

CHAPTER I

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"Poetry is the Voice of the Solitary Spirit"

- John Butler Yeats

Alienation may be traced back to human history. Men have felt lonely ever since the beginning of time. However, in our own times it has a special significance because a sense of it has come to pervade almost all spheres of human life. Alienation has become a serious problem in our social, political and religious life. What is done by our hands is not sanctioned by our hearts and heads, as they are all working in different directions, and much against each other. Thus we experience the pangs of self alienation. Modern man's disregard of others has severed him from them. As a result he has come to feel totally isolated, and has developed a highly pernicious tendency to self-centredness.

The rise of the scientific discoveries and inventions and industrialization have brought about several changes in man's attitude towards God, Society, Nature, Family, Politics, Government and Himself. These revolutions have disrupted the traditional ways of life and harmfully affected our value systems and faiths, nay the whole framework of society. But unfortunately, corresponding new values have not been created. As a result, modern men have felt powerless and

helpless amidst uncontrollable and relentless forces their life is beset by. Before we discuss alienation, it is essential to know what is alienation and what are the meanings of other synonymous terms.

Now-a-days, the words like 'loneliness', 'alienation', and 'isolation' are synonymously used in our modern routine life; but they are, in fact, different from each other as they depict man's different mental reactions and physical conditions. Peter Townsend makes the difference between loneliness and isolation thus : "to be socially isolated is to have few contacts with family and community; to be lonely is to have an unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. The one is objective, the other subjective...."¹ Though the term 'alienation' is the synonym of loneliness and isolation, it has a wider scope and a wider application. It is used to identify feelings of estrangement, in law it means the act of transferring property or ownership to another person. It also means insanity and implies several mental disorders. Eric and Mary Josephson's following comments bring out the breadth and width of alienation in this way :

"In modern terms, however, "alienation" has been used by philosophers, psychologists and sociologists to refer to an extraordinary variety of psycho-social disorders, including loss of self, anxiety states, anomie, despair, deperso-nalization, rootlessness, apathy, social disorganization, loneliness, atomization, powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, pessimism, and the loss of

beliefs or values. Among the social groups who have been described as alienated in varying degree - some of whom we have already mentioned - are women, industrial workers, white-collar workers, migrant workers, artist suicides, the mentally disturbed, addicts, the aged, the young generation as a whole, juvenile delinquents in particular, voters, non-voters, consumers, the audiences of mass media, sex deviants, victims of prejudice and discrimination, the prejudiced, bureaucrats, political radicals, the physically handicapped, immigrants, exiles, vagabonds and recluses."²

The philosopher F.H.Heinemann's views on alienation are given here to put the term in its proper perspective. He says: "The facts to which the term 'alienation' refers are, objectively, different kinds of dissociation, break or rupture between human beings and their objects, whether the latter be other persons, or the natural world, or their own creations in art, science and society; and subjectively, the corresponding states of disequilibrium, disturbance, strangeness and anxiety."³

The rapid growth of science and technology is accompanied by an increasing awareness of alienation in human life. Machines, man's own creations, have become his masters. Modern transport systems, banking systems, paper identity, mass media have all increased distance between man and man and created a crisis of identity.

The slow but steady rise of individualism since the European Renaissance has also aggravated man's alienation. Individualism made men ultraconscious and self-centred. The breakup of joint families, failures in love and the

increasing number of divorces that followed in its train further alienated men from other members of their families. The world wars over the last three centuries have developed among men a tragic sense of life. They have added to man's alienation and created a sense of absurdity in human life.

Having dealt, in brief, with the causes of modern alienation, let us now focus our attention on the major types of alienation. Man's alienation from God, Society, Nature, Family and his Self. As far as the first four facets of alienation are concerned, we will take a rapid survey of the conditions which have caused them and concentrate more on the last, self-alienation, which is our major concern in this thesis. For convenience the first four types or facets of alienation will be discussed under one section and self-alienation under the following section. In the last section of this chapter we will discuss self-alienation in relation to W.B.Yeats's life and his early poetry.

I

We will first discuss man's alienation from God. In the long past, man lived a primitive life in small groups which worshipped several gods which regulated his life and related him to the large cosmic pattern. As man was ignorant and innocent, he could not understand the world around him and so he attributed everything to God in whom he had supreme

faith. His prayers and rituals were meant to please Him and relate himself to Him. At times, he feared that God and this fear itself was the beginning of man's alienation from Him. With the passage of time man began to live a more settled and more secure life and his awareness of the world around him also increased considerably.

In the Medieval period man was still living in the God-centred (theo-centric) world in which magic, supernatural creatures, superstitions, and religious rituals created an aura in which man's sincere feelings towards God were lost, particularly when the religious authority became a second deity, indeed an oppressive intermediary that alienated the layman from his Father or Maker.

Under the impact of the European Renaissance, democratic, rational and scientific attitudes towards life brought man into a vast and wide world, marking the beginning of modernity in all spheres of life. The Copernican revolutionary heliocentric theory of the universe replaced the Ptolemaic geocentric theory; consequently God, religion and church came to be undermined and Man's alienation from God became prominent. The scientific and political and industrial revolutions ushered in the materialist and secular attitudes which further deprived man of God. The naturalistic philosophy of Darwin with its emphasis on the theory of the natural selection and the struggle for existence refuted the

Biblical story of man's creation by showing to the world that man has become what he is now in the process of evolution. This new scientific approach in the latter part of the nineteenth century took man several steps away from God. In a highly technocratic and scientific world of today, man has come to realize that heaven and hell are just mental states or concepts and that there is no God in the universe which is governed by matter and not by his mind. It must be conceded here that in recent times, particularly in the period of reconstruction after World War II, modern multitudes of men and women are bewildered, knowing not whether they should believe in God or not. As a consequence of this bewilderment, some of us deny God and others affirm and assert His existence and try to associate themselves with Him by means of prayers, fasts and worship. However, the major trend is one of unbelief in God.

The second type of alienation is man's alienation from Nature. The primitive man's views about Nature were superstitious. He found her elements to be both constructive and destructive forces. There was a solid, close bond between him and Nature. He was totally dependent on her for wood and food. His constant stay in the company of Nature created in him a sense of duty and obligation towards her. He worshiped her as a vast manifestation of God. But sometimes he was held spellbound and wonderstruck by the capricious behaviour of

Nature, which was just a mystery to him. The fury of the natural forces must have estranged the primitive man from her; but as he was powerless and helpless, he made adjustments to her. As man gradually began to know the world around him by means of reason, the gap between man and Nature became wider and wider over the centuries. In the Renaissance, man, in his restless search for unknown lands, came into competition with her. This competition assumed a serious form of conflict between man and Nature in the period of the Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century which made mobility easy and necessary. In order to get raw-material, Nature was invaded, the earth was dug up for coal, ore, gold etc. She came to be defaced and disfigured, and hence the cry of Rousseau: 'Return to Nature', which itself is indicative of man's separation from her. William Wordsworth's poetic attempt to restore man to Nature could not just last in the sweep and speed of the technological and scientific progress. The poets like Matthew Arnold, Thomas Hardy, Walter de la Mare, and T.S.Eliot have depicted in some of their poems the split between man and Nature. Walter de la Mare's poem entitled "Estranged" has rightly captured modern man's alienation from Nature in these lines: "No one was with me there-/ Happy I was-alone;/ Yet from the sunshine suddenly/A joy was gone./ A bird in an empty house/Sad echoes makes to ring, Flitting from room to room/On restless wing."⁴

Man's alienation from Society, the third type of alienation, is also age-old. In the nomadic stage, man lived in small groups which guaranteed security. The group life helped him face savage nature, wild animals and other groups. It created in him a sense of solidarity and made the need for togetherness imperative. Yet it must be admitted that when one group was in threat of an invasion from another group, the nomadic man must have felt alienated from others, as beings like himself. As tribal life changed into national life, social thinkers devised means and methods to control and regulate human behaviour in society. Thus social life became more integrated: Several restraints and compulsions came in, duties and responsibilities came to be laid on man. They were doubtless helpful in holding different members of society together, but when knowledge became easy to approach after the spread of education, it created in man a craving for individual freedom which implied break-up of man's ties with his society. The Renaissance democratic individualism may be treated as a starting-point of man's alienation from society. Later in the Industrial period, man, in search of jobs, had perforce to separate himself from his own society. Industrialization, among other things, created several new classes-the capitalists, workers, employers, employees, the rich, the poor, the bourgeoisie, superiors, subordinates, the

boss and the bossed, etc.- all these are governed by the economic forces, the desire for money and for profit. Naturally society was split up into smaller units, each pulling the gain on his side, each to himself and thinking only of himself. Man could not but feel alienated from the other man under such social and economic set-up.

In a highly compact world of ours, mass culture and mass society have further segregated men from men by forming small units of them. The mass media have, on the one hand, brought people together, and have also created a distance between them, on the other hand. Man of today is guided by his inner voices and personal choices, regardless and mindless of their fellow-beings. Thus modern man living a routine, mechanical life in lonely cells created by himself feels a sense of being depersonalized and dehumanized in the world which is indifferent to his humanity. Modern artist's (Who is one among modern multitudes) alienation from society is well expressed in W. B. Yeats's poem "VacillationIV", in the following lines :

"My fiftieth year had come and gone,
I sat, a solitary man,
In a crowded London shop,
An open book and empty cup
On the marble table-top."⁵

The fourth type constitutes man's alienation from Family. Family is a small but significant social group.

Family as a social institution is a recent phenomenon. It is based on matrimony and kinship. It has exercised a great influence on and contributed to the growth and development of society through its individual members. Man's unwavering faith in God and in social institutions has helped over the ages to maintain family unity and solidarity. But democratic ideals such as freedom and equality and the consequent rise of Individualism as a philosophical mode of living worked together to disturb and disrupt it, particularly in the Renaissance. Its unity was more shaken under the Industrial set-up when people left their local centres for jobs in big urban areas. Several other factors, in due course, have speeded up the disintegration of families in our own times. The spread of women's education, the feminist movement, the legal sanction for divorce, women's economic independence and equal status have all made modern women think of themselves more as individuals than members of the family. The idea of a comfortable life and of standard living, and the government plans to check population growth have also encouraged modern men and women to cut the size of their family to a minimum possible number - three, or even two under inevitable circumstances. One-child family, which is becoming a social norm, is a great threat to the family as institution in our life today. As husband and wife who work at different places and even at different times are estranged from each other and

from their children too. Fast food, dry food, feasts and parties in hotels have freed modern women from their routine work in the kitchen and at the some time undermined their traditional role as mother or wife and herein lies modern man's and woman's alienation form family.

II

In this section we will discuss the fifth type, man's alienation from his own Self, which is our major concern in this thesis. The foregoing discussion of the four types of alienation logically leads us on to the discussion of self-alienation, for the man who fails to relate himself to the external world also fails to discover his own self and its worth and meaning. Alienation from all others means alienation from one's won self. Self-alienation also occurs when man feels that he is cut off from the part or parts of his self, that is, from the elements that constitute it: from cognitive, (rational) affective (emotional) and conative (active) faculties. When man fails to identify himself as the subject of his physical and mental acts, he plunges into the condition of self-alienation. Before we take the historical survey of the phenomenon of self-alienation, we will first discuss the nature of self.

Philosophers and psychologists agree on the point that it is very difficult to define self adequately. Self is a

substance of a special and unique kind and it is non-material. It can be thought of as the centre of personal identity. It is through his self or self-hood that man grasps, measures and manipulates the objective world. Such terms as self, ego, agent, mind, knower, spirit and person are synonymously used. Such related concepts as identity, personality, self-awareness, self-consciousness, self-love, self-esteem are also associated with self. Such terms as self-denial, self-sacrifice, self-abnegation, auto-criticism, self-deprecation, self-depreciation, the loss of identity or personality, are negative ramifications of self. Other terms like doubt, suspicion, envy, jealousy, self-debasement, self-division, split personality, crisis of identity, the feeling of being ashamed, pride, egoism are also connected with self. A Concise Psychological-Dictionary Says : "Self-Concept- the cause and effect of social interaction - is determined by social experience, and its components are as follows : the real self (the idea about oneself in the present time), the ideal self (what the subject thinks he should be proceeding from moral principles); the dynamic self (what the subject intends to be), and the imagined-self (what the subject would wish to be if that were possible)."⁶ The 'ideal self', the 'dynamic self' and 'the imagined self', if not achieved by the subject, lead him to self-alienation.

Many writers who deal with the problem of alienation assume that in each of us there is a 'genuine' 'real' or 'spontaneous' self which we are prevented from knowing or achieving. Man has always been faced with such a question as to "who am I?" This question can be answered only when man comes to know the reality of his inner life and his relationship with the others in society. As a matter of fact man acquires a self or identity through interaction with others. Charles H. Cooley calls this process of acquiring a self "a looking-glass self" and George H. Mead terms it as "taking the role of the other." If a self is achieved by communicating with others, especially through language, then anxiety about or the loss of selfhood becomes a personal as well as a social problem.

In his article "On Alienated Concept of Identity"⁷ Ernest G. Schachtel discusses concepts like 'paper-identity', 'definite, fixed identity' 'negative identity' and 'positive identity' and points out that they all take man away from the centre of his actual, growing, developing, changing identity. In such identities man experiences that he is cut off from the real "I". As far as the paper identity is concerned, it is the 'paper' that counts and not the 'person'. The second term 'definite-fixed identity' is used by Schachtel to refer to the patients suffering from anxiety, the lack of

confidence and so on. Such patients are in search of a definite, fixed identity as they think that it will solve the problem of their alienation from themselves, knowing not that their search for a definite, fixed identity is actually "the continuation of their alienation." About the 'negative identity', Schachtel says :

"Very often real or imagined physical attributes, parts of the body image or the entire body image, become focal points of identity. Many people build around such a negative identity the feeling that this particular feature unalterably determines the course of their lives, and that they are thereby doomed to unhappiness. Usually, in these cases, qualities such as attractiveness and beauty are no longer felt to be based on the alive expression and flux of human feelings, but have become fixed and dead features, or a series of poses, as in so many Hollywood stars or fashion models. These features are cut off from the center of the person and worn like a mask. Unattractiveness is experienced as not possessing this mask."

and further continues that

"In the same way, other real or imagined attributes, or the lack of them, become focal points for a reified, alienated, negative identity. For example : feeling not sufficiently masculine or feminine, being born on the wrong side of the tracks, being a member of a minority group against which racial or religious prejudices are directed, and in the most general form, feeling intrinsically inadequate or 'bad'."

In the course of his discussion and by way of summing up he says this about the positive alienated identity :

"So far I have discussed mainly negative self-images. However, alienated identity concepts may be positive as well as negative. Alienated identity of the positive variety occurs in vanity, conceit and- in its more pathological form-in delusions of grandeur, just as in

its negative counterpart the "I" of the vain person is severed from a fixed attribute on which the vanity is based. The person feels that he possesses this quality. It becomes the focal point of his identity and serves as its prop. Beauty, masculinity or femininity, being born on the right side of the tracks, success, money, prestige, or "being good" may serve as such a prop. While in the negative identity feeling a reified attribute haunts the person, such an attribute serves the positive self-image as a support. Yet it is equally alienated from the living person. This is expressed nicely in the phrase "a stuffed shirt." It is not the person in the shirt but some dead matter, some stuffing that is used to bolster and aggrandize the self-feeling. It often becomes apparent in the behaviour of the person that he leans on this real or imagined attribute, just as it often is apparent that a person feels pulled down by the weight of some alienated negative attribute.

The reliance on an identity, on a self-image based on the prop of some reified attribute remains precarious even where it seems to work, after a fashion, as it does in the self satisfaction of the vain. This precariousness is inevitable, since the positive self-evaluation of such a person does not rest on a feeling of wholeness and meaningfulness in life, in thought, feeling, and deed. He is always threatened with the danger of losing this "thing", this possession, on which his self-esteem is based."

After having seen the nature of self and its types, we will now put it in its historical perspective. The primitive man, struck by the wonderful and mysterious events and happenings, attributed everything to God and natural elements. The universe in which he lived was beyond his intellect and imagination. So he came, in fear, to revere and worship various gods and even the natural forces. His act of worship itself was the fact of his self-alienation.

Later in the Greek, period the spirit of critical and philosophical inquiry increased so much that everything came to be thought of in terms of reason which quenched man's thirst for knowledge and at the same time increased it. Man is not only 'head' but also 'heart', and the fact that the heart's cry was denied speaks volumes for man's self-alienation in that period.

With the beginning of Christianity faith in God and religion became so strong that man became totally subordinate to the Divine Power and to the religious hierarchy through whom alone he could have communion with God. The Christian idea of the Original Sin, inherited by all, is itself a solid evidence of man's alienation from himself, because he is thought to have committed sin which he did not actually commit.

In the Renaissances the scientific and democratic ideas began to affect human life to a considerable extent. Science expanded the man's concept of the universe, whereas democratic thoughts expanded the horizon of man's mind. Under the influence of democratic individualism, freedom and personal choice came into prominence. The conflict between the individual and society began to take roots; the extreme emphasis on individualism later on paved way for man's self-alienation. The conflict between the spiritual and the

secular, the rational and the emotional, the material and the ideal was also partly responsible for man's self-division. Man of the time indeed was "In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer",⁸ to put it in the words of Alexander Pope. The general philosophical awareness of human existence itself as expressed in Hamlet's "To be or not to be",⁹ the cry in utter privacy of life, does indicate the mood of the time. Shakespeare's description of "Brutus, with himself at war"¹⁰ gives another dimension to man's self-alienation.

In the Age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, man's cry for liberty, equality and fraternity became louder than before. The political revolutions and the Industrial Revolution of the time helped transform man's total social and mental make-up. The Industrial Revolution, in particular, created new classes and tensions between them. It helped man to produce more and to consume more. Man became aware of his identity as a creator. His ability to create and produce goods, articles and commodities of various types posed several problems before him. The capitalist who invested money multiplied it almost automatically without doing much work, not at all manual work. But he learnt the lesson of exploiting the labourers and caused his own demoralization and thus self-alienation. The labourer, the basic human force in production, came to feel that his own creation stood over and against him; over and above, his creation came out in

market with a mark, without any mention of the real maker of it. In brief, he felt alienated from his own self, from his own acts.

The concept of labour in its alienated form was first discussed by Hegel and later on was developed by Marx. Hegel¹¹ speaks of the 'alienation of personality' and sees it in slavery, serfdom, disqualification from holding property, encumbrances on property, etc. According to him, "Alienation of intelligence and rationality, of morality, ethical life, and religion, is exemplified in superstition, in ceding to someone else full power and authority to fix and prescribe what actions are to be done --- or what duties are binding on one's conscience or what religious truth is, etc."

Marx took the Hegelian concept of alienation and related it to social conditions of man. In the process he discovered other forms of it. He looked upon capital as a lifeless, independent active force that employs (and thus exploits) human beings. According to Marx¹², though "private property appears to be the basis and cause of alienated labour, it is rather a consequence of the latter, just as the gods are fundamentally not the cause but the product of confusions of human reason. At a later stage there is, however, a reciprocal influence." Marx also sees alienation in the process of production. He says :

"However, alienation shows itself not merely in the result but also in the process, of production, within productive activity itself ----

In what does this alienation of labour consist? First, that the work is external to the worker, that it is not a part of his nature, that consequently he does not fulfil himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery, not of well being, does not develop freely a physical and mental energy, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary but imposed, forced labour. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisfying other needs. Its alien character is clearly shown by the fact that as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion it is avoided like the plague. Finally, the alienated character of work for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his work but work for someone else, that in work he does not belong to himself but to another person."¹²

Even money, for Marx, becomes a factor that alienates man from his own self, as it can do what the holder of it cannot.

Modern psychological research has awakened us to several psychic realities hitherto unknown to us. Freud's psychological theories, in particular, have been greatly useful in understanding various recesses of human mind. His three-layered theory of human mind - the Conscious, the Pre-conscious and the Unconscious - does speak for the division of mind. Freud believes that man is pulled by two opposite instincts - the life-instincts and death-instincts, 'Eros' and 'Thanatos' respectively. He says :

"The manifestations of Eros were conspicuous and audible enough; one might assume that the death instinct worked silently within the organism towards its disintegration, but that, of course, was no proof. The idea that the part of the instinct 'became directed towards the outer world and then showed itself as an instinct of aggression and destruction carried us a step further. This instinct would thus itself have been pressed into the service of Eros, in that the organism would be destroying something animate or inanimate outside itself instead of itself. Conversely, any cessation of this flow outwards must have the effect of intensifying the self-destruction which in any case would always be going on within."¹³

In the light of this passage we can conclude that man's being pulled in two different directions by two opposite instincts and his consequent aggressive nature cause his self-alienation, though Freud has not said so directly.

In the highly secularized industrialized and mechanized society of today man is estranged from God, Nature, Society, Family and Himself. Thus his alienation is total. The achievements of his hand and brain are ascribed to something else. The things into which he pours his heart are kept away from him. The workers are kept away from the products of their hands and from the profit that goes to the owners. In the world of innumerable commodities, consumers are alienated from themselves because they are so much influenced by the advertising media that they are unable to make their own choices based on their discretion and conscience. In the midst of modern scientific and technological knowledge modern man is cut off from the past, the source of genuine

knowledge. Man's being cut off from the past has both positive and negative effects. Technology has altered modern man's sense of time, has tied him to relentless routine which has sucked the vitality in him and reduced him to a mechanical object, one among so many objects of his own creation.

In modern bureaucratic organizations, educational social and political institutions, man is treated like a commodity. His genuine personality is not counted. Identity cards, coupon systems and cheques in banks are considered as substitutes for his personality. Strongly enough, they are insisted on by the authorities concerned, even though man the living person is before them. Under such circumstances man cannot but feel self-alienated. When Edward in T.S.Eliot's The Cocktail Party tells the Unidentified Guest (Reilly), the Freudian psychiatrist that his wife left him leaving him in with a mystery, the latter comments on modern man's sense of the loss of personality in a scientific and clinical manner in the following words which are applicable to the majority of modern men and women :

"And nobody likes to be left with a mystery.
But there's more to it than that. There's a loss
of personality;
or rather, you've lost touch with the person
You thought you were. You no longer feel quite human.
You're suddenly reduced to the status of an object-
A living object, but no longer a person.
It's always happening, because one is an object

As well as a person. But we forget about it
As quickly as we can. When you've dressed for a party
And are going downstairs, with everything about you
Arranged to support you in the role you have chosen,
Then sometimes, when you come to the bottom step
There is one step more than your feet expected
And you come down with a jolt. Just for a moment
You have the experience of being an object
At the mercy of a malevolent staircase.
Or, take a surgical operation.
In consultation with the doctor and the surgeon,
In going to bed in the nursing home,
In talking to the matron, you are still the subject,
The centre of reality. But, stretched on the table,
You are a piece of furniture in a repair shop
For those who surrounded you, the masked actors;
All there is of you is your body
And the 'you' is withdrawn. May I replenish?"¹⁴

III

In this final section of the chapter we will discuss Yeats's growth as a man, the causes and consequences of his self-alienation in his actual life and the reflection of self-alienation in his early poetry.

W.B. Yeats, the eldest son, was born on 13th June, 1865 at George's Vile, Sandymount Avenue, Dublin in South Ireland in the family of John Butler Yeats and Susan Pollexfen, the former a sceptic and the latter a deeply religious, emotional lady. John Butler yeats was a man of an artistic bent of mind, a champion of liberty, a great debater and controversialist. His father wanted him to be religious, and to become a barrister. J.B. Yeats could not fulfil his father's first wish, and only partially fulfilled the second

one because, though fully qualified for the legal profession, he abandoned it completely in 1867. Then he decided to study painting at Heatherley's Art school.

When the poet was only nine years old, the family moved to London in 1874, where he received his early education. He was put to Godolphin School Hammersmith in 1776. In 1881 the family came back to Dublin where he was put to Erasmus High School. After High School education he joined the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin (1884-1885), and then was sent to the Royal Hibernian Academy School (1886), where he made friends with George Russell (A.E.). Yeats and Russell developed interest in mysticism. Yeats's interest in mysticism led him to found the Dublin Lodge of the Hermetic Society. His father returned to England in 1887 and Yeats followed him soon. There in England Yeats joined the Rhymer's Club, and under the influence of Madame Blavatsky, became deeply involved and interested in mysticism and occultism. He also became the member of Mac Gregor's Hermetic-Order of the Golden Dawn. On 30 January 1889 a very happy thing happened in his life : Maud Gonne, a beauty incarnation, came to his house and he fell in love with her at first sight. Later, when he expressed his love and proposed to her, she just laughed away the idea. Her fairy-like appearance proved to be elusive and delusive in Yeats's life. Though she was out of his hand, he never missed chances to pursue and propose to

her, but all in vain or only in brain. In 1894 he fell in love with 'Diana Vernon; this affair was terminated in 1896, after their stay together for about a year. In November 1903 he went to America on a Lecture tour. Since 1908 his father lived in New York and refused to come home. Frustrated, at last he married Georgie-Hyde Lees on October 21, 1917. In the next four years two children - Anne and John - were born to them. In 1922 his father died, in this year President Cossgrave conferred on him the Irish senatorship. He was awarded, in 1923, the Nobel Prize for Poetry and his name as a leading European Poet spread everywhere. From 1926-1932, he was almost at the door of death, in 1928 he suffered from Malta fever. On January 28, 1939 the world lost a great poet in his death at Roquebrune in France, where he was buried. After nine years his dead body was exhumed and buried again at Drumcliffe in Ireland in 1948.

Looking at his life, we come to know that Yeats was a man of various interests. He was an ambitious person, aspiring for great and heroic things. In order to fulfil his ambitions and aspirations, and while playing various roles in life, he had to take several poses, assume various masks. Hence the doctrine of the Mask, which includes one's social self, the other self, or the anti-self, becomes central and significant in Yeats's life and poetry. Richard Ellmann comments on it thus :

"The doctrine of the mask is so complex and so central in Yeats that we can hardly attend to it too closely. Even at this early stage of its development it has multiple meanings and is a variable concept. To start with its simplest meaning, the mask is the social self. Browning had spoken of 'two soul-sides, one to face the world with', and one to show the beloved. But Yeats's doctrine assumes that we face with a mask both the world and the beloved. A closely related meaning is that the mask includes all the differences between one's own and other people's conception of one's personality. To be conscious of the discrepancy which makes a mask of this sort is to look at oneself as if one were somebody else. In addition, the mask is defensive armour: we wear it, like the light lover, to keep from being hurt. So protected, we are only slightly involved no matter what happens. This theory seems to assume that we can be detached from experience like actors from a play. Finally, the mask is a weapon of attack; we put it on to keep up a noble conception of ourselves; it is a heroic ideal which we try to live up to."¹⁵

Yeats's childhood was spent in poverty. At school in London he felt himself inferior to other children, as he was weak and tender and dark in complexion. At High School he was almost good for nothing in the eyes of his teachers. At home his father was affectionate and intellectually dominating; he was caught between mother's theism and father's atheism. The total family atmosphere, as far as religion is concerned, was, to a young boy, much of confusion, ultimately resulting in his self-alienation, knowing not what course he should take.

Yeats erected an eccentric faith some where between his grandfather's orthodox belief and his father's unorthodox

disbelief. J.B. Yeats had himself revolted against the standard values of the nineteenth century. The son was thrown into the position of a counter-revolutionary. Besides, half of his life was spent in the nineteenth century in which the notion of self-hood had changed drastically and the dissociation of personality had been felt acutely by the writers. Yeats had a great trouble in finding a basis for self-expression. Richard Ellmann comments on Yeats's self-alienation in this way :

"Yeats came to maturity in this atmosphere of doubling and splitting of the self, but his mental growth was parallel to that of other writers and did not derive from them ----- Yeats noted everywhere about him confirmation of his sense of internal division. But as we have seen, that division had its origin in childhood with a revolt, which could only be a half-revolt, against his father and his father's world. He sought in vain the unself-conscious life which he associated with his mother's family. Hating his father's scepticism, he still could not escape it; he would have liked to dream the days away, but he also wanted to be a success in the world. The inner struggle was dramatized by his difficulties with sexual desire; he had a continual battle with his senses and was filled with self-loathing at what he thought was an unnatural and horrible state of mind. Thus many personal factors and many examples, and beyond these the spirit of the times, made him see his life as a quarrel between two parts of his being."¹⁶

Even as a lover Yeats suffered from the pangs of self-alienation. In his teens he had the experience of first love with his cousin Laura Armstrong. Later on his first meeting with Maud-Gonne in 1889 proved to be a turning-point

in his life. His other strong love-affairs with Diana Vernon and a woman in London were just temporary adjustments which were made for the sake of an emotional outlet. Yeats blamed himself for losing Maud Gonne. Too much of critical intellect and his timidity prevented him from acting on instinct. This sense of guilt at having separated himself from the normal, active man is expressed in his plays written between 1903 and 1910.

As is the nature of artistic creation, every artist feels the sense of being separated from his creation. As a poet Yeats also experienced the feeling of being alienated from his own work in which he had put his heart and mind. He wanted to be a painter but became a poet, and herein also he was alienated from his own self.

Yeats was very shy and somewhat awkward in the company of women, despite having two sisters of his own. In his early years, for some times he lived the life of self-denial. Even in his old age he was shy and struggling with his shyness.

Yeats was fully aware of his own self as divided against itself. His letter to Lady Gregory, written on June 27, 1907, speaks volumes for his torn, shaken and broken personality : "I feel that I have lost myself - my centre as it were, has shifted from its natural interests, and that it will take me a long time finding myself again -----"¹⁷ The foregoing discussion with regard to Yeats as man, as lover

and as artist amply proves that he was a self-alienated personality.

W.B. Yeats has been ranked by many critics as the dominant poet of our time. His place in modern poetry is very secure, solid and significant. To fully appreciate Yeats's poems one has to be fully conversant with the Irish background and the Irish mythologies and also be familiar with his interests in magic, occultism, theosophy, and the complex symbolism which keeps changing meaning from poem to poem. Yeats has tried to bring back the simplicity and "altogetherness" of the earlier ages and blend it with the modern ideas of good and evil. Yeats's earliest poetry is frankly escapist, and its purpose was not to interpret life but to compensate for it. His adolescence was shaped by Spenser, Shelley, Rossetti, and Blake. But it was Ireland that rescued him from this imitative romantic world. As a result of the Irish folklore that he had picked up, a new precision in imagery entered his poetry, and his diction acquired a greater vitality. In this folklore his wild imagination was combined with homely realism, stories of fairies, ghosts, goblins, local spirits, etc. It was the first step in the development of Yeats's individuality as a poet. Richard Ellmann says the following about Yeats the poet:

"I can not concede to Mr. Hough that even in the early Yeats there is any desire for an autonomous art, separated from life and experience by an impassable gulf. We have been taught so often that we live in a degenerate age, that the audience has become obtuse and sterile, that writers have detached themselves from it perforce, that we are almost embarrassed when we bethink ourselves of the sizeable number of our best writers who are not alienated, not isolated, not even inaccessible. Yeats's early dream was not to live in an ivory tower, but on an Irish island, not in unnatural, but in nature, not in a place he had never seen, but in a place he had grown up. If there was anything that he shied away from it was the separation of his art from his life, of his work from his audience."¹⁸

Yeats's early volume of poems Crossways (1889) is a collection of poems which, on the whole, are concerned primarily with "longing and complaint." Yeats's another volume of poems The Rose was published in 1893. It is a collection of poems whose general theme is the symbolisation of Platonic ideas by means of figures from Irish mythology and early Irish history. The Platonism of Shelley and Spenser is fully seen in his conception of the Rose as a symbol of the idea of beauty. His early poetry is concerned largely with expressing the dichotomy; while his later work shows his effort to resolve this dichotomy.

The theme of self-alienation is reflected in two early poems taken from The Rose - "Fergus and the Druid" and "The Man Who Dreamed of Fairyland." "Fergus and the Druid"¹⁹ is in the form of dialogue between Fergus and the Druid, the former a king and the latter a priest in the ancient world. Both are

self-alienated people. Fergus, weary of his kingly duties and responsibilities renounced the crown which he was unable to wear. Then he was in search of real knowledge and wisdom and peace which, he thought, he would get in the company of Druid. He imagined himself to be many other things - 'a green drop', 'a gleam of light upon a sword', 'a fire-tree', 'an old slave' and 'a king sitting upon a chair of gold'. He tells Druid : "But now I have grown nothing, knowing all." Even Druid in his priestly and saintly garb is not much happy, as is made clear in the following words spoken by him to Fergus;

"Look on my thin grey hair and hollow cheeks
And on these hands that may not life the sword,
This body trembling like a wind - blown reed.
No woman's loved me, no man saught my help."

As the title indicates, "The Man who Dreamed of Fairyland"²⁰ is romantic in character. The idea of this poem is that the thoughts of fairyland or an imaginary world of beauty, which visit a man of a dreamy, imaginative nature, throw him out of key with reality. It deals with the life of a man who wanted to run away from the responsibilities and tensions of the world into the world of the fairies. This dreamer in the poem was happy at no stage in his life. In his youth, he made love but it was neither lasting nor happy. He could only think of the endless and joyous love possible in the fairyland. In his middle age, he paid attention to

business and money-making and yet never felt happy. In his old age he reflected on his past achievements and present revenges to be taken on the people who had opposed and ridiculed him in the past. He was not happy even in his grave. This dreamer's restlessness longing for another world (which is elusive and delusive) and nervousness - all speak for his self-alienation.

The volume of poems entitled The Green Helmet And Other Poems (1910) shows a remarkable change in Yeats's poetry when we compare it with the earlier volumes. This volume came out in 1910, when Yeats had become a recognized poet, but his old dream about happy love, national theatre, the Irish populace and patriotic endeavours were shattered. He was deeply concerned with land-reform agitation, threatening the security of aristocratic families, like that of Lady Gregory's. Synge died in 1909 and Lady Gregory was ill, with the result that Death was very much in the mind of the poet. It is not without significance that the opening poem underscores the dignity of Death and the closing one the crookedness of love. The poems in this framework are marked by "a tone of regret and bitterness, a sober determination to question and dissect the ideals and aspirations which had inspired him in his early youth. Let us now discuss the theme of self-alienation as reflected in "Reconciliation" and "The

Fascination of What is Difficult", the poems selected from this volume.

"Reconciliation"²¹ has in the background Maud Gonne's marriage with John MacBride in 1903. The news of this marriage shocked and surprised Yeats so much that he could do nothing but bear the painful blows caused by her going away from him. He found, on her marriage, that his physical faculties were just paralysed, "the ears being deafened, the sight of the eyes blind/with lightening....." Even his poetic faculty was greatly affected; he found no reason and no theme to write poems about other than the helmets, swords and half-forgotten things. His cry of agony caused by his severance from Maud Gonne and consequent self-alienation can be seen in the concluding lines of the poem : "But, dear, cling close to me; since you were gone, / My barren thoughts have chilled me to the bone." The pun on the word 'gone' in this quotation intensifies his present condition. Yeats had become the Production Manager of Abbey Theatre in 1904. In the following year, he along with Lady Gregory and Synge, had become a co-director of a limited theatrical company. "The Fascination of What's Difficult" is the out come of his experiences as a writer, producer, and manager of the theatre - a subject he did not feel like romanticising or glorifying when he wrote the poem "The Fascination of What's Difficult"²² between 1909 and 1910. At the very outset of

this poem he admits that "The fascination of what's difficult / Has dried the sap out of my veins, and rent / Spontaneous joy and natural content / Out of my heart." The strain and sweat caused by his hard work, his weariness and nervousness and also the feeling that there is no escape from that sort of life fill the atmosphere of the poem and throw light on his self-alienation.

The poems composed between 1907 and 1914 were collected in Responsibilities, which is marked by a great variety of themes and style. This volume represents the antithesis of Yeats's early work, stripped of its decoration and mystery. In this volume Yeats turned to savage satire and invective, defending great art against the philistines. Yeats began to praise the refinement and public-spiritedness of aristocratic life. He repudiated all the Celtic Twilight's "embroideries" out of old mythologies" in "A coat." He recorded his disillusionment with the realities of Ireland in "The Fisherman." He castigated Ireland's ingratitude to her benefactors in "To A Shade." Behind all this sounds the groundswell of his frustrated life for Maud Gonne. It is a versatile collection. There are in it a number of direct, personal, or occasional poems and some satirical ones. The influence of Synge and Pound is quite apparent and so is the reminiscence of Donne's Metaphysical manner. Two poems from this volume "September 1913" and "To a Shade" deal with the

exiled condition of the political leaders of Ireland who worked and died for her. In contrast to this, the people in Ireland around 1913 were all passive, idle and without any strange, romantic love for her. They had become materialists given to a life of happiness and comforts: "Romantic Ireland's dead and gone, / It's with O'Leary in the grave."²³ Yeats the poet and patriot could not but be restless under such circumstances. The fate of Parnell as depicted in "To a Shade" is not much different from Robert Browning's patriot in the poem of that title. Long after Parnell's death in 1891, Yeats wrote this poem in 1913, at the end of which he addresses the ghost, the shade of Parnell thus : "You had enough of sorrow before death -/ Away, away ! You are safer in the tomb."²⁴

This discussion of self-alienation as reflected in Yeats's early poetry logically pushes us ahead to its reflection in more mature later poetry. The following four Chapters, which form the major body of this thesis are devoted to the exploration of the theme of alienation in Yeats's later poetry, particularly the poetry written after 1917, the year which ended his long bachelorship and brought him into the world of larger domestic, social, political, poetic and philosophical considerations.

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