls for a younger generation of disciples and decadent aesthetes" (2011:17/18). That Pater was much in mind in the formulation of "The Sensuous Man" of Phase 13 in *A Vision* can be gauged to some extent from

Colin Cruise's assertion in "Walter Pater (1839-1894)" (2011) that the conclusion "challenged the reader to find passion in every moment; an amoral, if not immoral, injunction" whereby Pater "severed links with Ruskinian criticism which held that aesthetic pleasure was, in the end, moral rather than sensuous" (2011:61). Yet in "Empedocles on Etna", Arnold addresses this issue, for Yeats, of what such a flame might do to a poet: "A living man no more, Empedocles!/Nothing but a devouring flame of thought" (1905:471).

Moreover, as Watson points out: "Asserting the primacy of [sense] impressions, Pater had written rather chillingly in the conclusion... 'Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner his own dream of a world'" (2006:50). In "Empedocles on Etna", again much to the benefit of Yeats's poetical development, Arnold addresses the issue of imprisonment within the mind. In Act II, in the long 'existential' soliloquy before he plunges into the crater, Empedocles considers the bodily return in death to the elements, but wonders where the mind might go:

But mind, but thought –
 If these have been the master part of us –
 Where will they find their parent element?
 ... But we shall still be in them, and they in us,
 And we shall be the strangers of the world,
 And they will be our lords, as they are now;
 And keep us prisoners of our consciousness,
 And never let us clasp and feel the All...

(1905:471-73)

Arnold proceeds to project the ideal of unity with the buried self, but I wish to emphasize that this ideal is contrasted with falling away into sensuous subjectivity, increased intensity, and oblivion:

To see if we will now at last be true
 To our own only true, deep-buried selves,
 Being one with which we are one with the whole world;
 Or whether we will once more fall away
 Into some bondage of flesh or mind,
 Some slough of sense, or some fantastic maze
 Forged by the imperious lonely thinking-power.
 And each succeeding age in which we are born
 Will have more peril for us than the last;
 Will goad our senses with a sharper spur,
 Will fret our minds to an intenser play,
 Will make ourselves harder to be discern'd.
 And we shall struggle awhile, gasp and rebel –
 ... And we shall feel our powers of effort flag,
 And rally them for one last fight – and fail;
 And we shall sink in the impossible strife,
 And be astray for ever.

(1905:471-73)

We can see that Arnold clearly sets out the difference between sensuous men who fall away into oblivion, and the ideal of poise and uniting with the buried self, in stark terms; and therefore Arnold's bearing is decisive in Yeats's reading of "The Sensuous Man" Pater and his disciples of the tragic generation. Yeats was able to draw upon Arnold's poem, in conjunction with the preface, in evaluating his contemporaries of the 1890s and the wider literary-historical

context of “art for art’s sake”. Beyond merely the appearance of the single term “[m]orbidity” at Phase 13, then, Arnold deeply informs the portrayal not only of the Paterian Rhymers at Phase 13 but also, by contrast, as we will see more fully in chapter four, the Daimonic Man Yeats at the ideal Phase 17 who has poised his life at last through his Mask and united with his buried self, achieving the “balance, measure” best exemplified by the genius of the ancients, rather than falling away into some slough of sense impressions, like the Rhymers.

Yeats fashions himself into a balanced, measured genius of the “ancient” variety, at Phase 17; and this may have been encouraged by a subversive reading by Yeats of Arnold’s rather ‘Celtic’ supporting character in “Empedocles on Etna”. The depressed and suicidal Empedocles is contrasted by Arnold with the joyful harpist and singer Callicles, whose words open and close the poem – much as Yeats has the last word in “The Tragic Generation” after his extended commentary on his ‘Empedoclean’ associates of the 1890s and, lastly, recounting his rescue effort of Synge. As Foster points out, “WB Yeats located both Dante and himself [at Phase 17], destined by astrology to be superpoets” (2003:286). Like Callicles, we might also say, Yeats emerges as sole survivor and superpoet. In Scene II, Empedocles hears a “harp-note below” (1905:442) and Pausanias tells him:

’Tis the boy Callicles,
The sweetest harp-player in Catana.
He is for ever coming on these hills,
In summer, to all country-festivals,
With a gay revelling band...

(1905:443)

In the context of Arnold's oeuvre, we may recognize here not only the (proto-) Celtic "gay" but the (proto-)cultural or Hellenistic "sweetest" too, yet merged in a single figure. Arnold's subsequent distinction between the Celt and Greek on the point of "balance, measure" and "a law of harmony presiding over the whole" is troubled not only by an inherent contradiction in his portrayal of a Romanticized Celt who is imaginative yet perpetually excessive and can never shape, unify, and constitute himself, but also by his portrayal (as we will see in chapter four) of the Celt's intoxication of style in almost identical language to his portrayal of Hellenism, replete with sweetness and light. Even in his Celticist analysis, the unmeasured Celt is nevertheless favourably portrayed by Arnold as exceeding the Greek in his magical affinity with nature. Arnold's up-and-down, gay and melancholy (but especially down and melancholy, indeed always falling) Celt who forever comes to naught is also fatally undermined and potentially 'corrected', if read subversively, by his own portrayal of the composed, gay, and sweet Callicles in "Empedocles on Etna". Such a reading, I wish to suggest, partly informs Yeats's self-portrait in "The Tragic Generation", corresponding with the representation of the measured Daimonic Man, at once rather Hellenistic and 'Celtic', at the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision*.

Moreover, in the lines from "Empedocles on Etna" about seeking to achieve unity with our buried selves, Arnold refers to earthly life as a "meadow of calamity". This corresponds with his argument in the 1853 preface that the "representation of the most utter calamity" (1992:173) is not enough to vitiate one's enjoyment of tragedy in an artistic work, as well as his description of the Celts "with their vehement reaction against the despotism of fact, with their sensuous nature, their manifold striving, their adverse destiny, their immense calamities, the Celts are the prime authors of this vein of piercing regret and passion, – of this Titanism in poetry" (2008:63). Yeats, I also wish to suggest, saw his ill-fated friends of the tragic generation in terms of "calamity" as well

as imbalance. He viewed them, that is, in a partly ‘Celtic’ light. It is not difficult to appreciate how such key ideas and terms as “sensuous”, “immense calamities” and a lack of “balance, measure” might have readily brought to mind, for Yeats, his peers of the tragic generation. Their ‘Celticisation’ would also have been encouraged by Arnold’s assertion that the Celtic genius had “love of beauty... for its excellence” (2008:49). We should recall not only that Yeats had established a literary career as what Kiberd calls a “professional Celt” (1996:128) but that the Rhymers’ Club had distinctly Celtic roots.

In *Yeats and the Rhymers’ Club: A Nineties’ Perspective* (1989), Joann Gardner has examined how the club “existed in two stages”: the early Rhymesters Club consisting mainly of Celtic members (including Yeats) and the later Rhymers’ Club “which added to that body the aesthetic poets of Fitzroy” (1989:54); or as she says earlier, “expanded [in 1891] to include a group of Oxford poets” (1989:9). We might also connect Arnold’s Empedocles plunging to his death, as a representation of morbid modern poets, with Arnold’s assertion that “[f]or ages and ages the world has been constantly slipping, ever more and more out of the Celt’s grasp” and his quotation from Ossian that “*they always fell*” (2008:46). Yeats’s metaphor of the Rhymers falling from a swaying rope could be instructively juxtaposed with Arnold’s claim that the Celt’s lack of “balance, measure” kept him from “high success” (2008:44/45); and we should note Yeats’s characterisation of the intoxicated Lionel Johnson in section III of “In Memory of Major Robert Gregory” (1918), as repeatedly falling:

Lionel Johnson comes the first to mind,
That loved his learning better than mankind,
Though courteous to the worst; much falling he
Brooded upon sanctity
Till all his Greek and Latin seemed

A long blast upon the horn that brought
 A little nearer to his thought
 A measureless consummation that he dreamed.

(1971:148/149)

Bloom has remarked that in projecting “the difference between himself and the artistic companions of his youth” in *A Vision*, Yeats “had too much tact, or genuine love for Lionel Johnson, to overtly assign him” (1972:244) to Phase 13. The ‘Celticisation’ of Johnson is also evident in that, as William H. O’Donnell explains, Johnson “was active in the Irish Literary Society in London during the mid-1890s, supported Irish nationalism, and – despite an absence of Irish parents, – sometimes called himself ‘Irish’ (for example, in a letter to Edmund Gosse, 29 Dec 1893...)” (O’Donnell 1989). As we will come to appreciate more fully, in the closing chapter five, the ideal Phase 17 is the culmination of a series of ‘Celtic’ phases (i.e. calamitous, lacking “balance, measure”, even intoxicating), extending from Phase 13. Though Phase 17 is not morbid, it is nevertheless tragic. As Yeats explains in the summary of Phase 13: “From now... and until Phase 17 or Phase 18 has passed... all life grows more tragic” (1990:165). Yet as Arnold had said in the 1853 preface, “the more tragic the situation, the deeper becomes the enjoyment” (1992:179). While Yeats’s circumspection, and the abstruseness of *A Vision*, make the Celtic element difficult to discern, Yeats is conducting a covert dialogue with Arnold on the question of the Celtic constitution of the ideal man of genius, and by extension state; and it is the balanced and measured Yeats, enjoying Unity of Being at the ideal Phase 17, who sees to it that, Callicles-like, he has the last word.

* * * * *

Chapter Four

Yeats at the ideal Phase 17

Sensitized in chapter three to how the dialectical mode of the gyres, and by extension the respective two types of man and lunar phases of the Great Wheel, can be seen to accommodate the Arnoldian element (likewise based on dialectic) in Yeats, we will now proceed, having considered the morbid Phase 13, to the interlinked, ideal Phase 17 with which it is effectively contrasted. What we are moving towards, I wish to signpost, is an appreciation of the crucial configuration of the Daimonic Man at Phase 17 (Yeats) alongside the Emotional Man (Arnold) at Phase 18. In this chapter, we will first take a closer look at Declan Kiberd's account of *A Vision* which, as I have indicated in the introduction, chiefly provides the impetus within the critical field for my own thesis on the Arnoldian element in the treatise. We will consider how the Arnoldian element in Yeats radically undermines Kiberd's brief linkage of Arnold to *A Vision* solely and speculatively on the Celtic aspect. We will also tease out how Yeats's poetic theory or doctrine of the Mask is incorporated into the structure of the Great Wheel of *A Vision*, before we delve into the various facets and complexities of the description of Phase 17. We will consider some of the implications of the Arnoldian representation of the Daimonic Man for the critical field. In the next chapter, we will examine Phase 18 in order to illuminate the significance of Arnold's placement in relation to that of Yeats, in both textual and symbolical terms; and close the thesis with a brief look at the intervening phases 14 and 16.

i) THE BURIED SELF: HOW ARNOLD COMES BACK TO HAUNT KIBERD'S THEORY OF THE GYRES

As we have seen, George Watson reports that Arnold's Celt powerfully shaped Yeats's art and criticism "in his early years" (2006:41); and "there has been a critical consensus after the impact of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) that Yeats's early Celticizing poetry and prose show him trapped in colonialist contradiction" (2006:42). However, I wish to foreground in commencing chapter four that this consensus has not prevented critics, led by Said himself, from constructing Yeats as not only Ireland's national poet but what Said calls "a poet of decolonization" (2001:84) in his seminal essay "Yeats and Decolonization" (1988). The seeming contradiction is typical of the complexities inherent in what Marjorie Howes has called "the topic of 'Yeats and the Postcolonial'" (2006:206). As she explains:

Depending on which texts or periods of his career we focus on and what methods of analysis we employ, Yeats can appear as a trenchant critic of imperialism, a closet imperialist, an apologist for the colonial ruling class in Ireland (the Protestant Anglo-Irish), a committed member of the first postcolonial Irish government, or a fierce opponent of that government's policies and its conception of national identity. His commitment to several varieties of Irish nationalism can appear as an influential means of national liberation, an Irish Protestant's attempt to dissolve or evade sectarian conflict through an appeal to a shared Irish culture, or a colonialist appropriation of decolonizing, nationalist tropes. And his interest in Irish folklore, the Irish peasantry, and the occult can be read

as commitments to the subaltern cultures and resistances of the colonized or as forms of orientalism, in which Yeats projected onto ‘others’ various exotic qualities and forms of knowledge that fascinated him.

(2006: 207/208)

Faced with such divergent interpretations of Yeats, Howes draws attention to Jahan Ramazani’s “W.B. Yeats: A Postcolonial Poet?” in *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (2001), in which he “points out that claims for or against each of these readings will necessarily invoke particular definitions of the postcolonial, and his essay helpfully ‘parses multiple definitions of postcoloniality in relation to Yeats’” (2006:208). Nevertheless, Ramazani answers with “a qualified yes” the question of whether “the necessary... conditions exist for redescribing Yeats as ‘postcolonial’” (2001:22). In doing so, he follows Said’s pioneering portrayal of Yeats as a postcolonial figure, whereby Said reconciles the poet’s liberationist impulses with what he calls the poet’s “nativism” (1994:275). Criticising Seamus Deane’s “rather Adorno-esque formulation of Yeats’s [colonial] quandary” in *Celtic Revivals* as possibly “weakened by its wanting to render Yeats more heroic than a crudely political reading would have suggested, and excuse his unacceptable and indigestible reactionary politics – his outright fascism, his fantasies of old homes and families, his incoherently occult divagations – by translating them into an instance of Adorno’s ‘negative dialectic’”, Said suggests that as “a small corrective, we might more accurately see Yeats as an exacerbated example of the *nativist* phenomenon which flourished elsewhere (e.g. *négritude*) as a result of the colonial encounter” (1994:275). Highlighting Yeats’s anti-imperialist prioritisation of “the geographical element” (1994:271) and traditional culture, Said argues that nativism “alas, reinforces the distinction [between the colonizer

and colonized] even while reevaluating the weaker or subservient partner” (1994:275).

Briefly outlining Said’s position, Howes explains that nativism is “a form of nationalism that is anti-imperialist yet derived from imperial structures of thought; like imperialism, it insists on an absolute distinction between the colonizer and the colonized, but it praises the colonized rather than denigrating them” (2006:207). The term, Howes says, “enables Said to acknowledge Yeats’s debt to imperialism and still praise his ‘considerable achievement in decolonization’” (2006:207). Indeed, Said constructs Yeats as a postcolonial figure in terms of what he calls the “two distinct moments” within the nationalist revival “in Ireland as elsewhere” (1994:270). Spelling out the limitations of nativism as a response to the first moment or “pronounced awareness of European and Western culture as imperialism” (1994:270), Said proceeds to align Yeats partially with the “second, more openly liberationist” moment: that is, with the notion of liberation that is awakened when orthodox or mainstream nationalism is revealed as “both insufficient and crucial, but only as a first step” (1994:271). Out of this “paradox”, Said argues, comes a “strong new post-nationalist theme” (1994:271) within the nationalist revival. “In this second phase,” he says, “*liberation*, and not nationalist independence, is the new alternative, liberation which by its very nature involves, in [Frantz] Fanon’s words, a transformation of social consciousness beyond national consciousness” (1994:278).

Said constructs Yeats as a poet of decolonization who partially belongs to this second phase, mostly by reference to a range of Yeats’s poetry from “that climactic period after the Easter Uprising of 1916” (1994:280) to his death in 1939. Said’s prioritisation of later works chimes with a preponderance of similar periodization in Yeats scholarship stressing the emergence of a radically

transformed Yeats in the years after the Rising – as married man and rejuvenated occultist, unlikely “founding father of the new nation” (Foster 2001:59), and modernist writer.²² However, although he observes that the “deeply eccentric and aestheticized histories [Yeats] produced in *A Vision* and the later quasi-religious poems elevate the [colonial] tension to an extra-worldly level, as if Ireland were best taken over, so to speak, at a level above that of the ground” (1994:274), Said all but dismisses *A Vision* as worthy of close consideration as a postcolonial text. It is therefore a significant development in Yeats scholarship that in *Inventing Ireland*, a book in which, as Anthony Roche correctly judges, Said’s “concept of Yeats as a poet of decolonization underwrites the central position he occupies” (2001:xix), Declan Kiberd examines the treatise in some detail, in the chapter “The Last *Aisling* – *A Vision*”. Kiberd extends Said’s construction of Yeats as a poet of decolonization at the expense of Said’s criticism of Yeats’s “incoherently occult divagations”. Whereas Said argues that Yeats partially belongs to the second moment but “stopped short of imagining full political liberation” (1994:287/88), Kiberd goes further to argue (employing Benedict Anderson’s famous encapsulation) that “*A Vision* envisages Ireland as an imagined community” (1996:326).

Kiberd effectively shadows Said’s manoeuvre and concomitant periodization in aligning Yeats – and *A Vision* – with the liberationist moment. Echoing Said in an earlier chapter “Ireland – England’s Unconscious?”, Kiberd argues in regard to Irish writers generally: “Sometimes in their progress the revivalists would seem to reinforce precisely those [imperialist] stereotypes which they had set out to dismantle: nevertheless, this was an inevitable, nationalist phase through which they and their country had to pass en route to liberation” (1996:32). In

²² A notable early example is T.S. Eliot’s first annual Yeats Lecture at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 1940. Not wishing “to give the impression that I regard his earlier and his later work almost as if they had been written by two different men” (1963:56), Eliot confides that his own “enthusiasm had been won by the poetry of the older Yeats... from 1919 on” (1963:54).

this vein, in “The Last *Aisling* – *A Vision*”, Kiberd’s central argument is that “*A Vision*, for all its arcane lore, was intended by [Yeats] to provide a spiritual foundation for the new nation-state” (1996:316). While I concur with this central argument, Kiberd’s methodology is highly questionable, not least because, similarly to F.S.L. Lyons in *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland*, Kiberd briefly admits Arnold’s relevance to his thesis only for Arnold to disappear from view. Nevertheless, this is an improvement on Said’s seminal essay, in so far as taking stock of Arnold’s bearing on Yeats and the treatise is concerned. Although Said is acutely attuned in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) – a title reminiscent of Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* – to how the meaning of “culture” itself “almost imperceptibly” carries “a refining and elevating element” (1994:xiii) championed by Arnold and which has permeated literary studies, and confesses to his own struggle as an academic not to fall prey to what he considers an Arnoldian conception of culture “antiseptically quarantined from its worldly affiliations” (1994:xv), the highly influential Arnold is not mentioned at all in his essay on Yeats.

As we have seen, Kiberd’s claim that *A Vision* can be read as “a kind of Celtic constitution” for the fledgling Irish state is partly underpinned by his observation that Yeats had “endorsed the basic outlines” of Arnold’s Celticist analysis but “for the word ‘Celtic’ had repeatedly substituted the word ‘ancient... expanding the meanings of ‘Celtic’ to global dimensions” (1996:318). This is the first and last explicit mention of Arnold in Kiberd’s chapter on *A Vision*. Yet in registering Arnold’s widespread influence, in “Ireland – England’s Unconscious?”, Kiberd comments that it is “remarkable, in retrospect, how durable [Arnold’s Celticist] thinking proved, even among those Irish who fancied that they had exploded it” (1996:32). Kiberd’s later report, in relation to *A Vision*, that Yeats had been expanding the meanings of “Celtic” to global dimensions, would seem to imply that, rather than amplifying Arnold’s

thinking, Yeats thereby “exploded” it, or at least fancied that he had. In “Ireland – England’s Unconscious?”, Kiberd identifies a key problem posed by Arnold’s Celticist analysis for Irish writers in general in the colonial context:

Many embraced the more insulting clichés of Anglo-Saxon theory on condition that they could reinterpret each in a more positive light... it permitted Irish people to take many images which were rejected by English society, occupy them, reclaim them, and make them their own: but the negative aspect was painfully obvious, in that the process left the English with the power of description and the Irish succumbing to the pictures which they had constructed. The danger was that, under the guise of freedom, a racist slur might be sanitized and worn with pride by its very victims; and that the act of national revival might be taken away from a people even as they performed it.

(1996:32)

However, in “The Last *Aisling* – A *Vision*”, Kiberd does not interrogate this problem in regard to Yeats, even as he reports that Yeats had largely approved of Arnold’s portrait of the Celt and claims that *A Vision* projects a Celtic basis for the new Irish state. It could be said that in consigning Arnold to the background of his account of *A Vision*, Kiberd effectively confines Arnold to the earlier “nativist” phase of Yeats’s career outlined by Said, even as he situates *A Vision* within the “liberationist” phase. As we have seen, critics like Marjorie Howes and Gregory Castle have argued that Yeats’s recourse to primitivism did not, in fact, divest Yeats of Arnoldian Celticist logic, which can be seen to be mapped onto the Irish context in his dream of the noble and beggar-man (or, we might add, the hunters and fishers). Kiberd’s theory is further troubled by the fact that he does not square his own appellations of “Anglo” and “Celtic” for the primary and antithetical gyres respectively, in

“The Last *Aisling* – *A Vision*”, with his parallel assertion in a later chapter “The Winding Stair” that “the primary gyre in *A Vision* might loosely be termed Protestant... as against the antithetical or Catholic gyre” (1996:451). Kiberd adds, similarly, that “the underlying desire of the book... is to render those [Protestant and Catholic] labels meaningless by reaching that point at which each gyre is interpenetrated by its own opposite; and so to write a kind of constitution for the infant state” (1996:451).

Kiberd ultimately offers us, then, a palimpsest of primary and antithetical gyres: “Anglo” and “Celtic” respectively, as well as “Protestant” and “Catholic” respectively, with the System tilted in favour of the Celtic-Catholic gyre. How uneasily this sits with Yeats’s oeuvre can be readily gauged by Yeats’s dismissal in “Under Ben Bulbin” of the modern Catholic middle class with eugenicist contempt as “all out of shape”, which does not accord with Unity of Being, possessed by the antithetical Daimonic Man Yeats himself, at the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision*. Nevertheless, piecing together these arguments, it is clear that, in Kiberd’s view, Arnold’s Celticist thinking is challenged by Yeats through the interpenetration or fusion of the opposed terms. Kiberd’s theory of Protestant and Catholic gyres is an extension of his argument across several chapters that Yeats’s ideal of a unified Ireland was a deliberate subversion, learnt from his father, of the central proposition of Arnold’s Celticist analysis. In the playfully entitled chapter “Protholics and Cathestants”, Kiberd writes that JBY and George Bernard Shaw “felt that a fusion of both traditions would produce a new Ireland greater than the sum of its parts. If Matthew Arnold had hoped that Irish imagination could raise and ennoble English pragmatism and that both could couple in a complete British person, John Butler Yeats deftly repeated this manoeuvre, but in the opposite direction, recruiting the pragmatism of the English Protestant for an expanded and enhanced Irish personality” (1996:425).

Although this could be seen, as Castle sees it, as a residual reliance upon, rather than decisive or successfully subversive critique of, Arnoldian logic, Kiberd adds that “while Arnold had proposed his fusion of Celtic and Saxon elements in order to deny the separatist claims of the Irish, John Butler Yeats mischievously modified it, with the strategic purpose of *asserting* that very claim” (1996:425). In the earlier chapter “The National Longing for Form”, Kiberd quotes from the closing section IX of Yeats’s “Hodos Chameliontos” (1922) in the *Autobiographies* (1955) to illustrate this position in relation to Yeats himself:

The two halves of their nature are so completely joined that they seem to labour for their objects, and yet to desire whatever happens, being at the same time predestinate and free, creation’s very self. We gaze at such men in awe, because we gaze not at a work of art, but at the recreation of the man through the art, the birth of a new species of man.

(Kiberd 1996:124)

Kiberd argues that although “offered primarily as the fusion of a great man with his Image” in artistic creation “Yeats’s account of this moment has implications for Anglo-Irish relations and for the liberated person who may yet be their outcome” (1996:124). “The project of inventing a unitary Ireland,” he says, “is the attempt to achieve at a political level a reconciliation of opposed qualities which must first be fused in the self. In other words, personal liberation must precede national recovery” (1996:124). He then links this project to Arnold. Yeats’s “father’s idea,” he speculates, “of uniting Catholic imagination with Protestant efficiency must have seemed to Yeats a wily appropriation *for Ireland alone* of the Arnoldian theory of Irish creativity ‘completing’ English

pragmatism in a unified British personality” (1996:124). In this way, he asserts, “a potentially insulting cliché is retrieved by Yeats in a subtle and subversive fashion, to underwrite the very separatist claim which Arnold sought to deny” (1996:124).

However, the context of the snippet from “Hodos Chameliontos” quoted by Kiberd raises the spectre of Arnold at the very core of Yeats’s art itself, his ‘whole’ ideal of achieving a unified self in the writing of poetry, which extends to the “project of inventing a unitary Ireland”, as Kiberd describes it. Yeats is portraying here “[s]uch masters – Villon and Dante, let us say” (1999:217) – in the act of creative genius, which for Yeats involves the merging of the conscious with the unconscious mind, the achievement of unity with the Daimon through the Mask. Prior to this, in section VIII, Yeats suggests that an innate or unconscious, even supernatural intelligence is at work in great art: “When a man writes any work of genius, or invents some creative action, is it not because some knowledge or power has come into his mind from beyond his mind? It is called up by an image...” (1999:216).

What I wish to especially draw attention to is the phrase “buried self” which Yeats employs in reference to this innate or supernatural intelligence within the artist. Such a self is, for Yeats, crucial to the creation of works of genius. Yeats begins section IX: “I know now that revelation is from the self, but from that age-long memored self, that shapes the elaborate shell of the mollusc and the child in the womb, that teaches the birds to make their nest; and that genius is a crisis that joins that buried self for certain moments to our trivial daily mind. There are, indeed, personifying spirits that we had best call but Gates and Gate-keepers, because through their dramatic power they bring our souls to crisis, to Mask and Image, caring not a straw whether we be Juliet going to her wedding, or Cleopatra to her death; for in their eyes nothing has weight but passion”

(1999:216/217). The notion of a “buried self” arises again, this time in the plural, soon thereafter when Yeats elaborates on the nature of these spirits: “They have but one purpose, to bring their chosen man to the greatest obstacle he may confront without despair. They contrived Dante’s banishment, and snatched away his Beatrice, and thrust Villon into the arms of harlots, and sent him to gather cronies at the foot of the gallows, that Dante and Villon might through passion become conjoint to their buried selves, turn all to Mask and Image, and so be phantoms in their own eyes” (1999:217).

Yeats’s notion of a “buried self” or “buried selves” has analogues in theories on the unconscious mind and hidden selves propounded by, among others, Freud and Jung. Foster establishes that in its “original form” *Per Amica* “confronted the ideas of Freud and Jung more than he had done before (though their names were excised for the published versions)” (2003:76). A note of caution must be sounded, then, in regard to possible influences on Yeats in formulating his concept of the buried self. That Yeats had, according to A.E., “already developed a theory of the divided consciousness” (Ellmann 1960:77) by 1884 helps us to trace the long development of Yeats’s concept of a “buried self” in 1922 to the late Victorian period when he came of age. The idea of a hidden self, and therefore of double selves, is conspicuous in the literature of this period, perhaps most notably in such enduringly popular dark tales as Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). These works are duly referred to by Ellmann in his account of how “the notion of selfhood had changed drastically during the nineteenth century” (1960:76) and how Yeats “came to maturity in this atmosphere of doubling and splitting of the self” (1960:77).

Examining Yeats’s own “sense of a bifurcated self”(1960:73), Ellmann proceeds to explain that “many personal factors and many examples, and

beyond these the spirit of the times, made [Yeats] see his life as a quarrel between two parts of his being” (1960:77). It would be misguided, therefore, to credit any particular single influence on Yeats for his notion of a deeper or buried self. Leading us back in myriad ways to the ancient Greeks, such modern specialist fields as psychology, philosophy, and literature are inextricably bound up together. It is a short step from Freud, for instance, to one of Yeats’s foremost and most routinely recognized influences: Nietzsche. As Anthony Elliot writes in *Concepts of the Self* (2008):

“One’s own self is well hidden from one’s own self.” It was Friedrich Nietzsche, not Freud, who wrote this. Yet it is in Freud’s psychoanalysis that Nietzsche’s thesis, arguing that, unbeknown to ourselves, our lives are governed by desires and passions, is given its most concrete formulation.

(2008:56)

Elliot’s quotation is from Nietzsche’s “The Spirit of Gravity” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-85), where the full sentence continues: “... of all treasure pits, one’s own is the last to be dugged up” (Nietzsche 1985:211). In “The Twofold Self” in *Nietzsche’s Epic of the Soul: Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (2005), T.K. Seung refers to Zarathustra’s “struggle to bring his individual self into harmony with his cosmic self” (2005:202). Seung elaborates:

Even in his fight against the Dionysian monster in ‘On the Spirit of Gravity’, he stressed the importance of loving oneself and the difficulty of recognizing one’s hidden self...Of all treasures, he preaches, it is our own that we dig up last because it is so ordered by the spirit of gravity [or melancholy]...Now that his hitherto concealed physical self is revealed as his cosmic self, it can be

as magnificent as the entire universe.

(2005:202)

Similarly, in “A Defence of Poetry”, Shelley argues that poetry “creates for us a being within our being... and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being” (1973:760). However, while we could venture much further into the labyrinth of influence, I wish to guide us back to Arnold, who is a prime example as to why the notion of the harmonization of an individual self with a cosmic self would not have been new to Yeats in reading Nietzsche from 1902. Yeats would have long since encountered this notion in “Empedocles on Etna”, where Arnold projects, as we have seen, the ideal of achieving unity with what he refers to, strikingly, as our “true, deep-buried selves/ Being one with which we are one with the whole world” (1905:472). Similarly, in his poem “The Buried Life” (1852), Arnold speaks of a “genuine” or “hidden self” and of trying to achieve unity with and express that self amid (Empedoclean) strife. He equates this self with “our true, original course”. The poetical implications of this are clear: to act and speak in accordance with such a self is to be not merely eloquent but “true”:

... That [Fate] might keep from his capricious play
 His genuine self, and force him to obey
 Even in his own despite his being's law...
 But often, in the din of strife,
 There rises an unspeakable desire
 After the knowledge of our buried life;
 A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
 In tracking out our true, original course...
 And long we try in vain to speak and act
 Our hidden self, and what we say and do

Is eloquent, is well – but ‘tis not true!
 ... Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,
 From the soul’s subterranean depth upborne
 As from an infinitely distant land,
 Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
 A melancholy into all our day.

(1905:261/262)

Along with “Empedocles on Etna”, this is not too far removed from Nietzsche’s “The Spirit of Melancholy” – yet another instance in which long-term Arnoldian repercussions can be registered in Yeats’s attraction to Nietzsche, among others. Significantly, too, and giving Arnold a decided edge within the labyrinth of influence, the buried self might easily have been seen by Yeats as distinctly ‘Celtic’, against Arnold’s view that the Celt had “accomplished nothing”, for Arnold speaks with similar ‘airs’ in regard to the Celt from whom, he claims, “English poetry got... its turn for melancholy” (2008:57). As we will see, “sweetest melancholy” is part and parcel of the representation of the Daimonic Man at the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision*, in contrast to the debilitating morbidity of the Sensuous Man at Phase 13. At this stage, what I wish to underline is the upshot of all this for Kiberd’s theory. Such textual and conceptual correspondences between Yeats’s “buried selves” in “Hodos Chameliontos” and Arnold’s “deep-buried selves” in “Empedocles on Etna” or “hidden” selves in “The Buried Life” confirm that the subversive or anti-Arnoldian Yeatsian proposition of cultural fusion “for Ireland alone” which Kiberd seeks to illustrate by reference to “the two halves” joining together in “Hodos Chameliontos”, the daily trivial mind with the buried self, is a manoeuvre which may take us, therefore, from Arnold back to Arnold.

Arnold is deeply influential on Yeats's most profound thoughts on the achievement of artistic genius – above all, as laid out in *A Vision*. As we have seen, Empedocles provides some of the structuring principles for the treatise. Yeats's Romantic bias is effectively encoded in his Empedoclean conception of the gyres; and another structuring principle provided by Empedocles, though Yeats does not highlight this so explicitly as he does with the gyres, is the notion of the Daimon which, as we have also seen, has been defined historically as ancient Greek genius (shading into Latin "Genius" and our contemporary usage of the word "genius"). The locus of genius in Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna" is the buried self; and we should not be surprised, therefore, to find that the locus of genius in *A Vision* is the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17, where we find Dante who is described in "Hodos Chameliontos" as uniting with his buried self. In "Hodos Chameliontos" the buried self is equated with the unconscious mind; but nor should we be surprised to find Yeats, elsewhere in his oeuvre, referring to his own Daimon, explicitly, as his "buried self".

There is a strong connection, we must realize, between Yeats plumbing the depths of the unconscious mind of the medium Mrs Yeats and his ideal of literary genius. In section VI of "The Stirring of the Bones" (1922), Yeats equates what he calls the "buried self" with his own Daimon. He describes, though not naming her, a consultation with a medium who was in fact Olivia Shakespear: "A certain symbolic personality who called herself... Megarithma, said that I must 'live near water and avoid woods because they concentrate the solar ray'. I believed that this enigmatic sentence came from my own Daimon, my own buried self speaking through my friend's mind" (1999:279/280). Unsurprisingly, artistic genius was a principal preoccupation in the complex creative process that led to Yeats's compilation of the treatise, as the two volumes of George Harper's study of the Automatic Script show in abundance. Notably, as Harper highlights in his examination of the dialogue of 1 January

1918: “The term ‘Genius’ was ultimately rejected in favour of ‘Creative Mind’” (vol 1, 1987:98). Later, Harper draws attention to Yeats’s footnote explaining the reason for this, in section II, “The Four Faculties”, in “What the Caliph Partly Learned” in the original *A Vision*: “I have changed the ‘creative genius’ of the Documents into *Creative Mind* to avoid confusion between ‘genius’ and *Daimon*” (Yeats 2008:15). Yeats’s association of the Daimon with genius, and therefore the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 with the achievement of genius, is evident in this clarification; while his Creative Mind, as we have seen, is akin to unifying Coleridgean or Romantic imagination.

The parallel between the larger concept in Arnold’s “Empedocles on Etna” of becoming “one with the whole world” through uniting with the buried self, and *A Vision*, is clear if we consider the structure of the central phases of the Great Wheel in relation to Yeats’s *Per Amica*. I wish to highlight the broad structural ‘movement’ from the individual to the universal in *Per Amica*: from “Anima Hominis” to “Anima Mundi”, or from “soul of man” to what Henry More called, in a sentence quoted by Yeats in section VI, the “soul of the world” (1990:53). Yeats describes in the first part “Anima Hominis” how the individual can unite with the Daimon through meditation on a Mask. While becoming knit together with the Daimon is portrayed in “Anima Hominis” as occurring within the deep of the mind of the individual, the psychological or spiritual depth at which this encounter occurs is also shown, in the second part “Anima Mundi”, to be not merely on an individual but ultimately a collective or universal level. Yeats’s faith in becoming one with the “buried self”, i.e. the Daimon residing in the (collective) unconscious mind, parallels the faith expressed in Arnold’s “Empedocles on Etna”, that in “Being one with [our own only true, deep-buried selves] we are one with the whole world”. Ellmann perceptively discerns, by reference to “The Phases of the Moon” (1918), that the “fifteenth phase... is the link between the *Vision* and Yeats’s poetic method” (1960:228) delineated in

Per Amica. Ellmann explains that Phase 15 “is inhabited only by spirits; no human life is possible there. Though Yeats does not explicitly say so, it is clear that to this phase belong the symbols of poetry, caught up into reconciliation” (1960:228). In other words, Phase 15 represents the Anima Mundi.

This is the underlying soul of the world or collective unconscious which the poet becomes one with through meditation on a Mask, and resultant evocation of the Daimon. Accordingly, the Daimon is lurking in the vicinity of Phase 15. This is signalled by the limited number of successive, central phases clustered around Phase 15 where Unity of Being may be achieved. Yeats, thinly veiled by the omission of his name among the examples, naturally belongs to the phase most perfectly fitted for Daimonic possession. In *A Vision*, Yeats explains that the individual of Phase 17 “is called the *Daimonic* man because Unity of Being, and consequent expression of *Daimonic* thought, is now more easy than at any other phase” (1990:172). The Daimonic Man of Phase 17 is a poet who is able to express, we might say, his genius more readily than others. This parallels Arnold’s belief in “The Buried Life” that aligning with one’s hidden self enables “true” expression. Yeats defines the Daimon as the “ultimate self” (1990:132); and in the introduction to the revised *A Vision* he credits the “incredible experience” of his wife’s automatic writing for his poetry gaining “in self-possession and power” (1990:75) in *The Tower* (1928) and *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933). It could be said that the Daimonic Man is a poet who enjoys, in more ways than one, “self-possession”.

Quoting from Yeats’s summary of Phase 17, Ellmann reports that Unity of Being “is the result of a struggle, for the mind is beginning to burst into fragmentary images, and consequently ‘The being has for its supreme aim... to hide from itself and others this separation and disorder’, hence the pose and mask” (1960:240). Ellmann adds, again quoting from the summary, that “the

men of phase 17 are naturally ‘partisans, propagandists and gregarious, yet because of the Mask of simplification, which holds up before them the solitary life of hunters and of fishers and ‘the groves pale passion loves’, they hate parties, crowds, propaganda’’ (1960:240). Crucially, what Ellmann does not point out – and indeed, no Yeats biographer or critic has yet pointed out – is that both of these quotations from the summary of Phase 17 in *A Vision* correspond with an important passage in section IV of Yeats’s “The Celtic Element in Literature”, his ‘direct’ response to Arnold’s portrayal of the Celt. Therefore, Kiberd’s linkage of Arnold to the treatise need not have been so speculative – Arnold can be linked definitively through these textual correspondences to Yeats’s symbolical ideal man of genius at Phase 17.

I have previously quoted just a portion of this passage in section IV containing the “ancient hunters and fishers” reference, in relation to Yeats’s ideas of class and the ambiguity in his works on whether we are encountering the Anglo-Irish gentleman or the Irish peasant, the noble or the beggar-man. However, the fuller passage is especially illuminating in regard to *A Vision*:

Matthew Arnold asks how much of the Celt must one imagine in the ideal man of genius. I prefer to say, how much of the ancient hunters and fishers must one imagine in the ideal man of genius? Certainly a thirst for unbounded emotion and a wild melancholy are troublesome things in the world, and do not make its life more easy or orderly, but it may be the arts are founded on the life beyond the world, and that they must cry in the ears of our penury until the world has been consumed and become a vision.

(1972:184)

Yeats biographers and critics have not linked this passage to the title *A Vision*, and have not seen Arnold as central to Yeats's concerns in the treatise, but as we will see in more detail in this chapter, these textual correspondences on "hunters and fishers", "emotion", "melancholy", "orderly" and "a vision" confirm Arnold's central importance to Yeats and the projection of his ideal man of genius in *A Vision*. As Bloom says, the "personal as opposed to the structural center of *A Vision* is Phase 17 rather than 15, and Yeats's imagination asserts itself always when he is most personal" (1972:243). That imagination, however, is strikingly defined by Yeats, as we have seen, in classical-romantic terms, furnishing qualities which could be considered reminiscent of both Arnold's imaginative and emotional (but unmeasured) Celt, and his imaginative and emotional (but measured) ancient Greek, both antitheses of lumpen Saxonism or Philistinism. At Phase 17, the True Creative Mind is "Creative imagination through *antithetical* emotion" (2008:63). As I have indicated, Yeats clarifies in the description of Phase 17 that the antithetical "intellect (*Creative Mind*)" is "better described as imagination" (2008:64); and this imagination, exalted in its prime location at the ideal Phase 17, is Romantic in nature, as critics like Catherine Paul and Margaret Harper have noted. As we have seen, they explain Yeats's conception of the Creative Mind as "something that shapes, formulates, constitutes... equivalent to the imagination" (Yeats 2008:235) of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. Such an imagination is integral to the constitution of the Daimonic Man, who is distinguished by the harmonious condition of Unity of Being.

As I have previously signposted, we cannot, therefore, go along with Bloom's claim in *The Anatomy of Influence*, referring to Phase 17 in *A Vision*, that "[t]he place is the daimon's, and Yeats regards Dante, Shelley, Landor, and himself as instances of 'the Daimonic Man,' who at his best possesses a Paterian imagination – 'simplification through intensity'" (2011:181). It is rather the

case that, at his best, the Daimonic Man possesses a Romantic imagination (such as that described in the *Biographia*), and as we will see, finds self-expression in full measure through an Arnoldian Mask. Bloom effectively conjoins the Creative Mind or “Creative imagination through *antithetical* emotion” at Phase 17, and the Mask of Phase 17, which Yeats defines as “Simplification through intensity” (1990:171) or “a *Mask* of simplicity that is also intensity” (1990:172). Bloom is much more on the mark in *Yeats*, where he says that the Creative Mind of Phase 17 “explains the difference between [Yeats] and the artistic companions of his youth.... The true form of this intellectual aestheticism is ‘Creative imagination through antithetical emotion’” (1972:244). That true form is the Romantic imagination, which Bloom effectively argues for at this earlier stage of his career. The authentic Mask sought by the Daimonic Man, he says, “Yeats calls ‘Simplification through intensity’; and picking up on Yeats’s definition of the Body of Fate at Phase 17 as “Enforced Loss”, Bloom argues that “[i]n Wordsworthian and Coleridgean terms, which are immensely relevant here, the poet’s Imagination is Compensatory, a saving and simplifying gain rising out of experiential loss. But out of loss rises also the parody of simplification through intensity, which Yeats calls ‘Dispersal,’ the ultimate fate of the Romantic Imagination” (1972:243).

As we have seen, Yeats ultimately found the Paterian imagination and art of sense impressions of his peers of the tragic generation sorely wanting, and was helped along to his conclusion by Arnold’s projection in “Empedocles on Etna” of those who fail to unite with their buried selves and consequently fall into the “slough of sense” and go “astray forever”. As part of an overall ‘correction’ of Arnold in *A Vision* on the Celtic constitution of the ideal man of genius, Yeats is targeting Arnold on the point of the imagination of the Celt, or rather, the ancients, by restoring thereto a Romantic conception of the imagination as unifying and harmonizing. The Daimonic Man’s mode of “balance, measure”,

closely related to the shaping and constituting power of his Romantic imagination or Creative Mind, and resulting in a “law of harmony presiding over the whole” or Unity of Being, is the Mask. Put another way, the Mask is the means by which the poet poises his life at last, and unites with the buried self. We will consider the Mask more closely later in this chapter, for I wish first to highlight that the making of *A Vision* coincides with Yeats prominently asserting Irish “measure” in his work, lasting the rest of his life. We must ultimately see this development in the light of the positing of his ideal, measured Daimonic Man in *A Vision*, framed by a time of anarchy.

ii) POETICAL AND POLITICAL MEASURE AND ORDER: QUALITIES SHAPING YEATS’S ALLEGED FASCISM AND EUGENICS

Significantly, Yeats revises his early poetical manifesto as occultist and nationalist, “To Ireland in the Coming Times”, by repeatedly inserting the single word “measure” and its variants, for publication in 1925, the year the original *A Vision* was finalized, and dated, before publication in 1926. As we have seen, Yeats exhibits rather Arnoldian cultural diction in this poem in seeking to “sweeten Ireland’s wrong” (Allt, Alspach 1989:137) as a national poet, but the later emphatic additions of “measure” confirm that Yeats has cross-referenced and is also drawing upon Arnold’s Celticist vocabulary. That is, Yeats has subversively modified, and merged within himself, Arnold’s Hellene or ancient Greek genius (full of sweetness, and exhibiting exemplary measure) and Arnold’s Celt. This is hardly surprising, for as I have indicated, Yeats wishes in the poem to be “counted one/With... Ferguson” (Allt, Alspach 1989:138). In his Notes to *Early Poems and Stories* (1925), in which the revisions on “measure” first appear, Yeats explains that he has revised

“considerably” a number of poems, including “To Ireland in the Coming Times”, “till they are altogether new poems. Whatever changes I have made are but an attempt to better express what I thought and felt when I was a very young man” (Allt, Alspach 1989:842). Indeed, in his revisions to this poem, Yeats has reaffirmed his position on the measured Celtic genius, belonging in the high company of Arnold’s ideal of measured ancient Greek genius, in his first published reviews, on Ferguson, in 1886, when he was a very young man.

From lines 10 to 16, measure is added three times. In line 11, “The light fall of her flying feet” becomes “The measure of her flying feet”; in line 14, “To help her light foot here and there” becomes “To light a measure here and there”; and in line 16, “Upon her holy quietude” becomes “Upon a measured quietude”.

Lines 10 to 16, in revised form, therefore read:

When Time began to rant and rage
 The measure of her flying feet
 Made Ireland’s heart begin to beat;
 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.

(Allt, Alspach 1989:138)

Irish measure is reinforced in lines 25 to 28. In line 25, “In flood and fire and clay and wind” becomes “That hurry from unmeasured mind”; and in line 27, “Yet he who treads in austere ways” becomes “Yet he who treads in measured ways”. Lines 23 to 28, in revised form, therefore read:

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

(Allt, Alspach 1989:138/39)

We can see the expressly magical Celt tempered slightly in the change in line 23 from “The magical powers to and fro”. We can also see Yeats’s thinking on the measure of the ancients in the change to line 28, which was originally “surely meet their ancient gaze”. The last injection of measure occurs in line 38, where a possible allusion to Coleridge in “The mariners of night above” is supplanted by Yeats’s continuing personification of Time, in the new line “What measurer Time has lit above” (1989:139). These revisions reflect a significant shift from Yeats’s Romantic (in particular Blakean, as we will see) emphasis on Celtic excess, or lack of measure, in “The Celtic Element in Literature” in 1897, to an increasingly noticeable emphasis on measure post-1916, effectively bringing him full circle, back to his original affirmation of Celtic genius, in the high company of the measured ancient Greeks, in the appraisal of Ferguson.

We should mark well Yeats’s Arnoldian preoccupation with “measured ways” and Time as a true measure, and his Arnoldian determination to speak to future generations, in such texts as “To Ireland in the Coming Times”, “The Celtic Element in Literature”, and “Under Ben Bulbin”. In Chapter I of *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold inadvertently describes Oxford, which he says is full of Hellenistic sweetness and light, in a very ‘Celtic’ way by maintaining that despite political defeat after defeat at the hands of the Philistines of the modern world, Oxford has nevertheless “shown its power even in its defeat” and undermined the Philistines’ position in the long term through having “kept up

our own communications with the future” (2008:108). “It is in this manner that the sentiment of Oxford for beauty and sweetness conquers,” he enthuses, “and in this manner long may it continue to conquer!” (2008:109). Acutely aware of Arnold’s similar portrayal of the Celt as perpetually defeated but “indomitable”, Yeats subversively claims this Hellenistic strategy for Ireland in “The Celtic Element in Literature”.

Yeats effectively declares the arrival of a new influx of sweetness: the “more abundant fountain of Gaelic legends” (1972:186). Echoing the title of the poem, Yeats argues that “none can measure of how great importance it may be to coming times, for every new fountain of legends is a new intoxication for the imagination of the world... the Irish legends move among known woods and seas, and have so much of a new beauty that they may well give the opening century its most memorable symbols” (1972:187). Yeats’s “none can measure” mimics Arnold’s rhetorical question as to “who will estimate” how Dr Newman’s movement, with its keen desire for beauty, “contributed to swell the tide of secret dissatisfaction which has mined the ground under the self-confident [middle-class] liberalism of the last thirty years, and has prepared the way for its sudden collapse and supersession?” (2008:109). Yeats subversively plays off the cultural Arnold in addressing the Celticist Arnold, thereby proclaiming an Irish renaissance. Against Arnold’s claim that the Celt lacks “balance, measure” (2008:44), Yeats invokes what he would later call the “unmeasured mind” in the revised “To Ireland in the Coming Times” – which corresponds with the Anima Mundi or Phase 15 in *A Vision* – by repeatedly extolling the abundant and passionate imagination of the ancients who “had not our thoughts of weight and measure” (1972:178) and who therefore did not “weigh and measure” (1972:180).

The shift back to an emphasis on measure is already strongly evident in his attitude to the *Playboy* rioters in “The Fisherman”; and for Yeats measure becomes all the more imperative as Ireland descends into armed conflict and anarchy. In “Easter 1916”, we find Yeats questioning: “... what if excess of love/Bewildered them till they died?” (1971:204/205). A counterpoint to Irish excess is offered in “To Ireland in the Coming Times” in its revised form in 1925: Irish measure. From the latter poem we can draw a line to “The Statues” late in Yeats’s life, dated April 9, 1938 and included in *Last Poems (1936-1939)*. Brooding once again on the Easter Rising, Yeats’s portrayal of the Irish laying rightful claim to an “ancient” measure in modern times is yet another instance in which he addresses the defect of the Celt’s lack of measure proclaimed by Arnold. Yeats moves beyond Pythagorean or Greek measure at the start of the poem to contemplate in the concluding lines:

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

(Allt, Alspach 1989:611)

For Yeats, the “proper” vantage point and focus of the Irish is on ancient measure, on form, on tracing a “plummet-measured face” or Mask, by which the Irish may become unified and express their national genius. As we have seen, in the subsequent “Under Ben Bulbin” Yeats echoes the original title of “To Ireland in the Coming Times” in the instruction to Irish poets, in stanza V,

to remember the past “That we in coming days may be/Still the indomitable Irishry” (Allt, Alspach 1989:640). As I have pointed out, the single word “indomitable” echoes Yeats’s usage of this term in regard to the Celt in the appraisal of Ferguson, and in turn, positively echoes Arnold’s description of the Celt as “indomitable” in passionately reacting against fact. Earlier in “Under Ben Bulbin”, in stanza II, as I have also indicated, Yeats asserts that “ancient Ireland knew it all” (1989:637); and in stanza IV, that “Measurement began our might” (1989:638).

Over the course of his career, Yeats’s representations of poetical and political struggle revolve in important ways around the twin themes of excess and measure, which he explored in the works of a range of writers – not solely Arnold, it must be emphasized. For instance, in explaining his approach to the study of Yeats and Nietzsche, Otto Bohlmann refers to “Nietzsche and Yeats’s enthronement of ‘excess’” but adds that “‘measure’ does remain an important attribute of the *Übermensch*” (1982:xiii). It remains a crucial attribute, too, of Yeats’s Daimonic Man of Phase 17, in the form of the Mask – but in recognising this, I wish to stress, we must also recognise that, as Ellmann says, “Yeats never accepted the superman” (1964:95) or overman of Nietzsche. I will return to Nietzsche later in this chapter, and wish at this stage merely to reiterate that Yeats’s early penchant for Arnold’s works helps to explain his later enthusiasm for Nietzsche, from 1902, as well as Blake in the interim, from 1889. Unsurprisingly, the opposition of “excess” and “measure” that we find in Arnold, and Nietzsche, is to be found in Blake, too. In “Blake’s Illustrations to Dante” (1897), Yeats writes:

Against another desire of his time, derivative also from what he has called ‘corporeal reason,’ the desire for ‘a tepid moderation,’ for a lifeless ‘sanity in both art and life,’ he had protested years

before with paradoxical violence. ‘The roadway of excess leads to the palace of wisdom,’ and we must only ‘bring out weight and measure in a time of dearth’... He taught it to his disciples, and one finds it in its purely artistic shape in a diary written by Samuel Palmer, in 1824: ‘Excess is the essential vivifying spirit, vital spark, embalming spice of the finest art... We must not begin with medium, but think always on excess and only use medium to make excess more abundantly excessive.’

(1972:123)

As we have seen, Arnold portrayed the Celt as lacking measure and therefore “sanity”, and as perpetually excessive, “straining after mere emotion”. Palmer’s Blakean view of excess, as we will see, is invoked against Arnold by Yeats in “The Celtic Element in Literature” in defence of the excess of the Celt, but Yeats is shrewdly using Arnold against Arnold, as it were. As we have seen, in the appraisal of Ferguson Yeats’s hope that the study of Irish legends will deliver Irish readers from “that leprosy of the modern – tepid emotions and many aims” echoes Arnold’s “The Scholar-Gipsy”. Yeats is in fact in agreement with Arnold in preferring ancient passion over the “tepid emotions” of modern life. By invoking Palmer’s Blakean view of excess, Yeats is targeting “tepid moderation” in so far as it leads to a passionless and “lifeless ‘sanity in both art and life’”; and this is a strategic exploitation of Arnold’s portrayal of “Moderate tasks and moderate leisure/Quiet living, strict-kept measure” which Arnold contrasts to one’s “deepest, best existence” (1905:49) in his poem “The Second Best” (1852), as well as of Arnold’s key literary term “moderation” in *On Translating Homer* where it effectively means ancient Greek simplicity or measure. This latter meaning is amenable, in fact, to the Celticist Yeats. As we have also seen, Yeats had pursued what he called a “studied moderation of style” – which also helps us, in part, to appreciate that Yeats is really with rather

than against Arnold on the need for moderation, specifically of style, by studying the example of the masterful ancients.

In the summary of the dissipated Rhymers' Phase 13 in *A Vision*, Yeats writes that "the subjective intellect knows nothing of moderation" (1990:165).

Arnoldian morbidity at this phase is not unrelated to style, specifically a lack of the Arnoldian ideal of style, synonymous with measure. In closing Lecture III of *On Translating Homer*, Arnold argues that "poems like the *Iliad*" are in "one manner" and advises that a gifted poetical translator "must cultivate in himself a Greek virtue by no means common among the moderns in general, and the English in particular – *moderation*" (1914:312). What Arnold means by "moderation" is clear early in Lecture 1: an attunement to "the simplicity of Homer" (1914:248); Homer "should be approached by a translator in the simplest frame of mind possible" (1914:249); the "translator of Homer should penetrate himself with a sense... of the simplicity with which Homer's thought is evolved and expressed" (1914:258). A failing of translators of Homer, he indicates at the end of Lecture I, is their "wanting simplicity of style" (1914:263). Arnold has in mind, therefore, a law of strong measure, the best possible translation stylistically, rather than tepid "moderation". Yeats in fact endorses moderation of style, or measure, of this kind, exemplified by the ancient Greek genius of Homer. As we have seen, in 1886 Yeats situates Ferguson firmly in the company of Homer and Aeschylus. Yeats even writes that Ferguson's "'The Twins of Macha' and 'The Naming of Cuchullin' give us the keynote of his work – that simplicity, which is force" (Yeats 2004:12). Briefly examining the latter poem, Yeats comments: "All this is told with such simplicity... that we seem to be no longer in this modern decade..." (2004:13). Many years later, in the Dedication to *A Vision*, Yeats says he has now found "the simplicity I have sought in vain" (2008:lv).

This is one route by which Arnold informs the Mask-as-style of “simplicity that is also intensity” of the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision*, which I will revisit later in this chapter. However, the Blakean endorsement of excess over “tepid moderation”, and Arnold’s terminological muddle, as it were, on moderation and measure across works such as “The Second Best” and *On Translating Homer*, provides critical space for Yeats to take issue with Arnold on excess and passion by invoking Palmer, in “The Celtic Element in Literature”:

Certainly, as Samuel Palmer wrote, excess is the vivifying spirit of the finest art, and we must always seek to make excess more abundantly excessive. Matthew Arnold has said that if he were asked ‘where English got its turn for melancholy and its turn for natural magic,’ he ‘would answer with little doubt that it got much of its melancholy from a Celtic source, with no doubt at all that from a Celtic source it got nearly all its natural magic.’ I will put this differently and say that literature dwindles to a mere chronicle of circumstance, or passionless fantasies, and passionless meditations, unless it is constantly flooded with the passions and beliefs of ancient times, and that of all the fountains of the passions and beliefs of ancient times in Europe... the Celtic alone has been for centuries close to the main river of European literature.

(1972:184/185)

However, post-1916 we can see Arnoldian measure, rather than Blakean vivifying excess, emphatically coming into its own again in Yeats, not least in *A Vision*, which corresponds with the revisions on “measure” in “To Ireland in the Coming Times”. Yet paradoxically, in thus shifting his position, the Arnoldian

Yeats is still perfectly in harmony with the Blakean Yeats – an indication of the vital importance of the Victorian Arnold, too, to the Romanticism of Yeats. As we have just seen, although Blake champions excess, he attaches a vital clause, from Yeats’s perspective, advising that “we must only ‘bring out weight and measure in a time of dearth’”. For the Daimon “nothing has weight but passion”, Yeats says in “Hodos Chameliontos”; and in *Culture and Anarchy*, it is the passion of Hellenistic genius which lends cultural weight and measure to the state. Clearly, Yeats felt, post-1916, and increasingly so with the grim and bloody descent into full-scale civil war, that such a time had definitely arrived for Ireland. In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold speaks in precisely such terms of weight and measure, in a time of anarchy, which he relates to the founding of the state. Arnold asserts that “what the man is, depends upon his having more or less reached the measure of a perfect and total man” (2008:90); and it is just such a cultured man whom he envisions could be embodied in the state. With characteristic anti-Philistinism he proceeds to argue, in Chapter I, that “above all in our own country has culture a weighty part to perform, because here that mechanical character... is shown in the most eminent degree” (2008:101). Projecting his ideal society, Arnold says that the “flowering times for literature and art and all the creative power of genius” occur “when there is a national glow of life and thought, when the whole of society is in the fullest measure permeated by thought, sensible to beauty, intelligent and alive” (2008:112/113).

In this vein, he explains in Chapter III that “the idea of self-transformation, of growing towards some measure of sweetness and light not yet reached, is evidently at clean variance with the perfect self-satisfaction current in my class, the middle-class” (2008:130). Ultimately, for Arnold, “the question is, the action of the State being the action of the collective nation, and the action of the collective nation carrying naturally great publicity, weight, and force of example with it, whether we should not try to put into the action of the State as

much as possible of... our best self, which may, in this manner, come back to us with new force and authority, may have visibility, form, and influence... ?” (2008:143). As we might expect, such references to weight and measure in relation to society and the state are indicative of the Burkean Arnold. Though Arnold, and not Burke, is explicitly incorporated into the Great Wheel, we might also factor in Yeats’s own reading of Burke from 1918, which would appear, along with Blake, to have also partly informed Yeats’s valuation of the subversive Arnoldian projection in *A Vision* of his ideal man of genius: a man of measure, with a law of harmony presiding over the whole, in a time of anarchy, who is best embodied in the revolutionary Irish state.

In the *Appeal* Burke describes a man of “measure” best suited for public leadership. A man, he says, like Montesquieu “who could spend twenty years in one pursuit” (Burke 1962:136) – which is similar to Yeats’s Scholar-Gipsy-like description of Ferguson’s Celtic genius, in terms of passionate devotion to a single aim (rather than tepid emotions and many aims). Burke also points to the likewise indefatigable “universal patriarch in Milton”, “a man capable of... weighing, measuring, collating”, “a man, tinctured with no national prejudice, with no domestic affection, to admire, and to hold out to the admiration of mankind, the constitution of England!” (1962:136). Burke questions the choice, falling far short of the ideal leadership capabilities of such a man, of lesser “men incapable of being taught, whose only claim to know is, that they have never doubted; from whom we can learn nothing but their own indocility” (1962:136). This projection of two types of man can be readily related to Arnold’s contrast between a Hellenised (i.e. measured) best self and Philistine ordinary self, echoed in Yeats’s opposition of the antithetical or Daimonic Man, whose Mask is his mode of measure, and primary man in *A Vision*.

As I have argued, we can trace a line of filiation from Yeats to Burke through Arnold, in the projections of their respective natural or truly aristocratic individuals best suited to constitute the state. As I have also indicated, it is because Kiberd does not take stock of this line of filiation that we must question his linkage of Burke to the placement of Whitman at Phase 6 in *A Vision*, even as he overlooks that of Arnold at Phase 18 in relation to Yeats at Phase 17. Kiberd's attention to Whitman serves partly to reinforce his argument that *A Vision* is not an "*encyclopedia fascista*, as certain radical poets of the 1930s would claim" (1996:320). Covering Yeats's alignment with his Anglo-Irish precursors in the years following the publication of the original *A Vision*, Kiberd draws a line from Burke to Whitman, presenting them as examples to Yeats in seeking to negotiate a balance between self and society, or individual and state. Kiberd points to Burke's "telling example, for he confronted Yeats with two irreconcilable theories – the absolute efficiency of the state versus the absolute freedom of the individual" (1996:321). "The first, if taken to extreme, led to tyranny; and the second, likewise, to anarchy," Kiberd says. "Burke, therefore, refused to see politics solely in terms either of the state or the individual, and he attempted to reconcile the conflict by inventing the modern idea of the *nation*" (1996:321).

Kiberd observes that "Yeats's essays invoke this tradition, insisting that the Irish nation must steer a middle course between drab statism and piratical individualism, aligning itself with neither" (1996:321/322). Kiberd remarks: "Such strictures would hardly feature in the encyclopaedia of a fascist" (1996:322). Kiberd proceeds to assert that "Yeats's rather Augustan desire to balance the claims of individual and state... led him to embrace [the democratic] Walt Whitman, the great reconciler of self and mass. Accordingly, he placed this poetic founder in Phase 6 of *A Vision*" (1996:324). However, Kiberd does not mention that the Will of Phase 6 is rather disparagingly labelled

“Artificial Individuality” (1990:153). Nor does he question whether Yeats was likely to wholeheartedly embrace a poet characterised thus: “... all his thought and impulse a product of democratic bonhomie, of schools, of colleges, of public discussion” (1990:154). Yeats’s search for political authority did not ultimately take him in the direction of Whitman and democracy. We need only turn to Yeats’s “Blood and the Moon”, written in August 1927, to appreciate that Yeats’s anti-democratic attitude is behind his approval of Burke’s organic conception of the state as an oak tree:

And haughtier-headed Burke that proved the State
a tree,
That this unconquerable labyrinth of the birds, century
after century,
Cast but dead leaves to mathematical equality...

(Allt, Alspach 1989:481)

As Donald Torchiana says, “the attack on what Yeats called ‘mathematical democracy’ seemed Burke’s distinguishing Anglo-Irish trait. Burke’s onslaught against the French dogma centred on the rule of the majority” (1992:203). However, Yeats’s anti-democratic outlook had long since been shaped, in part, by the Burkean Arnold. As James Simpson says: “Civilization was threatened, Arnold thought, not simply by ‘monster’ meetings in public parks – to him an emblem of the coming chaos – but also, and more insidiously, by democracy itself” (1979:116). Arnold’s aversion to the rule of the majority is strongly in evidence across his oeuvre, not least in *Culture and Anarchy* where, in Chapter I, he remarks that democracy “has plenty of well-intentioned friends against whom culture may with advantage continue to uphold steadily its ideal of human perfection” (2008:109/110). Arnold warns against democracy training “Philistines to take the place of the Philistines... nothing excellent can then

come from them” (2008:110). He argues that “the idea which culture sets before us of perfection... is an idea which the new democracy needs far more than the idea of the blessedness of the franchise” (2008:110).

It is the anti-Philistine Yeats’s preoccupation with cultural excellence, too, that underpins his rejection of “mathematical equality” in “Blood and the Moon”. As Brenda Maddox says: “He and George became personal friends of the [fledgling Irish] government’s strongman, [Kevin] O’Higgins” (2000:219). However, “Blood and the Moon” was written, as Torchiana says, “in revulsion at the assassination [of O’Higgins]” (1992:179); and “especially after 1927” Yeats denounced what he saw as the Republican appeal “to mass instinct and democratic representation... for delivering Ireland to ‘the incompetent’” (1992:205), as Yeats would put it in *On the Boiler*. Although “O’Higgins had seemed to Yeats the next best thing to Burke reborn” (1992:180), according to Torchiana, this does not solely account for the fact that, as Maddox reports, Yeats “did not protest at the government’s harsh regime, and did not wish to” (2000:219). We might recall at this point Arnold’s claim that the “skilful and resolute appliance of means to ends which is needed... to form powerful states, is just what the Celt has least turn for” (2008:45). We must also take stock of the Arnoldian connection to the measured Daimonic Man Yeats, ratified in *A Vision* – which has considerable implications for the critical field. Despite Kiberd’s reference only to “radical poets of the 1930s” viewing *A Vision* as a fascist text, one of the most prominent and vigorous debates about Yeats involving many critics has centred on his alleged fascist leanings. As we will see in more detail later in this chapter, an ‘Orwellian’ cloud of controversy in this regard has swirled with longstanding specificity around *A Vision*.

However, while Yeats’s friendship with O’Higgins has featured strongly in this debate, it has never done so in relation to the Daimonic Man of *A Vision*. In

“Passion and Cunning: An Essay on the Politics of W.B. Yeats” (1965), which Grattan Freyer calls the “most celebrated critique in this field” (1981:125), Conor Cruise O’Brien argues that “first O’Higgins, and then O’Duffy and the Blueshirt movement, aimed at full fascist-style dictatorship” (Freyer 1981:127). O’Brien concludes that Yeats’s politics “in his maturity and old age” were “generally pro-Fascist in tendency and Fascist in practice on the single occasion when opportunity arose” (1988:50). However, not only in O’Brien’s essay but on both sides of the fascism debate in general, the Burkean Arnold’s part in shaping Yeats’s later politics has not been considered, and merits close attention. Explaining Yeats’s support of O’Higgins, Maddox says that Yeats “valued order above all; he accepted the possibility that at any time the republicans might pick up their arms again and declare a republic” (2000:219). Though Maddox claims a little too flippantly that Yeats’s “Fascist flirtation [with the Blueshirts in 1933] was a summer romance” (2000:263), we can see Yeats’s prizing of (ancient Greek) order in what Foster describes as the later “rationalization” when the “Three Marching Songs” were published in 1934, which begins: “In politics I have but one passion and one thought, rancour against all who, except under the most dire necessity, disturb public order, a conviction that public order cannot long persist without the rule of educated and able men. That order was everywhere their work, is still as much a part of their tradition as the *Iliad* or the Republic of Plato; their rule once gone, it lies an empty shell for the passing fool to kick in pieces” (Foster 2003:478).

It would be frivolous to suggest that Arnold was an example to Yeats of the ideal ‘fascist’ attitude and approach to dealing with civil unrest and political opposition, by citing Arnold’s endorsement in Chapter VI of *Culture and Anarchy*, with the Hyde Park rioters in mind, of his father Thomas Arnold’s firm position: “As for rioting, the old Roman way of dealing with that is always the right one; flog the rank and file and fling the ringleaders from the Tarpeian

Rock!” (2008:187). Amusingly, James Simpson quips that there is “not much sweetness, and even less light” (1979:113) in this attitude. Nevertheless, it is true that Arnold supplied Yeats with ample material to sanction his own form of anti-democratic authoritarianism, the bedrock of which was his reverence for order, unity, and harmony, enshrined, as we will see, in the projection of the measured Daimonic Man of *A Vision*: the ideal self to be embodied in the Irish state. Towards the end of “Yeats and Decolonization”, Said states that “Yeats’s full system of cycles, pernes, and gyres seems important only as it symbolizes his efforts to lay hold of a distant and yet orderly reality as a refuge from the turbulence of his immediate experience” (1994:287). However, the importance of *A Vision* rests in part on Yeats’s Arnoldian preoccupation with order and unity, in the immediate and turbulent – rather than distant – context of the Irish civil war and establishment of the new Irish state.

That Yeats valued order above all is consistent with Arnold’s position in *Culture and Anarchy* that unrest “ought to be unflinchingly forbidden and repressed” (2008:187). The Burkean Arnold explains:

Because a State in which law is authoritative and sovereign, a firm and settled course of public order, is requisite if man is to bring to maturity anything precious and lasting now, or to found anything precious and lasting for the future... for us, – who believe... in the duty and possibility of extricating and elevating our best self, in the progress of humanity towards perfection, – for us the framework of society, that theatre on which this august drama has to unroll itself, is sacred; and whoever administers it, and however we may seek to remove them from the tenure of administration, yet, while they administer, we steadily and with undivided heart support them in repressing anarchy

and disorder; because without order there can be no society,
and without society there can be no human perfection.

(2008:187)

In *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (1992), John Carey does not link Arnold to Yeats's attitude to the multitude but he reports that "W.B. Yeats recommended Nietzsche as 'a counteractive to the spread of democratic vulgarity'" (1992:4). Here again Arnold prefigures Nietzsche for Yeats, in envisaging a noble state dead-set against "democratic vulgarity". In Chapter VI, the Burkean Arnold describes finding "the helps of perfection" and coming "gradually to fill the framework of the State with them, to fashion its internal composition and all its laws and institutions comfortably to them, and to make the State more and more the expression... of our best self, which is not manifold, and vulgar, and unstable, and contentious, and ever-varying, but one, and noble, and secure, and peaceful, and the same for all mankind" (2008:188). He adds that "with what aversion shall we not then regard anarchy, with what firmness shall we not check it, when there is so much that is so precious which it will endanger! So that, for the sake of the present, but far more for the sake of the future, the lovers of culture are unswervingly and with good conscience the opposers of anarchy" (Arnold 2008:188). Just such a vision for Ireland is projected in the figure of the fully and perfectly formed Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision*, whose Unity of Being corresponds with Yeats's projection of Byzantium as "the vision of a whole people" (2008:158/159) in "Dove or Swan", which is reminiscent of Arnold's vision of "the whole of society... in the fullest measure... sensible to beauty, intelligent and alive" (2008:112/113).

It must be acknowledged, however, that within the labyrinth of influence many other exemplars could also be cited as informing Yeats's insistence on order as

the basis of culture. In “Yeats and Romanticism” (2006), for instance, George Bornstein draws attention to Seamus Heaney’s 1995 Nobel Prize lecture “Crediting Poetry”, which “in important ways rewrites Shelley’s ‘A Defence of Poetry’ for a modern artist and modern times” (2006:32). As he explains, Heaney “even uses one of Shelley’s most famous images for poetry when he seeks to credit poetry ‘... for making possible a fluid and restorative relationship between the mind’s centre and its circumference,’ a formulation that echoes Shelley’s famous definition of poetry as ‘at once the centre and circumference of knowledge’” (2006:32). Heaney relates this poetical mind-set to politics, effectively drawing a line from Shelley to Yeats. As Bornstein says, Heaney “invokes Yeats... ‘Nobody understood better than he the connection between the construction or destruction of a political order and the founding or foundering of cultural life[,]’ writes Heaney” (2006:32). In this vein, dovetailing with Arnoldian measure and order, we might note Shelley’s admiration, in “A Defence of Poetry”, for writers who “measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit”; as well as his association of poetry with order. “The frequent recurrence of the poetical power,” Shelley says, “may produce in the mind an habit of order and harmony” (1973:762). Shelley effectively conflates the poetical and political in his assertion that “poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order, are not only the authors of language and of music... they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society” (1973:747/8), which gives rise to his famous declaration: “Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world” (1973:762).

Moreover, it is a short step in regard to measure and order from Shelley to Dante, both of whom are examples of the Daimonic Man of Phase 17 in *A Vision*. Arnold contributes powerfully to Yeats’s esteem for Dante, as we will see, but among many others within the labyrinth of influence, so too does

Shelley. As Michael O'Neill points out in his source-book on Yeats's poems, the title "Ego Dominus Tuus" refers "to a remark made by Love to Dante in the latter's *Vita Nuova* and means, 'I, thy lord'"; with the lord, for the character *Ille*, being "'the mysterious one' of the last lines" (2004:129). This is the Daimon of *Per Amica*; and as O'Neill later explains, *Ille*'s question whether "that spectral image" is the "man that Lapo and Guido knew?" (Yeats 1990:34) refers to Dante: the Latin genius, we might say. "Yeats would have known," O'Neill says, "Shelley's 'Sonnet, From the Italian of Dante Alighieri to Guido Cavalcanti', which begins, 'Guido, I would that Lappo, thou and I'" (2004:130). It might be added that Shelley speaks highly of Dante in "A Defence of Poetry", arguing, for instance, that "[t]he poetry of Dante may be considered as the bridge thrown over the stream of time, which unites the modern and ancient world" (1973:753). While we can tell that Yeats also knew Arnold's essay "Dante and Beatrice" (1863) well, given that, in section IV of "Anima Hominis", he paraphrases Arnold's reference to how "Dante's conduct... was at times exceedingly irregular" (Arnold 1914:451), I wish to underline, again, that we can never forget that Yeats was engaged in a great conversation, as it were, with an immense and diverse literary heritage.

O'Neill argues that at the heart of "Ego Dominus Tuus" is "the diagnosis by *Ille* of the nature of 'art': said to be 'a vision of reality', opposed alike to rhetoric and sentimentality" (2004:129). "'Vision' reminds us," he says, "that the artist must engage in shaping a way of seeing the real" (2004:129) – a statement which might serve to suggest the close proximity, rather than great gulf, between Yeats's Romantic position on artistic vision and Arnold's formulation of seeing things as they are. Arnold upholds in his essay on Dante the "desire [of art] for the freest handling of its object" (1914:447). "Art requires a basis of fact," Arnold says, "but it also desires to treat this basis of fact with the utmost freedom" (1914:447). O'Neill's statement might also serve to point us towards

Yeats's eugenicist concern with shape. Yeats's insistence on order is relevant not just to his alleged fascism, but to his eugenics, with shape, measure, and order part and parcel of his ideal condition of Unity of Being enshrined in *A Vision* and described by reference to Dante as "a perfectly proportioned human body".

Catherine Paul and Margaret Harper say that "WBY's exact reference to Dante [in *Il Convito*] has not been identified" but they highlight "two illuminating passages" (Yeats 2008:237). The first reads: "Amongst the effects of divine wisdom man is the most marvellous, seeing how... subtly harmonized his body must be harmonized for such a form... Wherefore, because of the complex harmony amongst so many organs which is required to make them perfectly answer to each other, few of all the great number of men are perfect"

(2008:237). The second passage reads: "And when [the body] is well ordained and disposed, then it is beauteous as a whole and in its parts; for the due order of our members conveys the pleasure of a certain wondrous harmony... And so, to say that the noble nature beautifies its body, and makes it comely and alert, is to say not less than that it adjusts it to the perfection of order" (2008:237).

Therefore, I wish again to emphasize that Arnold is far from the only source informing Yeats's preoccupation with such qualities as measure, wholeness, shape, order, unity, harmony, and perfection (and many associated qualities such as beauty and nobility) in both poetry and politics.

In 'correcting' Arnold, Yeats could subversively draw upon Arnold himself, as well as many others emphasizing such qualities in their works, including in due course Burke from whom we may trace a rich and complex network of influence including such prominent critical 'sages' as Coleridge and Arnold whose works parallel what Mark Parker has described in *Literary Magazines and British Romanticism* (2001), in relation to Coleridge, as Burke's "basic

belief in the unity of thought and feeling” (2004:33); and in relation to John Scott, as Burke’s “connection of the psychology of the individual to the whole of society” (2004:35). Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of the early impact and lasting bearing of, specifically, Arnold on Yeats. All of these concepts feature strongly across Arnold’s oeuvre, and exercised a powerful influence on Yeats’s aesthetic sensibility and works. Though critical of the Romantic Shelley, Arnold consistently reserves, across his oeuvre, the highest praise and admiration for Dante; and Arnold’s views on both writers, as I will show, partly inform their representation at Phase 17 in *A Vision*, along with Landor. However, in the projection of the ideal man of genius of Phase 17, alongside Arnold at Phase 18, Yeats is careful to ensure, as we might expect, that Arnold’s part in shaping his own poetical and political ideal of Irish self-rule and unity, of Irish culture flourishing upon the foundation of order, is accordingly subordinated to the whole.

iii) THE DAIMONIC MAN: YEATS, DANTE, SHELLEY, AND LANDOR, PLUS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CRITICAL FIELD

As the portion of the description of Phase 17 in *A Vision* quoted by Ellmann confirms, Yeats’s conception of the Mask has a ‘Celtic’ dimension. It is a “Mask of simplification, which holds up before” the Daimonic Man “the solitary life of hunters and of fishers and ‘the groves pale passion loves’” (Yeats 1990:173). This Romantic imagery chimes with Yeats’s ambiguous projections of aristocratic hunters and fishers across his oeuvre, in the Irish context, which some critics have associated with the Irish peasant/Celtic mythology and others with the Anglo-Irish gentleman. This is the dream of the noble and the beggarman, deeply informed by his attitude to Celtic primitivism and hopes for Unity

of Being in Ireland. Both the naturally noble Irish peasant and Anglo-Irish aristocrat – as well as the poet and noble individual Yeats himself, who dreams of their unity – harmonize at the antithetical Phase 17. During the making of *A Vision*, as George Harper reports, the issue arose, in the dialogue of 9 April 1918, of “the relationship of the Primary to a democratic society with emphasis on the mass and the Antithetical to an aristocratic society with emphasis on the individual” (vol 2, 1987:4). These respective associations attached to the primary and antithetical gyres respectively, so that we can see Yeats’s Arnoldian anti-Philistinism and preference for a truly aristocratic rather than democratic social order take shape and become enshrined in *A Vision*, in accordance with his ideal of Unity of Being, likened to a perfectly proportioned human body.

Moreover, focused on the Romanticism of Yeats, Bloom has argued that Yeats’s “true Mask, like Shelley’s, is the Image of solitary wisdom in a natural context, either the wandering lover who is the Poet of *Alastor*, or the sage Ahasuerus of *Hellas*. This image is the simplification through intensity of a manifold of images, of everything in pastoral romance that is a vision of Innocence” (1972:244). In this vein it could be said, too, that Yeats’s Romantic image of the solitary in nature is not unlike Arnold’s magical Scholar-Gipsy who “ran gaily... Before this strange disease of modern life... was rife” (1905:279), whom Arnold exhorts to “keep thy solitude” and envisions “[w]ith a free, onward impulse brushing through,/By night, the silver’d branches of the glade” (1905:280). Arnold, too, exercises an important bearing on the Romantic aspect of Yeats’s projection of the Mask of Phase 17, that of his ideal man of genius, namely the Scholar-Gipsy Yeats himself moonlighting, so to speak, as the Daimonic Man, near Phase 15 (Full Moon). As early as the appraisal of Ferguson, Yeats had cross-referenced Arnold’s magical Scholar-Gipsy and Celt

as ancient and noble figures immune to modern life with “its sick hurry, its divided aims” (1905:279).

The complexity of such associations is exacerbated in that the primitivism of Yeats means that we are also faced with his shape-shifting ambiguity on whether we are encountering not just a Celtic, or Romantic, but also a Hellenistic Mask at Phase 17. Yeats elaborately describes in *Per Amica*, having alluded to the Latin genius Dante as Daimon in “Ego Dominus Tuus”, an “ancient Mask” and consequent Daimonic possession by a solitary in the sacred grove of Dodona, i.e. in an ancient Greek context. Perhaps alluding to Hermes Trismegistus, he even hints that there may be a touch of the ancient Egyptian about the Mask. In section VII of “Anima Hominis”, Yeats writes of the hero’s discovery “upon some oak of Dodona an ancient mask” and “when at last he looked out of its eyes he knew another’s breath came and went within his breath upon the carven lips, and that his eyes were upon the instant fixed upon a visionary world: how else could the god have come to us in the forest?” (1990:42). The gold or solar symbolism applied to the Mask in *Per Amica* is indicative of the requisite objectivity it provides for active self-expression rather than passive, morbid, and disabling subjectivity. As Yeats tells us in section IX of “Anima Hominis”: “The poet finds and makes his mask in disappointment, the hero in defeat” (1990:44).

Perhaps surprisingly in relation to Arnold, Yeats’s extraordinarily associative thinking on the achievement of genius, inseparable from his primitivism, is illuminated to some extent by J.G. Frazer’s *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion* (1890), changed to *A Study in Magic and Religion* in its second edition in 1900. This is a book which Foster has cited as among the influences on Yeats’s later Byzantium poems. In Chapter XV, “The Worship of the Oak”, Frazer explains that the “worship of the oak tree or of the oak god

appears to have been shared by all the branches of the Aryan stock in Europe. Both Greeks and Italians associated the tree with their highest god, Zeus or Jupiter” (1967:209). He adds: “Perhaps the oldest and certainly one of the most famous sanctuaries in Greece was that of Dodona, where Zeus was revered in the oracular god” (1967:209). This is the setting for possession by the Daimon or ancient Greek genius, through the Mask, in *Per Amica*. Yet Yeats might easily have been imagining Celtic genius among such “ancients”, much as Ireland, as Ellmann has argued, was never far from Yeats’s imagination in his projections of Byzantium. Later, having referred to the Irish kings as the “kinsmen” (1967:210) of the Greek kings, Frazer turns the spotlight on the Celts:

As we pass from southern to central Europe, we still meet with the great god of the oak... among the barbarous Aryans who dwelt in the vast primaeval forests. Thus among the Celts of Gaul the Druids esteemed nothing more sacred than the mistletoe and the oak on which it grew; they chose groves of oaks for the scene of their solemn service, and they performed none of their rites without oak leaves. ‘The Celts,’ says a Greek writer, ‘worship Zeus, and the Celtic image of Zeus is a tall oak.’...the very name of Druids is believed by good authorities to mean no more than ‘oak men.’

(1967:211)

This perhaps helps to explain in part why Yeats would later approve of Burke’s conception of the state as an oak tree, but contrary to Burke, and the Burkean Arnold – who had described the state as “sacred” (2008:187) – an independent Irish state. Yeats might also have been encouraged towards this approval by Shelley, who asserts in “A Defence of Poetry” that “[a]ll high poetry is infinite; it is as the first acorn, which contained all oaks potentially” (1973:755). In “To

Ireland in the *Coming Times*”, shortly after the lines “Yet he who treads in measured ways/May surely barter gaze for gaze”, which form part of the revisions on measure in 1925, Yeats expressly describes Ireland as Druidic: “Ah, fairies, dancing under the moon,/A Druid land, a Druid tune!” (Allt, Alspach 1989:139). Moreover, Yeats’s ambiguity in conjuring up images of peasant and aristocrat is partly illuminated by Edward Larissy’s insight that “[s]ince Yeats clearly believed that the magic and esoteric lore he knew were substantially the same as those known to the Druids, he was able to think of his Protestant inheritance as offering not only a system to vie with Catholicism, but one which had truer access to a perennial wisdom possessed by the ancient Celts” (1997:xxiv). Crucially, in just such an “ancient” and magical vein as Frazer’s positive linkage of the Celts to the ancient Greeks and Italians, Yeats ‘corrects’ Arnold in *A Vision* by extending Arnold’s literary ideal of the genius of the ancient Greeks and Italians to include the Celt, whom Yeats sees, unlike Arnold, as the fully-fledged kinsmen of these ancients. To understand the relation of the Yeatsian Mask to Arnold more clearly, we must recall that Yeats’s concept of the Mask is synonymous with style, achieved through the practice of what he calls, in “Anima Hominis” in *Per Amica*, “active virtue”.

In section VI, Yeats writes of a moment of rebirth akin to that of Dante merging with his buried self in “Hodos Chameliontos”:

I was always thinking of the element of imitation in style and in life, and of the life beyond heroic imitation. I find in an old diary: ‘I think all happiness depends on the energy to assume the mask of some other life, on a re-birth as something not one’s self, something created in a moment and perpetually renewed...’; and again at an earlier date: ‘If we cannot imagine ourselves as different from what we are, and try to assume that second self, we cannot impose

a discipline upon ourselves though we may accept one from others.
Active virtue, as distinguished from the passive acceptance of a code,
is therefore theatrical, consciously dramatic, the wearing of a mask...'

(1990:42)

Yeats's reference to "imitation" is striking in that, as we have seen, he had long since jeered at Arnold on this point in the Ferguson appraisal. Over the course of his career, however, we can see Yeats's close study of Arnold on style, and approval of not only the Arnoldian ideal of style – evident even in the Ferguson appraisal – but Arnold's recommendation of imitation of the ancient masters of style, finding greater creative expression. Indeed, Arnold's position is not dissimilar to that of Shelley, who reflects in "A Defence of Poetry" on how "[t]he poems of Homer and his contemporaries... were the elements of that social system which is the column upon which all succeeding civilization has reposed", with Homer having "embodied the ideal perfection of his age in human character" and provided models of "patriotism, and persevering devotion to an object" (1973:749). Shelley adds that readers "must have been refined... until from admiring they imitated, and from imitation they identified themselves with the objects of their admiration" (1973:749). In "Ego Dominus Tuus", Yeats again employs the word "imitation" in what is effectively Ille's confirmation of Arnold's recommendation in the 1853 preface:

Why should you leave the lamp
Burning alone beside an open book,
And trace these characters upon the sands?
A style is found by sedentary toil
And by the imitation of great masters.

(1990:35)

Recognising Yeats's conception of the Mask-as-style, we can appreciate that the Mask of the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision* – defined as “Simplification through intensity” (1990:171) or “a *Mask* of simplicity that is also intensity” (2008:63) – can be related to a range of Arnold's works (as we have seen in part in relation to “moderation” of style in *On Translating Homer*) but on balance, so to speak, his Celticist analysis above all. Before we see how comprehensively Arnold informs the Yeatsian Mask, however, I wish to sound a note of qualification: within the labyrinth of influence, we might easily point to a wide range of potential exemplars confirming Yeats's ideal of style in such terms, whether read directly by Yeats, or via Arnold and others. As we have seen by reference to Matthew Gibson, Coleridge and Wordsworth were strongly in play in 1906 as influences on Yeats's preoccupation with “simplicity” (Gibson 2000:18) and language in the Irish context. Both Romantics were also strongly influential on Arnold, who would go on to praise the simplicity of Wordsworth's poetry in *Essays in Criticism: Second Series* (1888). Similarly idealizing the “ancient” over the “modern” were the German Hellenists. As Douglas Smith says in contextualizing Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, in “writing of Greek culture, the German Hellenists tended to present Greece as an idyllic lost world of innocence and harmony standing in stark contrast to the conflict and self-consciousness of modern life. So, for Winckelmann in his *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (1755), Greek art was characterized above all by ‘noble simplicity and quiet grandeur’” (Nietzsche 2008:xi).

Arnold's advocacy, in the 1853 preface, of the imitation of works of genius of the ancient Greeks, whom he describes in precisely these terms of “noble simplicity” and “grandeur”, as well as “intense significance” (as we will see shortly), in contrast to the deficiencies of modern poets, can be partly related to Winckelmann. Of course, Winckelmann's ideas would not have reached Yeats

via Arnold alone. Pater's essay "Winckelmann", which features in the *Renaissance*, perhaps partly informs Bloom's later view that the combined imagination/Mask of the Daimonic Man is Paterian. Pater writes of the "intense outlines" of the "antique world" (1998:115); of "something simple and primeval in [Winckelmann's] nature" and his "longing desire to attain to the knowledge of beauty" (1998:116). Winckelmann is among the "born antiquaries" (1998:117); and his efforts to develop his "culture" leads Pater to assert that "the aim of our culture should be to attain not only as intense but as complete a life as possible" (1998:120). Pater draws a line to Goethe, arguing that in the "bewildering" modern world Winckelmann "imprints on the imagination of Goethe... in its original and simplest form" the notion of the intellectual need for "completeness", defining for Goethe "the eternal problem of culture – balance, unity with one's self, consummate Greek modelling" (1998:146). It could be said, too, that Goethe did much the same for Arnold, as evinced by the 1853 preface in which Arnold echoes Goethe's stance on the need for objectivity to rebalance the excessive subjectivity of modern poets, and thus recommends Goethean architectonics – a line of argument linked to Arnold's portrayal of the Celt as lacking "balance, measure" and therefore the unity exemplified by the genius of the ancient Greeks and Italians; and to Arnold's depiction of a unified and harmonious, i.e. Hellenised best self in *Culture and Anarchy*.

Furthermore, Arnold explicitly follows Schiller's insistence on the need for joy in art, in the 1853 preface. As I have indicated, the debt to Schiller goes much further – for instance, to the notion of a free play of consciousness so integral to Arnold's cultural analysis. That is to say, Arnold draws heavily upon the German Hellenists. As Smith says, albeit in relation to Nietzsche, both Winckelmann and Schiller "contributed to the creation of the image of Greek 'serenity'", which Nietzsche "is at pains to revise" by arguing that "the alleged

‘serenity’ of Greek culture is not some happy prelapsarian state... but rather the end result of a difficult and protracted struggle to come to terms with the suffering caused by life, the hard-won triumph of Apollonian form over Dionysian insight” (Nietzsche 2008:xiii). In the labyrinth of influence on Yeats’s Mask-as-style of “simplicity” and “intensity”, evoking the Daimon and thus giving rise to the serenity of Unity of Being, we might also point, then, to Nietzsche. As I have indicated, Denis Donoghue has argued for Nietzsche’s pre-eminence in Yeats’s achievement of a “cast of mind... best understood in theatrical terms. Theatre brings everything together: consciousness as conflict, vigour of mind as tension, struggle, action, role, mask, will, gesture, speech, excess, form” (1971:44). In this context, Donoghue finds Yeats’s “greatest poems... intensely dramatic” (1971:44); and before quoting from Yeats’s diary entry on active virtue, Donoghue argues that when Yeats “draws upon the [theatrical] theme, he recurs to the same range of words: self-mastery, difficulty, discipline, the antithetical force, theatre, style” (1971:44).

We need only turn to the description of Nietzsche’s Phase 12 in *A Vision* to confirm that Yeats strongly associated the German philosopher with “intensity”. With characteristic abstruseness, employing the jargon of his ‘System’, Yeats writes: “It is a phase of immense energy because the Four Faculties are equidistant. The *oppositions*... are balanced by the *discords* and these, being equidistant between *identity* and *opposition*, are at their utmost intensity” (2008:53). More plainly, we can also see the importance of Nietzsche to the formulation of the Yeatsian Mask in section 230 of “Our Virtues” in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), where Nietzsche writes of “[t]hat imperious something that the common people call ‘spirit’” wanting “to be the master... and to feel its mastery: it has the will to go from multiplicity to simplicity, a will that binds together, subdues, a tyrannical and truly masterful will” (2008a:121). Nietzsche proceeds to describe the spirit’s “readiness to deceive other spirits and go

among them in disguises”, and he even uses the word “simplification” to describe the nature of masks, a single term which we find also defining the Mask at Phase 17 in *A Vision*: “This will to appearance, to simplification, to masks, to cloaks, in short, to the surface... is countered by the sublime tendency of the man in search of knowledge to take and to want to take things deeply...” (2008a:122/123).

It must be acknowledged, then, that far and beyond solely Arnold’s input, a considerable Romantic and Hellenistic heritage is potentially in play in Yeats, wherein single terms such as “simplicity” and “intensity” are widely used to define “ancient” art, even extending in a case such as Nietzsche to a conception of masks as “simplification”. The similarity of the Yeatsian Mask to that of Nietzsche, though not in such detail as these terminological particulars, has long been recognized by biographers and critics, not least Ellmann who, in “The Pursuit of Spontaneity”, points out that for Yeats the “advantage of the mask of Nietzsche over the ‘pose’ of Oscar Wilde was that the former was virile and unconnected with estheticism” (1964:93). Ellmann compares Yeats’s Mask to that of Nietzsche as a buffer against the “mob” and an ideal to aspire to:

With Nietzsche, as with Yeats, the mask has several functions. Not the least is its severance of the hero from the mob, for whom his open-faced candour would be too dangerous... The mob is protected from too much reality, the hero from debasement... Finally, the mask may be an image of himself which the heroic spirit sets up as his goal, and then proceeds to become.

(1964:94)

Yeats's conception of the Nietzschean Mask would appear, however, to have a Celtic complexion. In his examination of the dialogue of 21 December 1917, George Harper explains that "Cuchulain, who was to be Yeats's alter ego in *The Only Jealousy*, was placed in Phase 12..." (vol 1, 1987:79). Phase 12 in *A Vision* is that of Nietzsche: "before all else the phase of the hero, of the man who overcomes himself" (2008:53). Harper proceeds to assert, without elaboration, that "Yeats conceived Cuchulain as his Mask or solar opposite" (2008:83). Yet we must remind ourselves that the ideal Mask of Yeats in *A Vision*, that of "simplicity which is also intensity", is located at Phase 17, and is not explicitly linked to the Mask of Phase 12: "*True* – Self-exaggeration. *False* – Self-abandonment" (2008:52). Moreover, Yeats's projections of Cuchulain as his mythological surrogate across his oeuvre may seem to have nothing to do with Arnold, but the masculinity of Cuchulain is both a refusal of and rejoinder to what Marjorie Howes has described as Arnold's proposal of "a happy patriarchal marriage between the feminine and attractive but inferior Celt and the masculine and superior Saxon" (1996:22/3); as well as a distancing from aestheticism.

While we must certainly recognize the importance of Nietzsche to the formulation of Yeats's ideal Mask at Phase 17, prioritisation of their relation by many biographers and critics should not obscure the prior, indeed seminal and continuing relation, in fact, between Yeats and Arnold. The anti-Philistinism of Arnold, along with the "simplicity of the ends fixed" or goal of his passionate and natural geniuses of *Culture and Anarchy*, of eliciting their best selves, can also be seen to have partly shaped Yeats's affinity with the Nietzschean mask, and also to be encapsulated in the Yeatsian Mask as described by Ellmann in relation to Nietzsche. However, it must be reiterated that, as Ellmann says, "Yeats never accepted the superman" (1964:95) or overman, which would logically be the Nietzschean counterpart of the Daimonic Man of *A Vision*. As I

have been arguing all along, Arnold's noblest best self is a much closer 'fit' to Yeats's ideal man of genius, in a time of anarchy, for the Arnoldian best self, and the Arnoldian noble Celt, were both highly amenable to subversive modification, and a merger by Yeats, effectively, to suit his own Irish standpoint on independent self-rule. Nietzsche's preoccupation with self-mastery was long predated, for Yeats, by Arnold's stereotype of the Celt who could not master himself.

Though the defining terms of Yeats's ideal Mask of Phase 17 proliferate within the labyrinth of influence, it remains that Arnold is a major conduit for that Romantic and Hellenistic heritage in its early impact upon Yeats. No matter who we might look to within the labyrinth of influence as possibly informing Yeats's ideal Mask, it remains that its definition in *A Vision* is in keeping with the Arnoldian ideal of style. Habitual usage of the terms "simplicity" and "intensity" in describing the masterful style of the ancients could not be more concentrated and conspicuous than in Arnold's works, and of more acute interest to the Celticist Yeats. Along with his embryonic Daimonic Man posited in distinction to Arnold's definition of poetry, Yeats's Arnoldian ideal of style is already evident as early as the appraisal of Ferguson. Yeats paraphrases Arnold in arrogating to the Celtic genius ancient Greek "simplicity, which is force" and in remarking on the "simplicity" of Ferguson's poetry "that we seem to be no longer in this modern decade..." (Yeats 2004:13). Arnold had ascribed such "simplicity" to the ancient Greeks and Italians, not just in his Celticist analysis but in many instances across his oeuvre. In Yeats's maturity as a poet, and representation of the fully and perfectly formed Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision*, alongside Arnold at Phase 18, he is at it again, but with a greater awareness of philosophical and literary tradition by which he has been able to subversively confirm his own "ancient" ideal in relation to Arnold.

To appreciate in more detail Arnold's bearing on the form which Yeats's ideal Mask ultimately takes, from its imagery of "hunters and fishers" to the stylistic terms of definition, of "simplicity" and "intensity", crucial to the constitution of the Daimonic Man in the ideal condition of Unity of Being, we might start with the 1853 preface. In a sentence furnishing Yeats with such terms as we find in *A Vision*, Arnold maintains that as the modern poet "penetrates into the spirit of the great classical works, as he becomes gradually aware of their intense significance, their noble simplicity, and their calm pathos, he will be convinced that it is this effect, unity and profoundness of moral impression, at which the ancient poets aimed; that it is this which constitutes the grandeur of their works, and which makes them immortal" (1992:181). Prior to this key summary of his central recommendation, Arnold says the ancients are "the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the *grand style*. But their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence; because it is so simple and so well subordinated" (1992:175). Warning against using Shakespeare as a model, Arnold affirms "his power of intensely feeling a situation" (1992:179) but that he "appears in his language to have tried all styles except for that of simplicity. He has not the severe and scrupulous self-restraint of the ancients" (1992:180).

In *Culture and Anarchy*, preoccupied with the need for self-restraint among those doing as they like, Arnold expands the notion of style beyond the merely literary. As we have seen, he describes natural, passionate geniuses who seek to extricate their best self and "by the simplicity of the ends fixed by them as paramount... set up a fire which enfilades" (2008:134/5) their social class. This "intensity", therefore, when the intellectual force of Hellenism is at its best, is of a different, unifying kind to the fragmenting "moral force and earnestness" (2008:160) of the Hebraising Philistine. Clearly, the anti-Philistine best self is held up by Arnold as a higher personal and political ideal than democracy; as

what he calls a “style of proceeding, to get beyond the notion of an ordinary self” and ultimately “get the paramount authority of a commanding best self... recognised” (2008:135) in the form of the state. Thus Arnold translates the ideal literary style of the ancients into ideal personal and political style. This authoritative best self is clearly an ideal of excellence to live up to. Arnold argues, foreshadowing Nietzsche for Yeats, that “most of us” have “little idea of a high standard to choose our guides by, of a great and profound spirit, which is an authority, while inferior spirits are none” (2008:136). The best self is a “commanding” self, which might bring to mind the strident Yeats who directs the cutting of his gravestone epitaph in “Under Ben Bulbin”:

By his command these words are cut:

Cast a cold eye

On life, on death.

Horseman, pass by!

(Allt, Alspach 1989:640)

The single word “cold” echoes Yeats’s wish in “The Fisherman” to write the titular figure a “Poem maybe as cold/And passionate as the dawn” (Allt, Alspach 1989:348); as well as his disclosure on style in “Hodos Chameliontos: “I take pleasure alone in those verses where it seems to me I have found something hard and cold, some articulation of the Image which is the opposite of all that I am in my daily life, and all that my country is” (1999:218). Again, this seems to owe something to Yeats’s characterisation of Nietzsche, and/or Cuchulain. In the description of Phase 12 in *A Vision*, Yeats writes that the True Mask is “the reverse of all that is emotional, being emotionally cold; not mathematical... but marble pure” (2008:53). This is reminiscent of the “marmorean Muse” (1990:36) summoned by Yeats in “Anima Hominis in *Per*

Amica. Again, this may seem to have nothing to do with Arnold, but we should note that Arnold had described the Celt's "warm emotion" and lack of measure; but that here, conflating self and country, Yeats prizes precisely the opposite, "something hard and cold" in his verse, a style which he attributes to his Mask. Even as Arnold appears to shape the kind of heroic Mask favoured by Yeats at Phase 12 in *A Vision*, it must be reiterated that Yeats's own ideal Mask-as-style in *A Vision* is not that of Phase 12, but Phase 17 – and "hard and cold" could therefore also bespeak what Yeats calls, in "Ego Dominus Tuus", the "spectral image" or "hollow... stony face [of hardest stone]" of Dante.

Notably, too, in Chapter VI of his Celticist analysis, Arnold claims that "the principal deficiency of German poetry is in style" and he points to "the eminent masters of style, the poets who best give the idea of what the peculiar power which lies in style is, Pindar, Virgil, Dante, Milton" (2008:57). Again, we should mark closely the appearance at the ideal Phase 17 of Yeats's fellow super-poet Dante, given that Arnold enthuses that "[e]very reader of Dante can at once call to mind what the peculiar effect I mean is; I spoke of it in my lectures on translating Homer, and there I took an example of it from Dante, who perhaps manifests it more eminently than any other poet" (2008:57). In Lecture II of *On Translating Homer*, Arnold draws attention to Dante's *Inferno* as the "unique" work of a great master, moving from the Italian to the Greek in adding that the *Iliad* also "has a great master's genuine stamp, and that stamp is *the grand style*" (1914:274). We can readily see how this corresponds with Arnold's Celticist analysis, in which the Latin genius exemplified by Dante, as well as the genius of the ancient Greeks, constitute the ideal of poetical achievement, which the Celtic genius perpetually falls short of.

In Lecture II, Arnold proceeds to argue that "the few artists in the grand style", including the "noble" Homer, "can refine the raw natural man, they can

transmute him” (1914:284). Transmutation through simplicity of style is the effect, too, of Yeats’s ideal Mask-as-style, evoking the Daimon. In Lecture III, Arnold praises Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667) as “one of the only two poetical works in the grand style which are to be found in the modern languages; the *Divine Comedy* of Dante is the other” (1914:290). Yeats evidently endorsed Arnold’s critical judgment on the measured Dante as the premier master of style. We can gauge something of the power of Arnold’s influence on Yeats’s esteem for Dante if we cross-reference *On Translating Homer* with Arnold’s essay “Dante and Beatrice”. In Romantic vein, Arnold characterises Dante as “a born spiritualist and solitary” (1914:446). “The vital impulse of Dante’s soul,” Arnold writes, “is towards reverie and spiritual vision” (1914:446). Arnold’s portrayals of Dante across a range of works partly but powerfully shape Yeats’s representation of the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision*, whose Mask encapsulates the “solitary”, in accordance with Yeats’s capacious conception of “ancient” genius.

We can tell from the description of Phase 17 that there was further agreement on the particulars of style itself, ideally. In a key passage in Chapter VI of his Celticist analysis, to illustrate what he means by “style”, Arnold quotes from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Goethe’s *Torquato Tasso* (1790). He comments:

... [Goethe’s] is the style of prose as much as poetry... it has not received that peculiar kneading, heightening, and re-casting which is observable in the style of the passage from Milton, – a style which seems to have for its cause a certain pressure of emotion, and an ever-surg-ing, yet bridled, excitement in the poet, giving a special intensity to his way of delivering himself. In poetical races and epochs this turn for style is peculiarly observable; and perhaps it is only on condition of having this somewhat heightened and difficult manner...that poetry gets the privilege

of being loosed, at its best moments, into that perfectly simple, limpid style, which is the supreme style of all, but the simplicity of which is still not the simplicity of prose. The simplicity of Menander's style is the simplicity of prose, and is the same kind of simplicity as that which Goethe's style... exhibits; but Menander does not belong to a great poetical moment, he comes too late for it; it is in the simple passages in poets like Pindar or Dante which are perfect, being masterpieces of poetical simplicity.

(2008:57/58)

Corresponding with such works as the 1853 preface, *On Translating Homer*, and *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold's references to "intensity" and "simplicity" here become, in *A Vision*, the key defining terms of the Mask-as-style, "of simplicity that is also intensity" (1990:172) of the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17. In thus 'correcting' Arnold on the Celtic constitution of the ideal man of genius, Yeats is exploiting Arnold's inadvertently contradictory use of the word "measure" not long after this, in describing the Celt. Arnold had said that the Celt lacked a law of measure and harmony presiding over the whole. Yet Arnold also writes that "the Norse poetry seems to have something which from Teutonic sources alone it could not have derived; which the Germans have not, and which the Celts have" (2008:60), adding:

This something is style, and the Celts certainly have it in a wonderful measure. Style is the most striking quality of their poetry. Celtic poetry seems to make up to itself for being unable to master the world and give an adequate interpretation of it, by throwing all its force into style, by bending language at any rate to its will, and expressing the ideas it has with unsurpassed intensity, elevation, and effect.

(2008:60)

Accordingly, and subversively exploiting Arnold's usage of the term "measure", Yeats's 'Celtic' Daimonic Man, with his Mask of simplicity that is also intensity, evidently has style in a wonderful measure. Indeed, his Mask *is* the law of measure, by which his genius is expressed and harmony presides over the whole. This is further subversive in that Arnold had argued that their sensibility "made the Celts full of reverence and enthusiasm for genius, learning, and things of the mind; *to be a bard, freed a man*, – that is a characteristic stroke of this generous and ennobling ardour of theirs, which no race has ever shown more strongly" (2008:47). Simplicity might also have been easily interpreted by Yeats as an Irish rather than English trait, in reading Arnold's "The Incompatibles" (1881) in *Irish Essays and Others* (1891). Arnold highlights Goethe's characterisation of the English as "pedants" (1891:3) and later says that "The pedant... shrinks from *simplicity*, therefore, he abhors it, for simplicity cannot be had without thinking, without considerable searchings of spirit" (1891:35). As we will see, Arnold assists Yeats in associating Dowden with a lack of simplicity of style – even more validation for Yeats that simplicity of style was Celtic rather than scholastic or pedantic, i.e. Saxon.

We can also see Yeats's Arnoldian 'correction' of Arnold's Celt in the descriptions of the process of achieving Unity of Being through the Mask. At Phase 17, the excess emotion and aimless energy and excitement of the preceding phases has now become bridled to optimum effect, creating the necessary "pressure of emotion" and "intensity" for the expression of poetical genius. Yeats writes:

As contrasted with Phase 13 and Phase 14, where mental images were separated from one another that they might be subject to knowledge, all now flow, change, flutter, cry

out, or mix into something else; but without, as at Phase 16, breaking and bruising one another, for Phase 17, the central phase of its triad, is without frenzy... The being has for its supreme aim... to hide from itself and others this separation and disorder... When true to phase the intellect must turn all its synthetic power to this task.

(1990:172)

Yeats echoes Arnold's 1853 preface, or we might say Romantic imagination, in that the Daimonic Man's attention is not "fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images"; instead, like the ancients, he regards "the whole" (Arnold 1992:175). The single-minded aim of the Daimonic Man is to achieve order or, in Arnoldian terms, the "composure" of the 1853 preface; or "balance, measure" of the Celticist analysis; or the truly aristocratic "serenity which comes from having made order among ideas and harmonised them" of the cultural analysis. This is Yeats's Romantic (not Paterian) imagination at work; and as we might expect, the unifying drive in Yeats, carrying him beyond a solitude merely amid sense impressions, is distinctly nationalist.

Corresponding with his answer to Arnold in "The Celtic Element in Literature", the Mask of the ideal man of genius in *A Vision* is Celtic or "ancient", and may be counted as a projection of Unity of Being in Ireland, Yeats's dream of the noble and the beggar-man: "... men of this phase are almost always partisans, propagandists and gregarious; yet because of the *Mask* of simplification, which holds up before them the solitary life of hunters and of fishers and 'the groves pale passion loves', they hate parties, crowds, propaganda" (1990:173).

In observing the conjunction of the hunters and fishers, and "groves pale passion loves", we should recall Yeats's view quoted in *United Ireland* on 11 December 1897, which is strikingly similar to his appraisal of Ferguson, that in

the poem “Connla’s Well”, later entitled ‘The Nuts of Knowledge’ (1903), AE “had achieved the Celtic note ‘certainly... not [as] the result of conscious study of Renan or of Arnold, but because he had the actual habit of mind which the old Celts had. He felt that all beautiful places were haunted...’” (1997:154). Arnold had stressed the Celt’s love of beauty, spirituality, and affinity with nature. Despite the distancing from Arnold, Yeats’s great debt to Arnold is evident in his judgment on AE’s poem, in precisely his reference to the “Celtic note” which is borrowed from Arnold but, as we have seen, he had denied was part of his own vocabulary in the letter to Moran in 1900. Catherine Paul and Margaret Harper explain Yeats’s quotation at Phase 17: “The line ‘Fountain heads... pale passion loves’ is from the song ‘Hence all you vaine Delights,’ praising ‘sweetest melancholy,’ from the play *The Nice Valour* by John Fletcher and possibly Thomas Middleton” (Yeats 2008:255). Here is the “melancholy without the [Empedoclean] gloom”, Yeats’s rephrasing of Arnoldian tragic joy which, Schuchard says, Yeats had been seeking in the 1890s. The relevance of Arnold to the imagery of the solitary in nature and to Yeats’s oblique veneration of “sweetest melancholy” can be appreciated from both the cultural and Celtic angles, sweetness or beauty being a quality of Hellenism, and melancholy a quality of the passionate Celt.

Indeed, Arnold describes the Celtic note, and Hellenistic sweetness and light, in almost identical language. The mixed message would have been ripe for subversive exploitation by Yeats, in similar fashion to the Celt’s style in “wonderful measure”, by effectively merging Arnold’s Celt and Hellene. In his Celticist analysis, quoting from Shakespeare to show the transition from the Greek to the Celtic note, Arnold enthuses: “... we are at the very point of transition from the Greek note to the Celtic; there is the Greek clearness and brightness, with the Celtic aerialness and magic coming in” (2008:69). In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold combines the notion of “aerialness” with that of

“simplicity”, the single term employed by Arnold in his Celticist analysis in relation to style, and which is among many instances of usage of this term across Arnold’s oeuvre informing the ideal Mask of the Daimonic Man of *A Vision*. Arnold writes:

To get rid of one’s ignorance, to see things as they really are, and by seeing them as they are to see them in their beauty, is the simple and attractive ideal which Hellenism holds out before human nature; and from the simplicity and charm of this ideal, Hellenism, and human life in the hands of Hellenism, is invested with a kind of aerial ease, clearness, and radiancy; they are full of what we call sweetness and light.

(2008:149)

Arnold had also characterised the Celt, of course, as a lover of beauty. In *A Vision*, Yeats explains that the “*Mask* (the forms ‘created by passion to unite us to ourselves,’ [is] in the *antithetical* phases beauty)” (1990:206). Moreover, both “sweetest melancholy” and the drive towards order rather than “disorder” at the ideal Phase 17 can be seen to be important parts of Yeats’s overall Arnoldian Hellenistic ‘correction’ of Arnold’s Celt. As we have seen, while the textual correspondences between the portion of the description of Phase 17 in the treatise (referring to hunters and fishers) and section IV of “The Celtic Element in Literature” confirm that Yeats is again addressing Arnold’s question on the Celtic constitution of the ideal man of genius, there has been a shift in the interim in Yeats’s stance in this dialogue, from a defence of the excess of the Celt to an emphasis on measure. Whereas Yeats accentuates in “The Celtic Element in Literature” Arnold’s association of the Celt with “unbounded emotion and a wild melancholy” which, Yeats agrees, “are troublesome things in the world, and do not make its life more easy or orderly”, in *A Vision* the

Daimonic Man has bounded emotion through the Mask, and therefore has the sweetest rather than wildest melancholy about him. By the exercise of his Romantic imagination and power of synthesis, through the Mask, his supreme single aim has been to make his life more orderly by concealing his “disorder”.

Two key defining terms of the Daimonic Man are “unity” and “order”: “Yet Dante, having attained, as poet, to Unity of Being, as poet saw all things set in order, had an intellect that served the Mask alone, that compelled even those things that opposed it to serve, and was content to see both good and evil” (1990:174). That Arnold is part of the fabric of the construction of Phase 17 can also be appreciated in that Dante “can never see anything that opposes him as it really is” (1990:173). This is another ‘anxious’ instance of Yeats’s rejection of Arnold’s notion of poetry as a criticism of life and seeing or interpreting things as they are, but we can appreciate that in the overall ‘correction’ of Arnold Yeats is arrogating, to the Daimonic Man, Arnold’s ideal of ancient Greek genius. The representation of the Daimonic Man (Yeats himself) is effectively a reaffirmation of Lionel Johnson’s portrayal of Yeats in a review of *The Countess Kathleen* as long ago as 1 October 1892, in the *Academy*. As Warwick Gould, John Kelly, and Deirdre Toomey explain in a footnote to Yeats’s letter to Henry Davray dated 19 March 1896: “Johnson argued that, while Irish of the Irish and possessed of all the Celtic qualities of style and feeling, WBY’s poetry also displayed classical virtues of intelligence and organization (virtues which Matthew Arnold had famously found wanting in the Celtic genius). Thus ‘he produces poems, rational and thoughtful, yet beautiful with the beauty that comes of thought about imagination’” (1997:14).

Arnold had said the overemotional Celt could not govern himself owing to a lack of “balance, measure” and “a law of harmony presiding over the whole”, such as that possessed by the ancient Greeks and Italians. Accordingly, Unity of

Being of the Daimonic Man in *A Vision* signals emotional control and holistic “synthesis”: “He who attains Unity of Being is some man, who, while struggling with his fate and his destiny until every energy of his being has been roused, is content that he should so struggle with no final conquest. For him fate and freedom are not to be distinguished; he is no longer bitter, he may even love tragedy like those ‘who love the gods and withstand them’; such men are able to bring all that happens, as well as all that they desire, into an emotional or intellectual synthesis and so to possess not the Vision of Good only but that of Evil” (2008:26).²³ In this assertion of tragic joy we can also see the sweetened Yeats’s Arnoldian correction of himself in the long term, on the point of bitterness, having referred in the appraisal of Ferguson to the Celt’s “faithfulness to things tragic and bitter” (2004:9). The struggle to achieve such unity and harmony is tilted in favour of the antithetical. Yeats later describes this process as a bridling of emotion bringing balance and harmony: “All the antithetical control over the primary faculties increases... It struggles within itself, for it must now harmonise its instinct with its emotion, its reason with its desire, and not in relation to, or for the sake of, some particular action; but in relation to a conception of itself as Unity” (2008:51/52).

Yeats is perhaps seeking to distance his Daimonic Man from Arnold’s notion of unity through poetical “action” in the 1853 preface, a single term which also arises at Arnold’s Phase 18, as we will see. If so, it remains that the Unity of Being of the Daimonic Man is strikingly reminiscent of the Arnoldian best self by which, according to Arnold, “we are united... at harmony” (2008:127). In section XIII, “The Opening of the Tincture, etc” in the original *A Vision*, Yeats explains: “In the phases between Phase 12 and Phase 18, the unity sought is Unity of Being, which is not to be confused with the complete subjectivity of Phase 15, for it implies a harmony of *antithetical* and *primary* life” (2008:51).

²³ In “The Gates of Pluto”, Yeats says that “Evil is that which opposes Unity of Being” (2008:190).

The condition of harmony corresponds with the musical description of Unity of Being in section V of “Part II: Examination of the Wheel” in the revised *A Vision*: “Every emotion begins to be related to every other as musical notes are related. It is as though we touched a musical string that set other strings vibrating” (1990:135). This harks back to the embryonic Daimonic Man of the appraisal of Ferguson, posited in distinction to Arnold’s definition of poetry as a “criticism of life”, whose “whole nature [is] a song of answering harmony” to the “phantom finger swept over all the strings” (Yeats 2004:6) of his being.

However, though the fully and perfectly formed Daimonic Man of *A Vision* is also being posited in distinction to Arnold, we can see not only that Arnold’s comprehensive exaltation of Dante on style has partly but powerfully shaped Yeats’s own representation of Dante as the foremost poet or Daimonic Man of the Great Wheel, but that Arnold also shapes the representation of the two other examples of this phase: Landor and Shelley. In regard to these poets, Yeats has Arnold’s claim that the Celt lacked “measure, sanity” (2008:44/45) and could not match the poetical achievement of the ancient Greeks and Italians, strongly in mind, but also many instances in which Arnold refers to (in)sanity across his oeuvre. As Bloom says, Landor is “a poet of classical restraint” (2011:181). We should also recall, however, that Arnold is the critic par excellence of restraint. Closing the description of Phase 17, Yeats writes of Landor: “The most violent of men, he uses his intellect to disengage a visionary image of perfect sanity... seen always in the most serene and classic art imaginable. He had perhaps as much Unity of Being as his age permitted, and possessed, though not in any full measure, the Vision of Evil” (1990:174).

With Yeats ‘secretly’ placed at Phase 17, we can see in this appearance of “sanity” as a defining characteristic of the Daimonic Man, a reaffirmation once again of Lionel Johnson’s portrayals of Yeats in the 1890s. As Gould, Kelly,

and Toomey also explain, in the footnote to Yeats's letter to Henry Davray dated 19 March 1896, in which they relate how Johnson's review of *The Countess Kathleen* in 1892 portrays Yeats as exemplifying the virtues of intelligence and organization which Arnold had found wanting in the Celtic genius: "Johnson's review of *Poems* (1895), which had appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* of 8 Nov 1895... praised WBY for being 'never commonplace and never eccentric, always distinguished and always sane'" (1997:14). This description of Yeats as "distinguished and sane", too, targets Arnold, and is effectively ratified in the figure of the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17. Prefiguring his representation of the Celt as lacking sanity, Arnold had said much the same of modern poets in his "Preface to Second Edition of *Poems*" (1854), echoing his portrayal of Empedocles. Arnold argues that the study of ancient writers "can help to cure us of what is... the great vice of our intellect, manifesting itself in our incredible vagaries in literature, in art, in religion, in morals: namely, that it is *fantastic*, and wants *sanity*" (1992:185). He adds: "Sanity, – that is the great virtue of the ancient literature; the want of that is the great defect of the modern, in spite of all its variety and power. It is impossible to read carefully the great ancients, without losing something of our caprice and eccentricity; and to emulate them we must at least read them" (1992:185).

Yeats evidently saw great virtue in Arnold's consistent judgments on this point across his oeuvre, subversively supplying the ancient-minded Daimonic Man with the sanity and distinction Arnold had found wanting in the Celt as well as modern poets and critics. Yeats reads not only Landor by this light, but also Shelley. In volume four of *Yeats's Vision Papers* (2001), Yeats's fictional character Robartes talks (in the Discoveries manuscript) of Shelley remaining "all his life by force of genius 'the infectual angel' waving his wings in the void of Arnolds description [sic]" (2001:65). This refers to the glowing last line of Arnold's essay "Shelley" in *Essays in Criticism: Second Series* (1888): "And in

poetry, no less than in life, he is ‘a beautiful *and ineffectual* angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain’ (Arnold 1965:206). Strikingly, however, Arnold had repeatedly characterised the Celt as “ineffectual” (2008:46), in poetry as well as politics. We should not be surprised, therefore, to find Shelley, who is routinely regarded by critics as among Yeats’s foremost influences, in the company of Dante and Landor (and the unnamed Yeats himself) as an example of the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17: ‘Celticised’ by Yeats, then, as an effectual writer of genius. Not as effectual, however, as Dante. Yeats finds Shelley a little wanting: “He lacked the Vision of Evil, could not conceive of the world as a continual conflict, so, though great poet he certainly was, he was not of the greatest kind” (1990:174).

Nevertheless, Arnold reports in his essay that in February 1812 the Shelleys “proceeded to Dublin, where Shelley, who had prepared an address to the Catholics, meant to ‘devote himself towards forwarding the great ends of virtue and happiness in Ireland’” (1965:192) – the sort of biographical detail, encountered here and elsewhere, which may have helped Yeats along to his view of Shelley as an honorary Celt, or poet in the high company of the “ancients”. Arnold had claimed the Celt lacked sanity; and at Phase 17 the “violent” Landor becomes the picture of poetical sanity. The Romantic Shelley is portrayed by Arnold, similarly to the Celt, as lacking sanity, which may also have encouraged Yeats to see Shelley in a partly ‘Celtic’ light: “The man Shelley, in very truth, is not entirely sane, and Shelley’s poetry is not entirely sane either. The Shelley of actual life is a vision of beauty and radiance, indeed, but availing nothing, effecting nothing” (Arnold 1965:206). Yeats evidently disagreed on the points of (in)sanity and (in)effectualness; but here too, like Arnold’s essay on Dante, is another possible Arnoldian source or ratification of the chosen title *A Vision*.

This is the essay in which Arnold “made sport” (Yeats 1991:87) of Dowden’s treatment of Shelley in his biography, confirming JBY and Yeats in their Arnoldian cultural view of Dowden as a “provincial”. Notably, Arnold writes that had Dowden told “his story in a plain way, lovers of simplicity, of whom there are some still left in the world, would have been gratified” (1965:187). This was a criticism, then, of Dowden’s style, implying he was a (‘Saxonised’) pedant. As we have seen, this Arnoldian theme of ideal simplicity of style, arising in his Celticist analysis, and so prevalent across his oeuvre, helps to define the anti-Philistine ‘Celtic’ or “ancient” Mask of the Daimonic Man Yeats at the ideal Phase 17 in *A Vision*, which harks back to Yeats’s essay on Dowden and Trinity scholasticism in 1892. Moreover, recognizing that the ideal Mask-as-style of Phase 17 has the air of “sweetest melancholy” about it, we might consider that Arnold had portrayed a severely melancholic Empedocles; while sweetness is reminiscent of Arnold’s best self, and melancholy a key quality of Arnold’s Celt: again, suggestive of a subversive merger by Yeats. Arnold’s essay may also have helped, in this regard, to underwrite Shelley’s placement at Phase 17. Arnold reports how Shelley, in July 1813, was “breathing the tenderest and sweetest melancholy as every true poet ought” (1965:193). This chimes with Shelley’s own assertion in “A Defence of Poetry”, which is not far removed from Arnold’s argument on tragic joy in the 1853 preface, that “tragedy delights by affording a shadow of the pleasure which exists in pain. This is the source also of the melancholy which is inseparable from the sweetest melody” (1973:756).

Against this backdrop, then, Yeats’s subversive ‘correction’ of Arnold in *A Vision* could be seen to spur readings of Yeats as a poet of decolonization. Clearly, in the projection of the Daimonic Man, Yeats seeks to overturn any negative trait and weakness by which Arnold had defined the Celt, in upholding the ideal of independent Irish self-rule. However, that Yeats prizes the

Arnoldian definition of style above all, which effectively constitutes his own ideal Mask, is a remarkable but also deeply troubling fact for postcolonial Yeats scholarship. Although the Daimonic Man is in the highest state of power, and therefore positively refigures Arnold's unbalanced, unmeasured, inharmonious and thus ineffectual Celt, it could be argued that the Arnoldian terms by which the Daimonic Man is subversively formulated mean that Yeats ultimately remains trapped in colonialist contradiction, having derived "a large proportion of his gospel", as Watson reports in regard to the Yeats of the 1890s, from an imperialist Englishman, though a sympathetic one. Said's criticism of "nativism" and reinforcing "the distinction [between the colonizer and colonized] even while reevaluating the weaker or subservient partner" (1993:275), or Castle's charge in regard to "The Celtic Element in Literature" that a "residual reliance on primitivist discourse... prevents Yeats from offering a decisive critique of imperialist Celticism" (2008:51), might be seen to apply here too.

"Whenever Yeats raised the question of style," Kiberd says in his chapter "The National Longing for Form", "it was as if he saw in it the promise of an antidote to Anglicization" (1996:122). Kiberd argues that "[s]tyle was the thing to be seized, the zone in which the battle of two civilizations would be fought out; and Yeats hoped that from his style a full man might eventually be inferred and, in due course – such was the enormity of his ambition – a nation" (1996:117). However, what might be inferred from Yeats's ideal Mask-as-style is indeed a full Irish man and nation, but in both cases best composed in Arnoldian terms approved and appropriated by Yeats. The Arnoldian Mask-as-style is also problematical for the long-running fascism debate. As Grattan Freyer highlights in *W.B. Yeats and the Anti-Democratic Tradition* (1981), it is George Orwell's essay "W.B. Yeats" in *Horizon* (January 1943) that discharges "the first real salvo" (1981:124) at Yeats's politics, posing "squarely the question raised by

the fact that ‘by and large the best writers of our time have been reactionary in tendency’, which has continued to trouble posterity” (1981:125). Orwell suggests that “there must be some kind of connection between [Yeats’s] wayward, even tortured style of writing and his rather sinister vision of life” (2000:271). Notwithstanding Orwell’s admission that he had personally never read *A Vision*, and was drawing instead upon V.K.N. Menon’s analysis, he contends that “Yeats’s philosophy has some very sinister implications” and “[t]ranslated into political terms, Yeats’s tendency is Fascist” (2000:273). He warns that “a writer’s political and religious beliefs are not excrescences to be laughed away, but something that will leave their mark even on the smallest detail of his work” (2000:276).

More recently, in *Blood Kindred: W.B. Yeats – The Life, The Death, The Politics* (2005), W.J. McCormack has reinvigorated the profile of a sinister or fascist Yeats, asserting that the “challenge posed by Orwell and V.K.N. Menon remains unmet” (2005:401). McCormack takes issue with Foster (among many others, including Said and Cullingford), specifically over his account of Yeats’s involvement with the Blueshirts, which ends allusively on this Orwellian topic. Foster speculates that to “an extent perhaps unrecognized, WBY’s affinity with Fascism (not National Socialism) was a matter of rhetorical style; and the achievement of style, as he himself had decreed long before, was closely connected to shock tactics” (2003:483). Foster’s position is not, of course, Orwellian. McCormack comments disapprovingly that the “difference between Orwell and Foster is more real than apparent. The former holds that the poet’s politics could (ideally at least) be understood through an analysis of his style. The latter suggests that the style (understood as a superficial end-in-itself) is all that the politics amounts to” (2005:431). However, neither side of the fascism debate has analysed Yeats’s valuation of Arnoldian style, enshrined in the Mask of the Daimonic Man of *A Vision*, in relation to his later politics. Instead, even

as both sides have often sought to substantiate their views through analysis of *A Vision*, Arnold has remained inconspicuous by his presence among the phasal examples of the Great Wheel, right next door, as it were, to Yeats.

Arnold merits close scrutiny within the debate over Yeats's alleged fascism, extending to the related issue of Yeats's eugenics, which has often been treated by critics as a separate phenomenon. In addition to the weight of evidence confirming the subversive Arnoldian complexion to Yeats's ideal Mask-as-style and man of genius of Phase 17 in *A Vision*, where Yeats's esteem for measure, order, and perfection are ratified, it should be recognized that Arnold also partly informs Yeats's association of style with shock. As F.W. Bateson observes, shock was vital to Arnold's criticism:

The pontifications of a modern reviewer or leader-writer can look very silly when they are trotted out in the literary pantheon of Homer and Aristotle, Dante and Goethe. But with Arnold such shock-tactics were not simply a controversial device... The modern mouse's speech will often be well worth hearing, especially if what it has to say is in fact a contemporary version of the ancient lion's roar.

(Arnold 1965:16)

Arnold's penchant for shock helps in part to explain the linkage of shock and style by both Yeats and Synge. As Kiberd says in his chapter "J.M. Synge – Remembering the Future", a "visit to the Aran Islands liberated the frustrated artist in Synge, who thanked Yeats for sending him with the remark that style is 'born out of the shock of new material'" (1996:169). Kiberd is partly drawing upon the opening section of "The Bounty of Sweden" (1924), where Yeats reflects: "Is not style', as Synge once said to me, 'born out of the shock of new material?'" (1991:531). However, we can partly but powerfully relate this to

Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna", where shock is associated with ancient Greek simplicity, which Yeats would easily have connected to the Arnoldian ideal of style. As we have seen, in Act II of the poem the central character refers to a grievous loss of balance, tipping into excessive subjectivity and consequent morbidity. The antithesis is simplicity, the stuff of the "ancient" Mask-as-style of the measured, balanced Daimonic Man in tragic joy at the ideal Phase 17, in contrast to the Rhymers at Phase 13:

Then we could still enjoy, then neither thought
 Nor outward things were closed and dead to us;
 But we received the shock of mighty thoughts
 On simple minds with a pure natural joy;
 And if the sacred load oppress'd our brain,
 We had the power to feel the pressure eased,
 The brow unbound, the thoughts flow free again,
 In the delightful commerce of the world.
 We had not lost our balance then, nor grown
 Thought's slaves, and dead to every natural joy.

(1905:468)

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Chapter Five

Sexual Love and the Writing of Poetry: Phases 18, 16, and 14

i) A WOUNDING BEYOND HEALING: ARNOLD, GOETHE, MRS YEATS, AND JBY AT PHASE 18

In this, the final chapter, I will consider the significance of Arnold's placement at Phase 18 in relation to that of Yeats at the ideal Phase 17, in both textual and symbolical terms; and close my thesis with a brief account of the Arnoldian element, perhaps surprisingly, in the intervening phases 14 and 16, those of Yeats's Muses Iseult and Maud Gonne respectively. As the presence of the Gones suggests, it is in the central phases that we can best appreciate the intertwinement for Yeats of literature and his love life, and thus the further attraction for Yeats, evident in his elucidation of the gyres, of Empedoclean philosophy in that the ancient Greek philosopher "regarded all things as... mingled by love or separated by strife" (Jeffares 1968:438). In the summary of Phase 13, alluding to Dowson (whose woeful love life is described in section V of "The Tragic Generation") but also his own deeply troubled love life at the time of the advent of the Script, Yeats writes: "From now... until Phase 17 or Phase 18 has passed, happy love is rare, for seeing that the man must find a woman whose Mask falls within or but just outside his Body of Fate and Mask, if he is to find strong sexual attraction, the range of choice grows smaller, and all life grows more tragic" (1990:165).

As this suggests, analysis of the central phases of the Great Wheel is complicated by what Bloom has described as “parallel courses through sexual love and the writing of poetry” (1972:253). Fundamentally, as Maddox says, Yeats “believed that all arts sprang from sexual love” (2000:82) and she points to the “obvious sexual significance of interlocked, gyrating cones” (2000:82), particularly in the context of the Script as a mechanism for stabilising the fledgling Yeats marriage in late 1917, which had been under threat owing to Yeats’s obsession with Iseult Gonne. It is Yeats’s own love life involving his foremost Muse Maud Gonne and her alluring daughter Iseult, both of whom had refused his proposals of marriage, and his devoted new wife George Yeats that dominates the heart of the Great Wheel, from Phase 14 to Phase 18. George Harper has shown the direct relation between Yeats’s obsession with Iseult and the advent of George’s ‘automatic’ writing in order to alleviate his “great gloom” (vol 1, 1987:3) during their honeymoon; as well as how the ‘love quadrangle’ (for want of a better description) between Yeats, Iseult, Maud, and George was in various ways central to the development of the Script. Harper’s study is abundantly stocked with illustrations of Yeats’s “continuing use of the System to psychoanalyse the people closest to him, especially the women in his life” (vol 2, 1987:93): primarily the symbolic “three birds” (vol 1, 1987:86) Iseult at Phase 14, Maud at Phase 16, and George at Phase 18, who along with Yeats himself in the guise of his alter ego Cuchulain at Phase 12, comprise the “unnamed *dramatis personae* of *The Only Jealousy [of Emer]*” (vol 2, 1987:238).

Perhaps surprisingly, the placement of Arnold at Phase 18 in *A Vision* is illuminated by the ‘love quadrangle’ between Yeats, Iseult, Maud, and George so central to the genesis and development of the Script, and which is ‘cast’ into *The Only Jealousy of Emer*. Harper explains that Yeats had planned the play “as a projection of the personal dilemma which had incited the A[utomatic]

S[cript]” (vol 1, 1987:83) and that upon its completion on 14 January 1918 Yeats and George “were strongly conscious that he had projected himself and his ‘three birds’ in the mythical surrogates...” (vol 1, 1987:149). Drawing upon Harper’s study, Terence Brown writes that the characters in the play “were also accorded their respective phases of the moon, Cuchulain at 12, Eithne at 14, Fand at 16... Emer at 18” (2001:263). Although he loses sight of the corresponding link to the text of *A Vision*, Brown rightly ties these characters and phases to the principals of the love quadrangle. He says that it “is furthermore clear that these characters share their categories with Yeats, Iseult, Maud and George respectively, so that Yeats’s play must be read, if we are to follow its author’s intentions, as a ramifying study of archetypical representations of himself and the three women he has loved in elaborate interrelationship” (2001:263).

The phasal link to the character Emer, the mythological surrogate of George, provides an insight into the incorporation of Arnold, with Goethe, into the treatise. As Maddox describes it, George had been the “amanuensis” for the play, which “sprang into Yeats’s mind simultaneously with his marriage and the arrival of his System” (2000:88). Also drawing upon Harper’s study, Maddox observes that work on the play “was a real test of George’s composure, for the plot dramatizes the triangle at the heart of her marriage and leaves the self-sacrificing wife as the loser” (2000:88). As we will see, Phase 18 in *A Vision* might well be described as the phase of the loser, occupied by Arnold and Goethe, from Yeats’s perspective. In the play, Maddox reports, the three women characters “are struggling over Cuchulain in roles not very different from those played by George, Maud and Iseult” (2000:89). She adds: “Queen Emer is robust, worldly and decisive, fighting to reclaim her husband from the spell of the mesmerizing, statuesque moon-goddess Fand. But she finds she must also rescue him from his desire for his young mistress, Eithne Inguba” (2000:89).

Fand and Eithne, Maddox notes, “are described as exquisitely beautiful” (2000:89). Maddox also draws attention to the “unhappy ending of this allegory” (2000:89). “As the short play ends,” she says, “[Cuchulain’s anti-self] Bricriu shrieks at Emer that she must renounce her husband’s love if she wishes to rescue him from Fand’s other world. The noble Emer makes the sacrifice, only to see Eithne Inguba come in and take Cuchulain back into her arms” (2000:89). Maddox quips: “Emer clearly has much to be jealous about” (2000:89).

It might also be said that, within the universe of the ‘System’, Arnold and Goethe at Phase 18 have much to be jealous about, in comparison to Yeats at the ideal Phase 17, and the rest of the examples from phases 13 to 17, in terms of the attainment of the ideal condition of Unity of Being. Significantly, the interrelation of Eithne and Emer in the play mirrors the impact of Iseult on George, placed at Phase 14 and Phase 18 respectively in the Script and duly inhabiting these phases (albeit unnamed) in *A Vision*, at the time of what Margaret Harper has described in “George Yeats” (2010) as the Yeatses’ “perfectly wretched honeymoon” (2010:158). As George Harper explains, “some letter (now lost or destroyed)” to Yeats from Iseult evidently caused what is cited in the Script as George’s “OM” or “‘Moment of greatest disquiet’” on 24 October 1917, which “in turn moved her to attempt automatic writing” (vol 1, 1987:5) and therefore precipitated the Script, which provided the “genesis and basic materials for *A Vision*” (vol 1, 1987:x). Maddox provides a marvellously simple translation of the hieratic “OM” of the Script on this point: “It was the worst moment of her life” (2000:67). Maddox adds: “Any illusion that Yeats loved her was shattered” (2000:67). Maddox says that while George’s “burst of magic” with her automatic writing “was a brilliant stroke, one of the most ingenious wifely stratagems ever tried to take a husband’s mind off another woman”, it “was also a move of desperation. Like Scheherazade,

Georgie staved off her fate by captivating her master, but at the price of being unable to stop” (2000:73).

Inevitably, the newlyweds’ troubled love life impacted upon the Script and left its mark in various ways in the published text of *A Vision*. In his examination of the dialogue of 17 January 1918, George Harper reports that Yeats “concluded the discussion of the Commedia and the Noh with a reference to George: 38. Can you give medium her PF [Persona of Fate] 38. disillusion” (vol 1, 1987:159). Harper explains that this “answer established the Body of Fate of Phase 18 (George’s) in *A Vision*, though it was modified slightly, from ‘Disillusion’ to ‘Enforced Disillusionment’” (vol 1, 1987:159). This disillusionment is related to Yeats’s obsession with Iseult, in particular that moment referred to by the medium when, as Maddox says, the “illusion that Yeats loved her was shattered”. The appearance of “Disillusionment” as a phasal characteristic is a snapshot of the collaborative nature of the treatise, and echoes the lines from “Solomon and the Witch” (1918):

Maybe the bride-bred brings despair,
For each an imagined image brings
And finds a real image there.

(Allt, Alspach 1989:388)

In a sense, Phase 18 captures Yeats’s lower-voltage romantic and sexual feelings for George in comparison to the Gones, and forecasts the Yeats marriage as unromantic by comparison. In the phasal summary, we may glimpse the troubled relationship, and the effort to stabilise the marriage: “Perhaps now, and for the first time, the love of a living woman (‘disillusionment’ once accepted), as apart from beauty or function, is an admitted aim, though not yet wholly achieved... He is still disillusioned but he

can no longer through philosophy substitute for the desire that life has taken away love for what life has brought” (Yeats 2008:66). In her perceptive concluding passage to *Wisdom of Two* (2006), Margaret Harper explains that George “participated to an unusually active degree in the writing and revision of the description of Phase 18, which of course describes her own soul, in the various drafts of the Great Wheel” (2008:343). Harper highlights that the Body of Fate, “the Faculty that describes the course of destiny, is ‘enforced disillusion[ment]’: in other words, souls at this phase do not have the lives they envisioned. However, with their Creative Mind of ‘emotional philosophy’, they make the best of their circumstances” (2008:343). Although she does not relate this to Arnold at Phase 18, Harper insightfully pairs George with Goethe in this regard:

Like Goethe...souls at 18 can know themselves, body and mind, and make of that awareness a seemingly separate ‘subject of knowledge’ through which they attain much. Phase 18, we recall, is ‘the only phase where the most profound form of wisdom is possible, a wisdom as emotional as that of the Centaur Chiron’ – an arresting evocation of a figure ambiguously situated between mortal and immortal worlds, a teacher and prophet, beloved of Apollo and mentor to kings, but also wounded beyond healing and finally left alone.

(2008:343)

Having probably put two and two together, as it were, by adding George and JBY from Ellmann’s account of phasal allocation in *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*, to Goethe and Arnold from the published text of *A Vision*, Bloom is the sole leading critic to list these four individuals collectively – Arnold, Goethe, George, and JBY – as belonging to Phase 18. In doing so, Bloom clearly

recognises the attendant aesthetic distinction drawn by Yeats between his wife and Muses. In the course of his examination of the phases of Yeats's Muses, 14 and 16 (those of greatest possible human beauty), Bloom clarifies in brackets: "(Mrs. Yeats is not among the Muses, but is in Phase 18, 'the Emotional Man,' which might be called Yeats's domesticated phase, since his wife and father join Goethe and Arnold there)" (1972:253). Bloom continues with his comparison of Phase 14 and Phase 16, and does not return to this extraordinary grouping. It is unclear what he means exactly by "domesticated phase" and how this applies to each individual. His description seems to encompass family or domestic ties in the case of George and JBY, as well as the sense of being tamed or subdued, in so far as Phase 18 falls outside what he refers to earlier, in the chapter "The Wild Swans at Coole", as the "Romantic matrix of Phases 13, 14, 16, and 17" (1972:195). Moving on from his examination of "the five phases most crucial to the Great Wheel – 13 through 17", Bloom briefly considers Phase 18, "exemplified by Goethe and Arnold", arguing that in the summary "Yeats is sardonic, for he disapproves the flight from Romanticism of these poets" (1972:256). Quoting from the summary, Bloom argues that "[t]he poets of Phase 16 or Phase 17, like Blake, Shelley, and Yeats 'forget their broken toys' and so are not reduced, like Goethe and Arnold, to loving 'what disillusionment gave'" (1972:256).

Bloom's interpretation of Phase 18 is buttressed by his observation that "[a]s one goes around the Wheel from Phase 18 through Phase 22, there is a necessary falling away from the possibility of Unity of Being" (1972:256). In the original *A Vision*, Yeats explains that "Unity of Being becomes possible at Phase 12, and ceases to be possible at Phase 18, but is rare before Phase 13 and after Phase 17, and is most common at Phase 17" (2008:26). Oddly, critics have not commented on the ambiguity of this statement: though Unity of Being ceases to be possible at Phase 18, it is rare after Phase 17. In the revised *A*

Vision, Yeats elaborates: “Sexual love becomes the most important event in life... At Phase 18 the primary tincture closes once more, and at Phase 19 the antithetical” (1990:135). Full-blooded sexual love, indeed Unity of Being in full measure, does not apply, in this scheme, to George at Phase 18 – it applies to Yeats at Phase 17 and the two other women in the ‘love quadrangle’, Iseult and Maud, at Phase 14 and Phase 16 respectively; and to the Rhymers at Phase 13. In *The Identity of Yeats*, Ellmann indicates that it is only “in the four phases closest to full moon” – that is, phases 13, 14, 16, and 17 – “where what Yeats (borrowing the phrase from his father) calls ‘Unity of Being’ is possible” (1964:158).

In the summary of Phase 18, it is clear that, as Ellmann says in *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*, “unity is beginning to break up, though a ‘wisdom of the emotions’ is still possible” (1960:240). Yeats writes:

The conflict between that portion of the life of feeling, which appertains to his unity, with that portion he has in common with others, coming to an end, has begun to destroy that knowledge... At its next phase it will have fallen asunder; already it can only preserve its unity by a deliberate balancing of experiences... and so it must desire that phase (though that transformed into the emotional life), where wisdom seems a physical accident.

(2008:66/67)

Whether one sees Phase 18 as the phase where Unity of Being ceases to be possible and is breaking up, or as the phase where Unity of Being is barely maintained before falling asunder at the next phase, it is clear enough that George’s Phase 18 permits, at best, a second-best sort of unity compared to the

four phases closest to Full Moon. This underlying rupture or breach between Yeats's phase and that of George, which in fact runs counter to George's efforts in the Script to forge a closeness between their phases at the expense of his obsession with the Gones, forecasts their marriage; but it also helps to explain the pairing of Arnold and Goethe at Phase 18, from Yeats's perspective. As we have seen, the Daimonic Man of Phase 17 is posited in response to Arnold's commentary on the Celtic constitution of the ideal man of genius. Moreover, the measured, balanced Daimonic Man is not only 'Celtic' and at the height of his powers, but a version of Arnold's Hellenised best self, projected in the context of the anarchy of the Irish civil war. We might recall Kiberd's words in his chapter "Ireland – England's Unconscious?": "Matthew Arnold, like his exemplar Burke, was never an Irish nationalist", arguing instead "that the 'idle and imprudent' Irish could never properly govern themselves" (1996:31). The target of Yeats's representation of Irish self-rule at Phase 17 is Arnold at Phase 18.

What we have in *A Vision*, in the breach between Phase 17 and Phase 18, in the contrast between full-blooded Unity of Being at Phase 17 and a weaker form, even a breaking up of unity at Phase 18, is a symbolic representation of Yeats's rejection of Arnold's Celticist proposal. Yeats is emphatically affirming Irish self-determination. In his Celticist analysis, Arnold claims that the Englishman "is mainly German" and the English are "a Germanic people", but "not so wholly as to exclude hauntings of Celtism, which clash with our Germanism" (2008:56). These "two natures are mixed in [the English], and natures which pull them such different ways" (2008:56). Arnold proceeds to demonstrate that it is in English poetry "that the Celtic part in us has left its trace clearest" (2008:56). On this basis, he stakes his claim that the Celtic peoples are "a part of ourselves" (2008:73) within an imperial collective, and calls for a chair of Celtic at Oxford "to send... a message of peace to Ireland" (2008:74). It is

therefore of tremendous significance that Arnold is placed with Goethe at Phase 18. The pairing of Arnold and Goethe references Arnold's Celticist analysis: over and over again, Arnold cites Goethe as the exemplar of Germanic genius, arguing that "it is only German poetry, Goethe's poetry, that has, since the Greeks, made much way with" (2008:70). While Goethe is repeatedly named and quoted by Arnold in illustrating and praising the Germanic genius, it is often with the purpose of contrasting the Germanic with the desirable Celtic element. For example, Arnold argues that "the principal deficiency of German poetry is in style" (2008:57) and quotes from Goethe, arguing that while nothing could "be better in its way than the style" Goethe employs "it is the style of prose as much as of poetry" (2008:57). It is style, Arnold argues, "which the Germans have not, and which the Celts have" (2008:60).

As we have seen, according to Arnold the Celts have style "in a wonderful measure" and it is "the most striking quality of their poetry" (2008:60); and Yeats shrewdly takes Arnold up on this, in the portrayal of the Daimonic Man of Phase 17 whose ideal Mask of simplicity that is also intensity gives him precisely style in "a wonderful measure". Arnold says that "we English have so much Germanism in us that our productions offer abundant examples of German want of style as well as of its opposite" (2008:60), the Celtic abundance of style. The "sense for style which English poetry shows", he argues, is "more plausibly" derived from "a root of the poetical Celtic nature in us" (2008:63). The representative Englishman Arnold is thus placed in Phase 18 with the figure he himself repeatedly cites as the exemplar of the Germanic element or genius, which is the predominant nature of the "two natures" Arnold holds to be mixed in the English, the other being the Celtic element. In this light, it is significant that an exemplar of the Celtic element deemed so desirable by Arnold, and held to be a subsidiary but special part of the genius of the English, is absent from Arnold's phase. Arnold propounds that the English are "not thorough Germans

by genius and with the German deadness to style” but rather that “we [English] have another side to our genius beside the German one” (2008:62), namely the Celtic element. However, Arnold is consigned in *A Vision* to sharing Phase 18 with the Germanic element, so to speak, but not with the Celtic element. To adapt Margaret Harper’s analysis of George in relation to Goethe, Yeats thus leaves Arnold “alone” with only the Germanic element of his Celticist formulation; and this is indeed a “wounding beyond healing”.

With, at best, a poorer sort of unity at Phase 18, and at worst, a breaking up of unity, this is the phase, to adapt Maddox’s analysis of *The Only Jealousy*, of “the loser”. There is much to be jealous about, given the full-blooded Unity of Being projected right next door, in the stylish and measured ‘Celtic’ or ancient genius of Phase 17. Symbolically denying Arnold’s claim on Celtic genius, Yeats detaches, and one might say reclaims, Celtic genius from Arnold’s representation of a lamed and ineffectual Celt. Arnold’s imperialist proposition is depicted as unfulfilled: his is the disillusionment of not getting what he had envisioned; he “can no longer through philosophy substitute for the desire that life has taken away, love for what life has brought” (1990:176). The possibility of Celtic genius being ceded to Arnold is foreclosed in the distinctness of the phases – or, we might say, the ‘distinguished’ nature of Phase 17, and the ‘self-possession’ of the Daimonic Man, harking back to Yeats’s distinction from Arnold long ago in the appraisal of Ferguson. We should bear in mind, too, Arnold’s “The Incompatibles” (1881) where he acknowledges that “we know but too well... the Irish consider themselves a distinct nation from us” but insists this “ought to seem as strange and absurd as for Scotland or Wales or Cornwall to claim a parliament, an army and navy, and a diplomacy distinct from ours” (1891:5). The Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 is defined in distinction to Arnold and Goethe at Phase 18; and this is therefore a symbolic

rejection of Arnold's notion of blending in an imperial collective, underlining instead the singularity of Irish genius and self-determination.

In his brief account of Phase 18 in section II of "The Stirring of the Bones", Yeats refrains from explicitly mentioning Arnold but alludes to "The Incompatibles" and the idea of blending, again drawing a clear distinction between himself at Phase 17 and Goethe (and by implication, Arnold) at Phase 18:

I still think that in a species of man, wherein I count myself, nothing so much matters as Unity of Being, but if I seek it as Goethe sought, who was not of that species, I but combine in myself, and perhaps as it now seems, looking backward, in others also, incompatibles. Goethe, in whom objectivity and subjectivity were intermixed, I hold, as the dark is mixed with the light at the eighteenth Lunar Phase, could but seek it as Wilhelm Meister seeks it, intellectually, critically, and through a multitude of deliberately chosen experiences; events and forms of skill gathered as if for a collector's cabinet; whereas true Unity of Being, where all the nature murmurs in response if but a single note be touched, is found emotionally, instinctively, by the rejection of all experience not of the right quality, and by the limitation of its quantity.

(1999:268)

In *A Vision*, one of the defining terms of the favoured antithetical gyre and man, reflecting the Romantic bias of the 'System', is "emotional". James Simpson highlights by reference to W.A. Madden that Arnold's 1853 preface is written in "the spirit of Weimar classicism" (1979:64/65). He says Arnold "establishes a

poetic theory, which, for the sake of brevity, one may term neo-classical” (1990:96). Arnold “repudiates romantic subjectivism and rejects personal emotion as the basic concern of art... In the place of emotion he puts ‘actions’” (1990:96). Simpson explains: “There can be no question that in asserting all this Arnold was more or less consciously following Goethe” (1979:96). Arnold is “plainly indebted to Goethe,” he says, “who likewise stresses the importance of selecting an excellent action” (1979:65). “Unlike Goethe,” he adds, “Arnold explains what he means by ‘excellent actions’”, albeit saying “nothing from which Goethe would have wished to dissent” (1979:66). As we have seen, Yeats appears to distance himself from “action” in his description of Unity of Being at Phase 17. Notably, the idea of “action” in Arnold’s preface, bound up with his insistence on a connection to the outer or objective world rather than “the dialogue of the mind with itself”, appears to have been drawn upon in the summary of Phase 18. Yeats writes that “the being” of Phase 18 “can hardly, if action and the intellect that concerns action are taken from him, recreate his dream life; and when he says ‘Who am I?’, he finds it difficult to examine his thoughts in relation to one another, his emotions in relation to one another, but begins to find it easy to examine them in relation to action” (1990:175). “He can examine those actions themselves,” Yeats adds, “with a new clearness. Now for the first time since Phase 12, Goethe’s saying is almost true: ‘Man knows himself by action only, by thought never’” (1990:175).

It is clear from the 1853 preface that Goethe figures strongly in Arnold’s thinking about the importance of the achievement of objectivity rather than falling prey, like the Empedocles of his poem, and like modern poets, to a dialogue of the mind with itself. As Simpson says, it was Goethe “on whose authority Arnold in his drive towards objectivity had chiefly relied” (1979:75). The pairing of Goethe and Arnold in *A Vision* would appear to be informed, in part, by Arnold’s strong identification with Goethe and objectivity in the

preface. This is consistent with Phase 18 being an even-numbered and therefore primary or objective phase within the antithetical sequence from Phase 8 to Phase 22. The being of Phase 18, Yeats writes, “must relate all to social life” for its “object is no longer a single image of passion” (1990:175). Yet as we have seen, single-minded passion, by which Yeats had long since characterised Ferguson as a Celtic genius, is a theme tune across Arnold’s oeuvre. If we return to the related matter of “emotion”, Arnold was of the view that the overemotional Celt, sorely lacking “balance, measure” and “a law of harmony presiding over the whole”, and passionately reacting against fact, had failed to produce great works like the ancient Greeks and Italians. Notably, too, when we consider the placement of Arnold with Goethe at Phase 18, Arnold had said the Celt had not matched the achievement of “the less emotional German” (2008:45), exemplified throughout Arnold’s analysis by Goethe. This notion of the “less emotional” is captured symbolically, too, in the placement of Arnold and Goethe in an even-numbered or primary (objective, moral, reasonable) phase within the antithetical (aesthetic, emotional, imaginative) sequence from Phase 8 to Phase 22.

Simpson says of Arnold and Goethe that “a moral tendency... was crucial to both men” (1979:63), but Simpson also finds Arnold guilty of a general moral misinterpretation of Goethe, not least on the point of the suppression of one’s emotions and suffering. Arnold’s decision to rein in his emotions after his involvement with Marguerite in Switzerland in 1848/9 parallels Yeats’s decision to marry George as an escape from the emotional tempest of his pursuit of Iseult, like her mother before her: a flight from Romanticism. Maddox comments on Yeats’s “The Wild Old Wicked Man”, penned in 1937: “Far from being another ‘final apology’, it is a final defiance of Catholic Ireland and, one suspects, of his wife: ‘... But a coarse old man am I,/I choose the second-best,/I forget it all awhile/Upon a woman’s breast’” (2000:311/312). However, it is

possible that Yeats has borrowed from, and is perhaps alluding to, Arnold's poem "The Second Best" (1852), a title referring to the desire for a "moderate" life, rather than the best. Yeats's first choice would have been, of course, Iseult. Yet his decision did not ultimately lead, like Arnold's, to repression of his poetry. Arguing that the "theoretical arguments which Arnold adduces in support of his decision to withdraw 'Empedocles on Etna' are so weak", Simpson adds that its "suppression... must be seen as an almost symbolic gesture by Arnold... of moral rather than artistic significance" (1979:57). He says Arnold "never acted more in what he [erroneously] conceived to be a Goethean spirit than when he suppressed it" (1979:57). The relation between Arnold and Goethe acquires a certain momentousness given that, as Simpson says, Arnold "avoided madness by suppressing the capacity for suffering, but in this way he ultimately killed his frail poetic gift" (1979:37).

Arnold's loss of poetical powers, effectively through misapplication of "measure" and a consequent failure to achieve harmony, is perhaps alluded to in the disjunction between the ideal Phase 17 and immediately less desirable Phase 18. Moreover, in her essay "George Yeats", Margaret Harper has pointed to a "discourse [in texts like *A Vision*] that [quite often] approaches or is characterized by humour", a kind of "comedy" that complements rather than opposes its concomitant "tragedy or seriousness" (2010:164). This is something to consider in regard to the representation of Arnold at George's Phase 18. Whereas Arnold "made sport" of Dowden, it would appear that Yeats makes sport of Arnold. Given Arnold's distrust of subjectivity in the 1853 preface, and in particular his portrayal of the overemotional Celt, it is puzzling that critics have not been struck by Arnold's placement at Phase 18, with Goethe, given that the Will is that of "The Emotional Man" (1990:174). In this phase, the True Mask is "Intensity through emotions" and the True Creative Mind is "Emotional philosophy" (1990:174). We might consider, adapting again Margaret Harper's

words concerning George and Goethe, that Arnold with his “emotional [or anti-emotional] philosophy” is left with Goethe or the Germanic genius to “make the best of his circumstances” or facts. Yeats explains that the “*antithetical tincture* begins to attain... when out of phase, sentimentality” (1990:175). This is a striking reversal, cutting to the quick of Arnold’s portrait of the Celt:

“*Sentimental* – always ready to react against the despotism of fact”. As I have suggested, this claim appears to have partly informed the formulation of the opposed gyres, which give rise to the ideal man of genius at Phase 17, alongside Arnold at Phase 18.

If this emphasis on emotion, and the arising of so resonant a term as “sentimentality”, is subversive in a Celtic sense, this also seems to be the case in a cultural sense. Setting out, with ironic humour, “the difference between an Irish Fenian and an English rough” in *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold says of the former that “if we deal tenderly with a sentimentalist like this, it is out of pure philanthropy” (2008:118). Strikingly, too, Arnold complains that the “disparagers of culture make its motive curiosity” (2008:98). In a passage inadvertently reminiscent of his claim that sensibility “made the Celts full of reverence and enthusiasm for genius... and things of the mind” (2008:47), Arnold insists that while there “is a curiosity about intellectual matters which is futile, and merely a disease, so there is certainly a curiosity, – a desire after the things of the mind simply for their own sakes and for the pleasure of seeing them as they are, – which is, in an intelligent being, natural and laudable” (2008:98). Culture, he says, is “properly described not as having its origin in curiosity, but... in the love of perfection” (2008:99): more encouragement for a merger of Celt and best self by Yeats. At Phase 18, the False Mask is “Curiosity” (1990:174). The Will, Yeats explains in the summary, “is vacillating and curious” (1990:175). “When he seeks to live objectively,” Yeats explains, “he will substitute curiosity for emotional wisdom, he will invent

objects of desire artificially... the False Mask will press upon him, pursue him, and, refusing conflict, he will fly from the True Mask at each artificial choice” (1990:176).

This might be read as a commentary on Arnold’s invention of an ineffectual but desirable, or “artificial”, Celt. Overall at Phase 18, we are again able to see a mix of Arnoldian terms and concepts employed in the formulation of a phasal type and examples, this time fittingly – and subversively – shaping the representation of Arnold himself, with Goethe. The humour seemingly informing the construction of Phase 18 should not mask the fact that we are witnessing, in conjunction with the ideal Phase 17, a kind of patricide.

Ellmann’s linkage of George and JBY at Phase 18, in *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*, is evidently on the basis of direct disclosure from George (whom he had personally interviewed, as he tells us in the 1979 preface). However, although there are occasional mentions of JBY, his placement at Phase 18 is not registered in the two volumes of Harper’s study of the Script; nor across the four volumes of *Yeats’s Vision Papers*. As Harper says, Yeats was “not at work [the creation of *A Vision*] that would have pleased John Butler Yeats” (vol 1, 1987:57). Referring to a family gathering on 10 March 1918, Harper says “Lolly was... conscious that [JBY] disapproved strongly of Yeats’s occult predilections” (vol 1, 1987:228).

As William O’Donnell and Douglas Archibald point out, Arnold’s relationship with his father, Dr Thomas Arnold, the renowned headmaster at Rugby, “became a type of nineteenth-century Oedipal drama, and WBY inevitably saw his own relationship to JBY against this background” (1999:531). Again, it is puzzling that Yeats’s biographers and critics have not made more of the information that JBY was installed at Phase 18 in Yeats’s culminating occult work – against his Will, as it were. The epithet “The Emotional Man” would

appear to reference JBY's letter to Dowden dated December 31, 1869, in which he asserts: "In the completely emotional man the least awakening of feeling is a harmony, in which every chord of every feeling vibrates" (Ellmann 1960:15). We can see in this statement the paternal influence on Yeats's embryonic but already harmonious Daimonic Man of the Ferguson appraisal, culminating in the Daimonic Man of *A Vision*, enjoying Unity of Being. This was "gay, exaggerated talk" intended, as Ellmann then clarifies, to unsettle and provoke the too serious, rational Dowden. Yet in *A Vision*, JBY himself is placed in the phase of "The Emotional Man", that of Arnold and Goethe, where (as Ellmann says) "unity is beginning to break up" (1960:240), rather than in the phase of the Daimonic Man. Ellmann writes that "the problem" for the young Yeats "of revolt against a father whose intellectual domination was so complete was complicated because [JBY] had himself revolted against the standard values of the nineteenth century" (1960:23). He explains that "the position of counter-revolutionary" is "always difficult for the young" and that Yeats "had a great deal of trouble in finding a basis for self-expression" (1960:23). In *A Vision*, however, the Daimonic Man of the ideal Phase 17 is at the height of his power, with the expression of his genius easier than at any other phase; whereas the tenuous unity of the Emotional Man at Phase 18 is falling (or about to fall) asunder and is therefore passing away.

There is, then, a sharp breach between the Daimonic Man and the Emotional Man, with the former having surpassed the latter. We may read this in part as a symbolic representation of the son surpassing the father; as a commentary on JBY as an 'unfinished' man: famously unable to complete a painting. That is, we are witnessing Yeats 'killing' his father. In his chapter "W.B. Yeats: New Ways to Kill Your Father" in *New Ways to Kill Your Mother* (2012), Colm Tóibín examines the letters from "father to son, from New York [where JBY moved to in 1907] to Dublin, from the great unfinisher to the connoisseur of

completion” (2012:38). He observes: “The son is cold and ruthless; the old man desperate to be murdered. It is as though Oedipus and Herod and some third force out of Freud’s dark laboratory had joined forces” (2012:41). Against this backdrop, we can better appreciate the Arnoldian placement of JBY at Phase 18 in *A Vision* where, it might be said, the killer blow is delivered, behind an occult veil. This occurs in the shadow of the emphatic emergence of Yeats at the ideal Phase 17. Moreover, the occult and ‘Celtic’ nature of Phase 17 suggests a psychological or Oedipal alignment with his mother. As Ellmann says, Susan Pollexfen Yeats “liked best to exchange ghost and fairy stories... she always considered her birthplace, the romantic country of Sligo, the most beautiful place in the world, and she passed on the feeling to her children. Places associated with [JBY], like London and Dublin, never had the same charm for them or for her” (1960:24). Maddox refers to Yeats’s speculation in writing “in 1903, in the *All Ireland Review*, ‘has it not been said that a man of genius takes the most after his mother?’” (2000:198/9).

Yet it might also be said that Yeats kills two critical fathers. As Lionel Trilling says: “For English-speaking people, Arnold is the father of criticism. Coleridge is in some respects a greater critical mind than Arnold... But Coleridge, great as he is, never has had the effect upon criticism that Arnold has had” (1979:410). In Yeats’s case, however, his relationship with JBY was intellectually bound up with Arnold, which helps to explain their allocation to Phase 18. We should mark well Ellmann’s linkage of Yeats’s placement at the ideal phase of *A Vision* and his observation that “[t]he power to classify is the power to control, and a new sense of strength comes into [Yeats’s] writing” (1960:240). This fact Yeats realised himself, as we have seen, crediting in the revised *A Vision* the “incredible experience” of his wife’s automatic writing for his poetry gaining “in self-possession and power” (1990:75). The ‘killing’ of his critical fathers in *A Vision*, which accounts in part for his surge in poetical power and self-

possession, bristles with the complications of ‘influence’. Although Yeats ‘kills’ Arnold it remains that he is deeply indebted to Arnold for a range of terms and concepts by which various phases, not least his own, are formulated; much as he was indebted to his father for the concept of Unity of Being, and his distinction between personality and character, in the treatise. Moreover, it is perhaps not entirely fair to Yeats to say merely that he is thus trapped in colonialist contradiction, like a fly struggling in marmalade, for we are witnessing in *A Vision* a phenomenon much more efficacious for the purposes of the artist than this suggests.

Bloom argues in *Yeats* that the Great Wheel “is perhaps best regarded... as a system of personal and poetic influence, or table of possible reincarnations” (1972:253). The arresting either/or that Bloom identifies is owing to the occult being Yeats’s habitual mode of what Bloom calls in *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973) poetic “misprision” (1975:7) or misreading of strong precursors. For Bloom, poetic history is “indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves” (1975:5). He argues that “[w]eaker talents idealize; figures of capable imagination appropriate for themselves. But nothing is got for nothing, and self-appropriation involves the immense anxieties of indebtedness, for what strong poet desires the realization that he has failed to create himself?” (1975:5). The notion of “immense anxieties” perhaps helps to explain the almost imperceptible elision of Arnold in the summary of Phase 18. Named only once, as the second of the two phasal examples, Arnold is not explicitly mentioned in the actual description of the phase; nor is he referred to in Yeats’s account of the phase in “The Stirring of the Bones”. Goethe, however, is repeatedly named and openly discussed in regard to the phase in both texts. Readers might scarcely register the impression that Arnold

is secondary or remote to proceedings at Phase 18, rather than central to the concerns of the treatise.

Ellmann points out in the Introduction to *Eminent Domain* (1965), a book which prefigures Bloom's theory, that because "language is common and literature is continuous, the words in a book are coded records of successive impositions of eminent domain. The best writers expropriate best, they disdain petty debts in favour of grand, authoritative larcenies" (1967:8). There could be perhaps no better description than this of *A Vision*, which from phase to phase, example to example, reads like successive impositions of eminent domain. Yeats's grand and authoritative philosophical treatise is very much a product of immense larcenies rather than a confession of debts, among them the appropriation and adaptation of Arnoldian ideas, not least the Arnoldian ideal of the grand style, as well as the seizure and construction of the emblematic figure of Arnold himself in occult terms, at Phase 18, along with Goethe. We should not be surprised to find that, in *A Vision*, Yeats confirms his own premier place among poets; and that, behind the veil carefully drawn over his decisive confrontation with Arnold, he may be counted among what Bloom calls "the strong poets, major figures with the persistence to wrestle with their strong precursors, even to the death" (1973:5).

ii) VEHEMENCE AND SELF-WILL: MAUD GONNE AND BLAKE AT PHASE 16

I will now close this thesis with a brief look at the intervening phases 14 and 16, those of Yeats's Muses Iseult and Maud Gonne respectively, in relation to the Arnoldian element in Yeats. George Harper explains that the dialogue of 2

January 1918 “furnishes the psychological basis for the explanatory essays about Phases 14 and 16” (vol 1, 1987:104) in *A Vision*. Quoting from the treatise, Harper confirms: ““As we approach Phase 15’, Yeats wrote, with Iseult and Maud in mind, ‘personal beauty increases and at Phase 14 and Phase 16 the greatest human beauty becomes possible’. When Yeats wrote that ‘Many Beautiful Women’ were examples of Phase 14, he was thinking of Iseult; and the ‘some beautiful women’ of Phase 16 refers to Maud, perhaps to her only” (vol 1, 1987:104). Although she inhabits Phase 16, Maud is not formally named among the examples in the treatise: “William Blake, Rabelais, Aretino, Paracelsus, some beautiful women” (1990:169). Significantly, as I have indicated by reference to Peter Ackroyd, a range of critics have pointed out, but without connecting this to the placement of Blake at Phase 16 in *A Vision*, that Yeats was convinced that Blake was a ‘Celt’. We might therefore expect Yeats’s engagement with Arnoldian Celticism to have some kind of bearing on the portrayal of this phase, beyond Blake’s appearance at a central phase in the antithetical sequence and therefore associated with such ‘Celtic’ qualities as emotion and imagination.

For Bloom, Blake is “the greatest exemplification” (1972:247) of Phase 16, labelled that of “The Positive Man” (Yeats 1990:169). He argues that “[e]verything about the intentional structure of Phase 16 suggests that Yeats wishes to reduce Blake” to a “[nineteenth-century] caricature [as excited, incoherent, confused]” (1972:247). Strikingly, however, the Creative Mind at Phase 16 would also appear to partly reflect Yeats’s long familiarity with Arnold’s works: “*True – Vehemence. False – Opinionated will*” (1990:169). We should recall Arnold’s notions of the Celt’s passionate or “vehement reaction against fact” (2008:63) and of Celtic “self-will” (2008:71), which closely resemble the terminology here in *A Vision*. The Celtic genius, Arnold says, has “sentiment as its main basis, with love of beauty, charm, and

spirituality for its excellence, ineffectualness and self-will for its defect” (2008:49). Yeats would appear, once again, to be working within the Arnoldian Celticist tradition, altering aspects positively to suit his own purpose. Long before, in his letter to Richard Ashe King dated 5 August 1897, Yeats had associated the Celt with vehemence while effectively drawing a parallel between the Celts and ancient Greeks, whom he distances from the Saxons:

My first principle in my work is that poetry must make the land in which we live a holy land as Homer made Greece... I believe that the celtic literature which is now beginning will find it possible to do this, for the celtic races love the soil of their countries vehemently, & have as great a mass of legends about that soil as Homer had about his. Saxon literature is the literature of far off holy lands for the most part.

(Gould, Kelly, Toomey 1997:129)

In the same letter, in another instance of the ‘anxiety of influence’, Yeats has a dig at Arnold, echoing his criticism of Arnold in presenting his embryonic Daimonic Man of the Ferguson review: “The third principle is that art is not a criticism of life but a revelation of the realities that are behind life. It has no direct relation with morals” (1997:130). In the description of Phase 16, it is also striking that the vehement individual of this phase is expressly at odds with fact. Yeats writes that “so small is the *primary* nature, sense of fact is an impossibility” (1990:169). Given that it is no secret that Yeats saw Blake as a Celt, it would appear that we are perhaps glimpsing something of Arnold’s up-and-down Celt, “struggling, fierce, passionate”, with his “strain of Titanism” (2008:64), in the portrayal at Phase 16 of a struggling and frenzied, indeed vehement Blake, blinded to fact:

In men of the phase there will commonly be both natures, for to be true to phase is a ceaseless struggle. At one moment they are full of hate – Blake writes of ‘Flemish and Venetian demons’ and of some picture of his own destroyed ‘by some vile spell of Stoddart’s’ – and their hate is always close to madness; and at the next they produce the comedy of Aretino and of Rabelais or the mythology of Blake, and discover symbolism to express the overflowing and bursting of the mind. There is always an element of frenzy...

(1990:170)

We might also correlate the notion of “excitement” at this phase with Arnold’s assertion that “it is not so much the vulgar satisfactions that attract [the Celt] as emotion and excitement” (2008:44). Significantly, “excitement” at Blake’s Phase 16 corresponds with the literary-historical sweep of “Dove or Swan”, in which the representation not only of Blake but also Nietzsche would seem to have been shaped, in part, by Yeats’s longstanding preoccupation with Arnoldian morbidity which, as we have seen, can be traced at Phase 13 (the Rhymers) and Phase 23 (Synge) in the Great Wheel. Yeats writes: “Certain men have sought to express the new emotion through the *Creative Mind*, though fit instruments of expression do not yet exist... but such men, Blake, Coventry Patmore at moments, Nietzsche, unlike those who, from Richardson to Tolstoy, from Hobbes to Mill and Spencer, have grown in number and serenity, are full of morbid excitement and few in number” (2008:172/173).

Unsurprisingly, we can also link Yeats’s foremost Muse Maud Gonne, effectively intertwined with Blake in the summary, to Arnoldian morbidity – although, as with Blake and Nietzsche, there are wider currents of nineteenth-

and twentieth-century discourses on morbidity also in play. George Harper highlights that in *A Vision* “the *False* part of *Creative Mind* became Opinionated Will, a characteristic that Yeats may have borrowed from his own bitter description of Maud’s ‘opinionated mind’ in ‘A Prayer for my Daughter’” (vol 1, 1987:103). Maud’s opinionated mind in this poem also corresponds with Scene II of Arnold’s “Empedocles on Etna” where the central character reflects:

Born into life! – in vain,
 Opinions, those or these,
 Unalter’d to retain
 The obstinate mind decrees;
 Experience, like a sea, soaks all-effacing in...

(1905:450)

This might seem a tenuous connection to Arnold but, as we have seen, Yeats draws in part upon the philosophical Empedocles as well as Arnold’s poem and 1853 preface for the structuring principles of the gyres from which the Daimonic Man arises, and the formulation of particular phases (such as the Rhymers’ Phase 13 and Synge’s Phase 23). This might also help to explain in part the configuration of Phase 16 and Phase 14. As we have also seen, in the revised *A Vision*, echoing his elucidation of the gyres in the original version, Yeats writes that it was “this Discord [of Empedocles] or War that Heraclitus called ‘God of all and Father of all, some it has made gods and some men, some bond and some free’, and I recall that Love and War came from the eggs of Leda” (1990:119). It is thus perhaps no coincidence that Yeats’s foremost Muse appears at Phase 16 and her alluring daughter Iseult, in the company of Helen of Troy, at Phase 14, the phases of greatest beauty, chiming with the “Ledaean body” (Allt, Alspach 1989:443) of “Among School Children” (1927). It is also a short step from “Empedocles on Etna” and the 1853 preface, or the morbid

aspect, to the Celtic aspect. Although the word “morbid” does not appear in the phasal summary, this Arnoldian analytical category is evidently brought partly to bear on Maud’s opinionated will: “If, however, it subordinate its intellect to the *Body of Fate*, all the cruelty and narrowness of that intellect are displayed in the service of preposterous purpose after purpose till there is nothing left but the fixed idea and some hysterical hatred” (1990:170). The correspondence between this passage and section II of “J.M. Synge and the Ireland of his Time” (1910) is striking, with the same keywords “fixed idea” and “hysterical” arising, except that in the latter text Yeats actually uses the word “morbid”.

Yeats criticises Irish nationalist “images for the affections” that have grown sterile, and more specifically, the advanced nationalists upholding them: “After a while, in a land that has given itself to agitation over-much, abstract thoughts are raised up between men’s minds and Nature... till minds, whose patriotism is perhaps great enough to carry them to the scaffold, cry down natural impulse with the morbid persistence of minds unsettled by some fixed idea” (1972:313). Yeats proceeds to allude even more vividly to Maud, in terms of a lack of measure which would seem to confirm that Phase 16 is indeed a representation of the Celt – part of a covert dialogue with Arnold on the Celtic constitution of the ideal man (or evidently woman) of genius, culminating in the measured Daimonic Man at the next, ideal Phase 17. Yeats writes: “They no longer love, for only life is loved, and at last, a generation is like an hysterical woman who will make unmeasured accusations and believe impossible things, because of some logical deduction from a solitary thought which has turned a portion of her mind to stone” (1972:314).

Although she does not tie her insights to *A Vision*, Majorie Howes has explained in her chapter “That sweet insinuating feminine voice: hysterics, peasants and the Celtic movement” in *Yeats’s Nations: Gender, Class, and Irishness* (1996)

that the “femininity of Arnold’s Celt had affinities with some late nineteenth-century discourses on hysteria” (1996:21). Howes later points to Burke’s association of “the excesses of the French revolution with ‘the horrid yells, and shrilling screams...’” of women, while “Arnold described the Celtic political temperament as tending towards revolution and sexual pathology” (1996:23). Such discourses would appear to have fed into Yeats’s view of Maud as an advanced nationalist. Moreover, although he does not relate these works to the summary of Phase 16 in *A Vision*, Foster has linked what he calls “the great passage” (2003:61) in “J.M. Synge and the Ireland of his Time” to “Easter 1916”. As Foster shows, Maud was well aware of Yeats’s characterisation of her as a person of the “fixed idea”. In “An Account of Yeats” (1939), which Foster quotes from, Maud recalls Yeats reading her the poem: “... he implored me to forget the stone and its inner fire for the flashing, changing joy of life, but... found my mind dull with the stone of the fixed idea of getting back to Ireland...” (Foster 2003:62).

Amid wider nineteenth- and twentieth-century discourses on morbidity also in play, we can see the Arnoldian dichotomy of morbidity and joy applied by Yeats to Maud in the Irish context, setting up in opposition “the morbid persistence of minds unsettled by some fixed idea” and “the flashing, changing joy of life”. At the same time we can also see in the association of Maud with the “fixed idea” evidence of the importance, in part, of Arnold’s cultural analysis to Yeats. Time and time again, Arnold differentiates between fixed ideas and a disinterested free play of consciousness upon them, in accordance with his opposition of Hebraism and Hellenism respectively. In Chapter V, Arnold writes that those with an over-development of Hebraism “have been led to regard in themselves, as the one thing needful, strictness of conscience, the staunch adherence to some fixed law of doing... instead of spontaneity of consciousness” (2008:155). They have “fancied themselves”, he adds, “to have

in their religion a sufficient basis for the whole of their life fixed and certain for ever” (2008:155). In *A Vision*, the primary or objective gyre is akin to Arnoldian Hebraism in its association with “facts” and the “moral”. This extends to the Arnoldian association of the fixed idea with religion, i.e. Hebraism. In the summary of Phase 16, Maud is the person of the fixed idea, a concept which can be linked by way of “J.M. Synge and the Ireland of his Time” to Yeats’s unfavourable view of her advanced nationalism, inseparable from religion: broadly speaking, majority Catholicism in Ireland; and in particular, her embrace of Catholicism in marrying the advanced nationalist John MacBride.

The link between the notion of the fixed idea and the objective gyre is clear from Harper’s report that, on 31 May 1919, Yeats sought “to comprehend objective love and subjective love” and was told that “‘objective form of intellect’ is the ‘fixed idea’ – a characteristic of Maud Gonne” (vol 2, 1987:280). While Kiberd has associated the antithetical gyre with Catholicism, it is clear that, in the summary of Phase 16, Yeats disparages Maud’s Catholic piety in her chosen role as Madame MacBride, relating this to her primary or “moral” mind, that of the fixed idea. By implication, Yeats rejects their advanced Irish (Catholic) nationalism, even as he pays homage to Maud as Muse – and ridicules his successful love rival MacBride, suggesting that Maud has given herself “to a beggar because he resembles a religious picture” (1990:171). Maud’s marriage to MacBride is also represented in mythological terms in the summary of Phase 16, as Venus’s choice of “lame Vulcan” (1990:171), which Bloom equates with the fact that “Maud Gonne chose MacBride” (1972:248). In the portrayal of Maud as having an imperfect mind in a beautiful body, her mind is matched with the “moral” and facts” of the primary gyre, echoing Arnold’s “facts” and “fixed” ideas synonymous with a Hebraistic outlook and morality tied inflexibly, even fanatically, to religion.

This is inextricably, indeed especially, bound up in the Irish context with Maud's advanced nationalism.

iii) INTOXICATION AND NATURAL MAGIC: ISEULT GONNE, KEATS, AND WORDSWORTH AT PHASE 14

To round off this thesis, I will briefly sketch how Arnold appears to partly inform the representation of Iseult Gonne, as well as Keats and Wordsworth, at Phase 14 in *A Vision*. In *W.B. Yeats and the Muses* (2010), in his examination of "To a Child Dancing in the Wind", Joseph Hassett says that as long as a "quarter of a century after Yeats pictured Iseult dancing in the wind [in 'To a Child Dancing in the Wind'], the memory of the association that prompted the poem was still a powerful image of unconscious energy" (2010:105). Hassett is referring here to Yeats's recollection of Iseult in section I of "Book III: The Soul in Judgment" in the revised *A Vision*, where he writes: "My imagination goes some years backward, and I remember a beautiful young girl singing at the edge of the sea in Normandy words and music of her own composition. She thought herself alone, stood barefooted between sea and sand; sang with lifted head of the civilizations that there had come and gone, ending every verse with the cry: 'O Lord, let something remain' (1990:225). However, although Hassett associates Phase 14 in *A Vision* with Iseult, effectively rectifying Bloom's erroneous but understandable view in *Yeats* of the phase as chiefly that of Olivia Shakespear, Hassett does not consider that the image of Iseult dancing and singing, returning always to the same refrain, also enters the summary of Phase 14.²⁴ I therefore wish to suggest that this is in fact the case.

²⁴ Bloom did not have the benefit of George Harper's study of the Automatic Script. Olivia was placed at "[Phase] 20" (vol 1, 1987:117).

Yeats writes that the Body of Fate is “derived from the phase of the utmost possible physical energy, but of an energy without aim, like that of a child...” (2008:56). He alludes to Iseult in his explanation that “if they [images of desire] move it is to music that returns always to the same note, or in a dance that so returns into itself that they seem immortal” (2008:56). Arnold’s role in shaping the representation of Iseult at Phase 14 is barely detectable, and exceedingly complex, but becomes clearer if we draw a parallel between Yeats’s “To a Child Dancing in the Wind” and Arnold’s early poem “To a Gipsy Child by the Sea-shore”. Yeats’s interest in Arnold’s poem about a gipsy child is not surprising given his more recognised interest in “The Scholar-Gipsy”; and at Phase 14 we are almost imperceptibly in the realm of Celtic natural magic. The titles are strikingly similar in directly addressing their respective subjects or ‘child’, and Yeats also uses the word “shore”, which corresponds with “Sea-shore” in the title of Arnold’s poem, when he introduces the image of the child in the opening line, “Dance there upon the shore” (Allt, Alspach 1989:312). Both poems, then, share the comparable setting of a sea shore: the dancing ‘child’ Iseult in Normandy; and the gipsy child in Douglas on the Isle of Man. There is also a remarkable symmetry of dates of composition, with Arnold’s poem most likely composed in August 1843, and Yeats’s poem in August 1912.²⁵ This was the same month that Iseult turned 18 and was therefore, as Hasset points out, “no longer a child” (2010:105).

In *Matthew Arnold* (1939), Lionel Trilling observes that in “To a Gipsy Child by the Sea-shore” Arnold “finds in an infant’s face the very essence of human

²⁵ In *A Life of Matthew Arnold* (1996), Nicholas Murray writes that Arnold’s poem was “written probably in August 1843” but admits it could have been written as late as August 1845. Yeats reported to Lady Gregory, in a letter dated 8 August 1912, that he had written a poem “on a child dancing... one of the best I have written” (Kelly, Schuchard 2002).

gloom – the gloom of foreknown sorrow” (1955:90). This can be readily appreciated when Arnold writes:

Down the pale cheek long lines of shadow slope,
Which years, and curious thought, and suffering give.
– Thou hast foreknown the vanity of hope,
Foreseen thy harvest – yet proceed’st to live.

O meek anticipant of that sure pain...
What wonder shall time breed, to swell thy strain?

(1905:42/43)

What Trilling describes as the poem’s “theme of conscious tragedy” (1955:90) could be easily applied to Yeats’s poem, in which he effectively foresees Iseult’s suffering, that time will swell her pain and strain. Yeats asks of the child, “What need have you to care/For wind or water’s roar?” which is echoed in the likewise ominous concluding lines: “What need have you to dread/The monstrous crying of wind?” (Allt, Alspach 1989:312). In a Blakean dichotomy between innocence and experience, Yeats poeticizes Iseult as being too young to have known tragedy, but implies that this is just a matter of time, evidently drawing upon his own unhappy life experiences. He refers to the “fool’s triumph, nor yet/Love lost as soon as won” (Allt, Alspach 1989:312), which alludes to John MacBride (his successful rival for Maud Gonne’s hand in marriage) as well as to the agonizingly long-awaited consummation of his relationship with Maud, in 1908, following her separation from MacBride, only for her to soon insist again on platonic friendship. Yeats also alludes to Synge: “...the best labourer dead/And all the sheaves to bind” (Allt, Alspach

1989:312). The progression to Synge is perhaps to be expected, given that the preceding word “fool” is one of many clown references across Yeats’s oeuvre which can be related to MacBride as well as the advanced Irish nationalists of the *Playboy* riots, who can be aligned with the clown-like primary man in *A Vision* via the clown of “The Fisherman”.

As James Longenbach explains in *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats & Modernism* (1988), Yeats’s poem “The People” (1915) “grew out of a quatrain that Yeats wrote after [Maud’s] marriage to John MacBride in 1903” (1990: 151):

My dear is angry that of late
I cry all base blood down
As though she had not taught me hate
By kisses to a clown.

(1990:151)

As Longenbach says, “‘The People’ begins with a spiteful condemnation of the ‘mob’ that balked [sic] at *The Playboy*... and rejected Hugh Lane’s paintings” (1990:151). As we will see, a reference to “clowns” in the closing line of the summary of Iseult’s Phase 14 in *A Vision* would appear to partly allude to MacBride. “To a Child Dancing in the Wind” and “Two Years Later” (1914) are placed in sequence, numbered I and II respectively, in *Responsibilities* (1914) in *Collected Poems*, and were therefore intended by Yeats to be read together as effectively one piece. Yeats explicitly links Iseult’s ill fate directly to her mother in the final stanza of “Two Years Later”:

O you will take whatever’s offered...
Suffer as your mother suffered,
Be as broken in the end.

(Allt, Alspach 1989:313)

“Two Years Later” therefore reinforces the intimations of Iseult’s future misfortune in “To a Child Dancing in the Wind”, with an explicit link to her mother. In *A Commentary on the Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats* (1975), A. Norman Jeffares and A.S. Knowland point to Yeats’s portrayals of Maud across his oeuvre as Helen or a queen, including among their examples “Fallen Majesty” (1912) which “records the change in Maud Gonne after her marriage and subsequent separation from John MacBride: ‘Whereon a thing once walked that seemed a burning cloud’” (1975:36). Yeats’s juxtaposition of poems in *Responsibilities* takes us from the ominous “To a Child Dancing in the Wind” and prophecy in “Two Years Later” that Iseult will suffer as her mother suffered, to the lowly Maud of “Fallen Majesty” whose woeful situation is a direct consequence of her disastrous marriage to MacBride. The context corresponds with the line from “Two Years Later”, suggesting that Maud has taken “whatever’s offered” – a disparaging allusion to MacBride. In the first stanza of “Fallen Majesty”, Yeats obliquely alludes to Iseult as a gypsy child when he describes himself as being “at a gypsy camping-place/Babbling of fallen majesty” (1971:138). “Fallen Majesty”, like “To a Child Dancing in the Wind”, was written at Colleville in Normandy: the “gypsy camping-place” is Maud’s unprepossessing seaside house, where Yeats had been visiting her and the children since 1910.

The gypsy reference is easily overlooked in favour of the grander vision in the poem of Maud as Helen-like, which is by far the more prevalent and recognised association with Maud across Yeats’s oeuvre.²⁶ Nevertheless, the gypsy

²⁶ Helen does not appear at Phase 16 but rather at Iseult’s Phase 14. George Harper writes that “Helen, originally in Phase 16, was shifted to 14... perhaps because Maud was to have no rivals” (vol 1, 1987:279). However, though he does not relate his insight to *A Vision*, Foster suggests that in Yeats’s “private iconography Maud had

association remains key to the contrast between Maud's "fallen" state and former glory. Yeats appears to have perhaps partly drawn upon the final stanza of Arnold's "To a Gipsy Child by the Sea-shore" for the title "Fallen Majesty", along the trajectory from "To a Child Dancing in the Wind":

Once, ere the day decline, thou shalt discern...
Ere the long evening close, thou shalt return,
And wear the majesty of grief again.

(1905:43/44)

In *A Vision*, Phase 14 and Phase 16 are explicitly inter-linked, contrasting but also confirming the bond between Iseult and Maud. Notably, Arnold links the gipsy child to the gipsy mother:

Remaining in thy hunger and thy pain;

Thou, drugging pain by patience; half averse
From thine own mother's breast, that knows not thee;
With eyes which sought thine eyes though didst converse,
And that soul-searching vision fell on me.

(1905:42)

While there are many possible literary sources for the title *A Vision*, this is yet another instance in which Yeats's choice of title might have partly derived from or been sanctioned by lines written by Arnold. Although obviously oversimplifying the treatise, Bloom has a valid point when he argues that the Muses or "beautiful women of Phases 14 and 16... are what *A Vision* is about"

long filled the place of Helen of Troy; now that age and fanaticism had dulled her own beauty, Iseult carried the torch" (2003:111).

(1972:249). In this vein, Arnold's gipsy child also appears to have provided sanction for Yeats's occult theory of the relation between Muse and Daimon or artistic genius. Arnold connects the ill-fated gipsy child to a mysterious and ominous entity:

The Guide of our dark steps a triple veil
Betwixt our senses and our sorrows keeps;
Hath sown with cloudless passages the tale
Of grief, and eased us with a thousand sleeps.

(1905:43)

In section VIII of "Anima Hominis" in *Per Amica*, the Daimon described by Yeats is effectively a "Guide of our dark steps", harnessing a "veil" of deception and leading individuals to their destiny, even doom. Yeats wonders whether there "may not be some secret communion, some whispering in the dark between Daimon and sweetheart" (1990:43) and he evidently has Iseult as Muse in mind (having dedicated the book to her) but also her mother who is effectively referred to as a sweetheart in "Fallen Majesty": "... a heart that laughter has made sweet..." (Allt, Alspach 1989:315). We should also recall, bearing in mind Iseult dancing on the sea shore, Yeats's description in section II of "Anima Mundi", of the "vast luminous sea... near whose edge the children sport" (1990:50). Perceptively, Bloom says there "is too little emphasis on [the] fascinating relationship" between sweetheart and Daimon outlined in section VIII of *Per Amica*, in the revised *A Vision*, and he points to the "remarkable section [in the original treatise], called 'The Daimon, the Sexes, Unity of Being, Natural and Supernatural Unity,' which fully develops *Per Amica*'s doctrine of the *daimon* as Muse" (1972:233). As he says, in this section "the alliance is much more pungently stated as an identity" (1972:234). "It follows," he reflects,

“that a man’s dreams and inspirations are the expression of his *daimon*’s [dark] energy...” (1972:234).

The sweetheart or Muse is in league with the Daimon, or artistic genius. Bloom appreciates that “to be a man and poet of Phase 17 is to have Yeats’s version of the tragic sense of life, for one must lose the women one loves, confronted always as one is by a recalcitrant Muse” (1972:234). The Daimon or “Guide of our dark steps” does not bode well for the personal lives of the Muses, indeed all those inhabiting the four phases closest to Full Moon – Phase 13, Phase 14, Phase 16, and Phase 17 – where Unity of Being is possible. The dissipated and love-sick Dowson at Phase 13 is among those of the tragic generation to die prematurely. In the description of Phase 16 Yeats is strongly critical of Maud’s choice of MacBride, even as her Musedom is enshrined. The key link between ill-fated mother and daughter in regard to their suffering is MacBride, with such poems as “To a Child Dancing in the Wind”, “Two Years Later” and “Fallen Majesty” feeding into their representation in the Great Wheel of *A Vision*. It is clear that the being of Phase 14 (Iseult) is tragically ill-fated: “All born at *antithetical* phases before Phase 15 are subject to violence... this violence seems accidental, unforeseen and cruel – and here are women carried off by robbers and ravished by clowns” (1990:167).

The reference to “robbers” and “clowns” is in part, presumably, a jibe at Francis Stuart. Catherine Paul and Margaret Harper note that the final paragraph of this phase “was added to a late typescript” (Yeats 2008:252). In 1920, as Maddox reports, Yeats had intervened as a guardian figure in Iseult’s deeply troubled marriage to Stuart, who had “starved her, beaten her, burned her clothes, sold her engagement ring, but managed to get her pregnant nonetheless” (2000:159). Whether Stuart could be said to have carried her off is debatable, but as Foster remarks, “‘The Second Song of the Fool’ now looked like a sinister prophecy”

(2003:173). The same might be said of all Yeats's poems suggesting Iseult was in danger. The reference to "robbers" and "clowns" would appear to also allude to MacBride, the perpetrator of the violent sexual abuse suffered by Iseult as a child – which ties in with the earlier description in the summary of Phase 14 of a "perilous" early life and the removal of "all powers of self-protection" (1990:166) in the household. Yeats's poeticizing of Iseult as a child dancing in the wind, who has not yet suffered tragically, is therefore disingenuous. Maddox reports that when Iseult "was a mere ten, she had been sexually assaulted by her drunken stepfather, John MacBride. The attack traumatized her; for years afterwards she had nightmares that MacBride was running after her; even in the daytime she was afraid to climb the stairs for fear that he was waiting to jump out of dark places" (2000:43).

As with the ill-fated Rhymers at Phase 13, Arnoldian Celtic concepts which help to partly explain Yeats's reading and portrayal of Iseult at Phase 14, explicitly linked to her mother's Phase 16, are "adverse destinies" and "immense calamities" – centring for both women on MacBride – as well as imbalance. In his account of the dialogue of 21 November 1917, George Harper explains that Iseult was "clearly in the minds of both George and Yeats" during "discussion of the struggle between Antithetical and Primary for domination" (vol 1, 1987:44). Harper adds: "[Yeats] received an answer descriptive of Iseult's imbalance: 'The Anti is melancholy dreaming & so on it creates a temptation of indolence and passivity'" (vol 1, 1987:44). Similarly, as Harper later shows, George Yeats would "reiterate subtly" in the dialogue of 16 February 1919 that "'this work' 'could never have been successful' with Maud as Medium. She lacked balance, perhaps because her Phase, though adjoining, was on the wrong side of Yeats's" (vol 1, 1987:102).

As we have seen, Maud is in the company of Blake at Phase 16, the latter well recognised by critics as having been deemed a ‘Celt’ by Yeats. In the summary of Phase 16, Yeats indicates that the Mask is “from Phase 2” (2008:60); and in the summary of Phase 2 we learn that “intoxication” flows, as it were, into both Phase 16 and Phase 14, as well as the preceding Phase 13. “Seen by those lyrical poets who draw their Masks from early phases,” Yeats writes, “the man of Phase 2 is transfigured... they desire some ‘concealment’, some transcendent intoxication” (1990:149). Yeats adds: “The bodily instincts, subjectively perceived, become the cup wreathed with ivy” (1990:149). Significantly, as Catherine Paul and Margaret Harper note, the “image of the cup of Bacchus [or Dionysus] also appears in Matthew Arnold’s ‘Strayed Reveller’” (2008:243). In the summary of Phase 14, Yeats indicates that the Body of Fate is “from Phase 2” (2008:56); and in the summary of Phase 2, Yeats adds: “Perhaps even a Body of Fate from any early phase may suffice to create this Image, but when it affects Phase 13 and Phase 14 the Image will be more sensuous, more like immediate experience” (1990:149). This helps to account in part for the placement of Iseult and Maud at Phase 14 and Phase 16 respectively: both, to Yeats, intoxicating beauties – indeed Muses.

Yet this intoxication is not merely Hellenistic or Latin but also ‘Celtic’ or ancient. In his Celticist analysis, Arnold numbers the Isle of Man – the setting for his poem on the gipsy child by the sea-shore – among the Celtic territories, arguing: “They are part of ourselves, we are deeply interested in knowing them...” (2008:73). We can appreciate Yeats’s ‘Celticisation’ of Iseult, too, by way of Jeffares’s commentary on “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen”, explaining that Yeats had written in his 1899 note to “The Hosting of the Sidhe” that “Sidhe is the Gaelic for wind and that the Sidhe had much to do with the wind” (Jeffares 1968:279). Iseult dancing in the wind thus signals her nascent

Musedom, in the footsteps of her mother. In his examination of the dialogue of 6 January 1918, George Harper quotes from Yeats's article "Irish Fairies, Ghosts, Witches, etc" (1889) in which Yeats explains that the "Leanhaun Shee (fairy mistress) is the Gaelic Muse" (Yeats 2004:80). The mythical surrogate of Maud in *The Only Jealousy* is Fand – the Queen or "Woman of the Sidhe" (Yeats 1982:281) – who is related in the Script to Phase 16. Moreover, we can see how the 'Celtic' intoxication flowing into the central phases partly informs the placement of the dissipated and love-sick poet Dowson (and unnamed, likewise intoxicated, always falling Johnson) described in "The Tragic Generation", at Phase 13.

In writing of the poets of Phase 14, Yeats explicitly names the ill-fated arch-poet of beauty Keats, as well as Wordsworth. Bloom argues that in the description of Phase 14 Yeats is "caricaturing a heroic naturalism in Keats and Wordsworth that he chooses not to understand, even as he describes an extraordinary kind of woman, or perhaps a poet's vision of a kind of woman" (1972:250). Yet Arnold appears to partly but powerfully inform this grouping in terms of Celtic natural magic. In the description of Phase 14, Yeats explains that, like the beautiful women of the phase, in "the poets too... one finds the impression of the *Body of Fate* as intoxication" (1990:167). Again, within the labyrinth of influence, we could look to many other writers besides Arnold in whose works the single term or notion of "intoxication" proliferates, as influences possibly also in play, not least Nietzsche in such works as "The Birth of Tragedy", "The Gay Science", and "Thus Spoke Zarathustra". In the summary of Phase 12 in *A Vision*, that of Nietzsche and Cuchulain, Yeats writes that "the sanity of the being is no longer from its relation to facts, but from its approximation to its own unity, and from this [phase] on we shall meet with men and women to whom facts are a dangerous narcotic or intoxicant"

(2008:53). Though this refers to Nietzsche (with little indication of Nietzsche's eventual insanity), the critical vocabulary of "sanity" and "facts" would seem to suggest that Yeats's portrayal of Nietzsche is partly bound up with his prior and longstanding familiarity with Arnold. "Intoxication" is also a key concept in Arnold's Celticist analysis, echoed in Yeats's "The Celtic Element in Literature" where he asserts that "every new fountain of [Irish] legends is a new intoxication for the imagination of the world. It comes at a time when the imagination of the world is as ready as it was at the coming of the tales of Arthur and of the Grail for a new intoxication" (1972:187).

Arnold employs this key term to define the Celt's style: "[Celtic poetry] has all through it a sort of intoxication of style, – a Pindarism, to use a word formed from the name of the poet, on whom, above all other poets, the power of style seems to have exercised an inspiring and intoxicating effect" (2008:60).

Considering the placement of the 'Celtic' Blake at Phase 16, this perhaps helps to explain the Mask-as-style of Phase 16, from the intoxicating Phase 2.

Moreover, for Arnold, the Celt's intoxication of style is related to Celtic natural magic:

The forest solitude, the bubbling spring, the wild flowers, are everywhere in romance... Now of this delicate magic, Celtic romance is so pre-eminent a mistress, that it seems impossible to believe the power did not come into romance from the Celts. Magic is just the word for it, – the magic of nature; not merely the beauty of nature, – that the Greeks and Latins had; not merely an honest smack of the soil, a faithful realism, – that the Germans had; but the intimate life of nature, her weird power and her fairy charm.

These are among the well-known sentences referred to by Yeats in section 1 of “The Celtic Element in Literature”, where he sketches Arnold’s view that the “Celtic passion for Nature comes almost more from a sense of her ‘mystery’ than of her ‘beauty,’ and it adds ‘charm and magic’ to Nature...” (1972:173). In section II, Yeats ‘corrects’ Arnold by stating that “I do not think he understood that our ‘natural magic’ is but the ancient religion of the world, the ancient worship of Nature...” (1972:176). For all the ‘correction’ of Arnold on the point of ‘Celtic’ or ancient natural magic, however, Yeats would appear to endorse not only Arnold’s association of intoxication with the Celts but also, in his own pairing of Keats and Wordsworth at Phase 14, Arnold’s view of these two poets as exemplars of natural magic. Arnold later reiterates: “Magic is the word to insist upon, – a magically vivid and near interpretation of nature; since it is this which constitutes the special charm and power of the effect I am calling attention to, and it is for this that the Celt’s sensibility gives him a peculiar aptitude” (2008:67). Significantly, in Yeats’s copy, the words “magically vivid and near interpretation of nature” are underlined, on p135. Shortly afterwards, Arnold includes Shakespeare, Wordsworth, and Keats as English poets displaying Celtic natural magic; and he ends his subsequent analysis of English poetry by quoting from *The Merchant of Venice* (written circa 1596) and commenting: “And those last lines of all are so drenched and intoxicated with the fairy-dew of that natural magic which is our theme, that I cannot do better than end with them” (2008:70).

The closing lines regarding Dido “Upon the wild sea-banks” are marked in Yeats’s copy, on p141 – one of a number of references to sea shores among Arnold’s selections of poetry which might help to explain, too, Yeats’s ‘Celticisation’ of Iseult in the liminal zone, as it were, of the Normandy beach,

feeding into Phase 14 of *A Vision*. In “The Celtic Element in Literature”, Yeats affirms that “the ancient religion” is to be found “very certainly in the quotations Arnold makes from English poets to prove a Celtic influence in English poetry; in Keats’s ‘magic casements opening on the foam of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn’; in his ‘moving waters at their priestlike task of pure ablution round earth’s human shores’... and in [Shakespeare’s] Dido standing ‘upon the wild sea banks’...” (1972:176/177). Moreover, dropping Shakespeare, Arnold proceeds to repeatedly pair just Keats and Wordsworth as poets of natural magic. Anticipating that “I shall be accused of... denying this and that gift to the Germans”, Arnold injects a little sweetness and light into his overall argument by proclaiming that it is “only German poetry, Goethe’s poetry, that has, since the Greeks, made much way with” and ultimately surpasses the poetry of, among others, “Keats and Wordsworth with their natural magic” (2008:70). Arnold therefore severely tempers his enthusiasm for the Celt, praising Goethe and “the scientific, serious German spirit” which is “not carried away by this and that intoxication of ear, and eye, and self-will” (2008:71). In *A Vision*, however, the tables are turned: Arnold and Goethe, at Phase 18, are denied the privileged condition of Unity of Being, which is instead the preserve of those in the ‘Celtic’ phases: Phase 13, Phase 14, Phase 16, and Phase 17.

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Conclusion

In *Matthew Arnold and Goethe* (1979), James Simpson seeks to begin remedying “a gap in Arnold scholarship” by proffering the first full-length study of Arnold’s relationship with Goethe, but concedes that the “task... is hazardous” (1979:1). He acknowledges that ultimately “Arnold’s thought was fed from innumerable sources” and “a mind as independent and eclectic as his was not to be dominated by the influence, no matter how powerful, of one man” (1979:1). Simpson reflects:

There is no easy way of avoiding that kind of misrepresentation, endemic in ‘influence studies’, in which exclusive, or nearly exclusive, attention is devoted to a single ‘source’. Such exclusiveness necessarily brings with it the danger of exaggerating that source’s importance. A dutiful critic will consult other known sources... but in doing so he is likely to find his efforts rewarded by ever diminishing returns. Moderation, tact, and a healthy scepticism with regard to his own occupation are perhaps his best safeguards.

(1979:1/2)

In concluding my thesis, it would be remiss of me not to sound a final note of caution, paying heed to the general problem of influence studies duly highlighted by Simpson, and counteracting any possible misrepresentation in having devoted almost exclusive attention to Arnold’s bearing on Yeats and *A Vision*. While I have sought to address critical underestimation of Arnold’s importance to Yeats and *A Vision*, it is not my intention to exaggerate Arnold’s significance in any way. Fittingly, balance has been at issue throughout. As I

hope to have conveyed all along in highlighting the myriad terminological hazards and endeavouring to guide readers through the labyrinthine Arnoldian influence but also some of the wider regions of the labyrinth of influence on Yeats's art and politics, Yeats's thought, too, was fed from innumerable sources. His mind, also eclectic and independent, not least in ultimately differing from Arnold on the question of independent Irish self-rule, could not be said, therefore, to have been dominated by the influence, no matter how powerful, of one man – not even his own father, so disapproving of his preoccupation with the occult. Given that *A Vision* does not readily divulge its mysteries and yield its meaning(s), I must own, in the final analysis, that my thesis represents just one possible approach to interpreting the treatise in expressly literary terms, with my principal findings in some ways definitive but often in necessarily speculative and therefore sceptical mode.

It remains for me to recapitulate that, rather than a peripheral figure (as the critical field has generally deemed him to be), Arnold is in fact central to Yeats's poetical and political concerns in *A Vision*. The textual correspondences I have identified between the description of the ideal Phase 17 and Yeats's "The Celtic Element in Literature" show – definitively – that Yeats continues in the treatise, and indeed renders the decisive instalment of, his dialogue with Arnold on the question of the Celtic constitution of the ideal man of genius. More than this, however, I have found that we are encountering not merely the Celtic element but a wide-ranging, interrelated Arnoldian element in Yeats which also encompasses three other aspects – the Romantic, morbid, and cultural – and an over-arching fifth aspect, the ideal of ancient Greek genius, which can all be traced in *A Vision* as a central work within Yeats's oeuvre. Crucially, the collective Arnoldian element powerfully shapes the projection of Irish self-rule and unity in the figure of the Daimonic Man or ideal man of genius of Phase 17 (Yeats) subversively juxtaposed with the Emotional Man of Phase 18 (Arnold

and Goethe) falling apart, as it were, in a time of revolutionary anarchy in Ireland; and also partly shapes the representation of a range of phasal examples of the Great Wheel.

The broader significance of my thesis stems from addressing, in particular, the general critical neglect of Arnold's placement at Phase 18 in relation to Yeats at Phase 17, as well as the concomitant lack of critical attention to Arnold's overall bearing on the 'System' itself. Severely undermining a tendency among even those critics who do stress Arnold's importance to Yeats, to focus on one or other aspect rather than the wider, interrelated aspects of Yeats's Arnoldian heritage, my thesis markedly improves critical insight into the scale of Arnold's influence on Yeats, and on *A Vision* as a central work within his oeuvre. The broader significance of my thesis also derives from the fact that no full-length study of the relation between Yeats and Arnold has yet appeared, and therefore also entails the debates my thesis could potentially inaugurate or reinvigorate, gathering force from even a few of the implications of Yeats's career-long preoccupation with Arnold being put to a critical field which has never seriously considered their relation on some of the most controversial topics and significant developments of Yeats scholarship. As I have argued, the Arnoldian element in Yeats and *A Vision* deserves close scrutiny within the long-running 'Orwellian' debate over Yeats's alleged fascism. Elizabeth Cullingford, in her renowned defence of Yeats on the charge of fascism, concedes that the "last of Yeats's enthusiasms is probably the most questionable" (1984:229), that of eugenics – and here too, as I have argued, the Arnoldian element merits serious attention, in tandem with, rather than in isolation from, the fascism debate. These issues are also relevant to how the Arnoldian element in Yeats and *A Vision* could be seen to bolster, but also deeply trouble, readings of Yeats as a poet of decolonization.

Lastly, I have addressed Harold Bloom's scant consideration of and critical distaste for Arnold, in suggesting that *A Vision* is an exemplary "anxiety of influence" text in which Yeats 'kills' his critical fathers: Arnold and JBY. Highlighting this act of patricide, as it were, has formed part of my argument that Arnold should be included as a matter of course, rather than so often overlooked by critics, among Yeats's foremost influences like Nietzsche, Blake, Dante, and Shelley whose representations in *A Vision* are partly bound up with Yeats's powerfully formative and enduring preoccupation with Arnold. While Simpson suggests that, with studies of influence generally, one's efforts are likely to be rewarded by "ever diminishing returns" (1979:1/2), I have found that, to borrow from Yeats's "The Phases of the Moon", the "strange reward of all that discipline" (1990:113) is that such returns are instead ever augmenting. My emphasis on the importance of the relation between Yeats and Arnold, far from being progressively weakened by admitting the relevance of other figures, too, on issues vital to Yeats, in fact has the opposite effect of deepening and enriching one's appreciation of the vast labyrinth of influence of Yeats's making, in art or politics. Ultimately, it militates against any assumption that the exceedingly complex Yeats who sought simplicity, and said he had found it through *A Vision*, could ever be 'explained' simply by reference to a single source.

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