Part I  Introduction

Chapter- 1

Tracing Irish History

"This Isle is sacred named by all the ancients,
From times remotest in the womb of Chronos.
This Isle which rises over the waves of ocean
Is covered with a sod of rich luxuriance
And peopled far and wide by the Hiberni."

Rufus Festus Avienus, fourth century AD
from The Story of the Irish Race, by Seumas MacManus

This research is a study of three acclaimed English poets of Irish origin, W.B.Yeats, Seamus Heaney and Paul Muldoon. The field of investigation is restricted to their poems and the focus is on the elements of tradition that binds inevitably these three poets to the grand continuous Irish tradition. The hypothesis of this researcher is that these three poets find their springboards of poetry in landscape, particularly dominated by the symbols - stone, water and tree. This three-tier symbolism is generated, retained and articulated by the fact that Irish poetry tradition is embedded in landscape.

‘Irish writing in English’ has made significant contribution to the shaping of English Literature and has been credited with great attention of critics and scholars. The genre of English poetry of modern times invariably begins with the contribution of William Butler Yeats and he was shaped by the Irish-Celtic tradition that has also influenced his successors. Ireland is different from England not only in its economy, religion and tradition but also in its essential response to the life around. It is a land haunted by shadows; spirits and memories have become unique facets of Irish tradition and culture. It was this spirit-world which enabled Yeats to burst on Europe
with a new imagery, a new mythology and new legends. His heroes, kings and fairy people are of the very soil of Ireland. His poetry is rooted mostly in the Irish tradition. Hence he is called the National poet of Ireland.

Ireland is not merely a peasant country; it is also a Catholic country. While most of the leading families in the day of Yeats were Protestants, the masses were, and still are, mainly Catholic. In terms of faith, Irish scene is a divided one, and this duality has become the part of Irish tradition now.

Politics of Yeats’ day exercised a powerful force in the social life of the Irish people. The War of Independence was on the rise. It is now history that there had been frequent, violent rebellions against England. Everything takes a political colouring, and even dramatists like Synge could not ignore it. Since Yeats, there have been significant contributions to English literature from Ireland. Right from Joyce, Beckett and Seamus Heaney, up to the now-popular Paul Muldoon, their contribution has been given ample recognition by the English literary historians.

The focus of the investigation is to fix the common element found in the chosen poets who of course have their differences in their themes and forms. Ireland has two faces, religious and political but beyond those unique features there is a visage of landscape that continues to appear in the Irish literary scenario and thus a tradition evolves from the natural sources like water, tree, animals, birds, stones etc. as poetic images recurrently used by these poets. They serve the purpose of the poets to frame their major symbols that could well transform those natural subjects into cultural objects. Moreover, the comprehensive presentation of Ireland’s racial as well as political literary history, mythology, fairies and faiths would help one distinguish Irish nation from other European nations. And, they could be used as parameters to
identify what is living in Irish tradition that finds expression in the poems of W.B.Yeats, Seamus Heaney and Paul Muldoon.

Every country has its own land that can be geographically defined but when it is socially defined, it is viewed in terms of culture/tradition. *Dictionary of philosophy* defines tradition as “historically shaped customs, rites, social precepts, ideas, values, rules of conduct etc. handed down from generation to generation” (I.Frolov 427) preserved in society or its social groups for a considerable period of time. Still Ireland has been considered a historical space that keeps Celtic tradition. Besides invasions that occurred later years, the language, beliefs and other features remain almost unaltered. To Tony Conron, “Christianity and Paganism were struggling for the soul of Ireland; yet Irish poetry everywhere reflects a cultural security that had known neither Roman conquest nor Roman withdrawal. The poets are free to let their imaginations wander over the struggle for the conversion” (23).

In this introductory part, chapter one is further subdivided dealing with the history of Irish politics and religion that has been traced through Celtic rites and rituals. They still exist in the form of myths and elemental archetypes, which include the nature symbols like, water, stone and tree. The second chapter gives a brief sketch of Irish literary tradition that, in fact, W.B.Yeats attempted to revive in his literary career and called it Celtic Revival.

**Geography of Irish Islands**

The following geographical description of both Ireland and Northern Ireland may well strengthen the historical perception of Irish politics and religion. Hence, the brief note on the geographical features of the island has been given as a pretext.

Irish (related to the poetic *Erin* and perhaps the Latin *Hibernia*) island, 32,598 sq mi (84,429 sq km), is the second largest of the British Isles. The island is divided
into two major political units—Northern Ireland, which is joined with Great Britain in the United Kingdom, and the Republic of Ireland. Of the 32 counties of Ireland, 26 lie in the Republic, and of the four historic provinces, three and part of the fourth are in the Republic.

Ireland lies West of the island of Great Britain, from which it is separated by the narrow North Channel, the Irish Sea (which attains a width of 130 mi/209 km), and St. George's Channel. More than a third the size of Britain, the island averages 140 miles (225 km) in width and 225 miles (362 km) in length. A highland rim roughly encloses a large central plain extending to the Irish Sea between the Mourne Mountains, in the North and the mountains of Wicklow in the South. The highlands of the North, West, and South, which rise to more than 3,000 ft (914 m), are generally barren, but the central plain is extremely fertile and the climate is temperate and moist, warmed by southwesterly winds. The rains, which are heaviest in the west (some areas have more than 80 in./203 cm annually), are responsible for the brilliant green grass of the "emerald isle," and for the large stretches of peat bog, a source of valuable fuel. The coastline is irregular, affording many natural harbors. Off the west coast are numerous small islands, including the Aran Island, the Blasket Island, Achill, and Clare Island. The interior is dotted with lakes (the most celebrated are the Lakes of Killarney) and wide stretches of river called Loughs. The Shannon, the longest of Irish rivers, drains the western plain and widens into the beautiful Loughs Allen, Ree, and Derg. The River Liffey empties into Dublin Bay, the Lee into Cork Harbour at Cobh, the Foyle into Lough Royle near Derry, and the Lagan into Belfast Lough.

Some notes on early Celtic Ireland

Tracing early Celtic Ireland reveals “some knowledge of Irish background: historical, political, economic, social and cultural” (A.N. Jeffares, 1) that is intimately
bound with this nation. Ireland has layers of settlement going back into pre-history and that continue to exist in the present time. From about 400 B.C. up to about the time of the birth of Christ, groups of invaders arrived in Ireland. These tall, fair-haired people came from the region between the Rhine and Danube rivers on the mainland of Europe. The invaders were called Celts. They were armed with iron swords and soon conquered the other peoples in the country. Their language was an old form of what is now Irish.

The Celts were of many tribal folks lived in different parts of Europe including Spain, Germany, France, Italy and the British Isles. They were characterized as ‘warlike, righteous, frightening, ferocious, proud, courageous and often very combative’. They were ‘also superstitious, artistic and spiritual’. It has been studied by the historians that they entered the world about 600 B.C. just after the founding of Rome in 500 B.C. One of such tribal groups settled in France and became the Gaul and another settled in the Iberian Peninsula and became great sea traders. There, they conquered Greece in third century B.C. and finally settled in modern day Turkey. They were called Galatians (derived from the word Gaul or Gaulish). In 400 B.C. they moved from Gaul to British Islands. Later Angles and Saxons drove them into Cornwell where they were known as Cornish and into Wales, where they became Welsh and then into Ireland where they were called Irish. Though the Celts lived throughout Europe they were of different tribes, there were no real unities among them. Their languages, lifestyles and traditions were different from one another. Yet, they had a commonality in believing ‘the immanence of the spirit in this world and the immortality of the soul’.

The Celts were farmers who grew cereals and flax. They also spent much of their time tending large herds of cattle and sheep. They are said to have worn tunics
or tight-fitting breeches and loose cloaks fastened with small iron brooches. Historians do not know how the ordinary people lived, but Celtic kings dwelt in houses fortified by banks of earth, or in lake dwellings called crannogs. The Celts believed in a life after death, and in another world, which is sometimes called Tir na nOg (land of youth). Their priests, called druids, not only offered sacrifices to the gods, but also served as teachers and judges.

A brief political history of Ireland

Ireland lies west of Great Britain and the mainland of Europe. Its history, like that of other countries, has been influenced by its geographical position. Ireland received most of its early settlers and much of its early culture from the mainland of Europe. But, from the A.D. 1100's onwards, the relationship between England and Ireland forms the central theme of Irish history. The English attempted to conquer Ireland, but the Irish put up a strong resistance. Irish history is characterized by devastating wars that impoverished the country, by plantations that placed nine-tenths of the land in the hands of English and Scottish landlords, by political and religious persecution, and by economic problems that forced many Irish people to emigrate to other countries.

Ancient Ireland (to A.D. 431)

The first people settled in Ireland about 6000 B.C. They crossed from Scotland and settled on the Antrim coast where the town of Larne is situated today. They lived on fish and other food that they gathered in the area. Their tools included knives and scrapers made of flint. Gradually, the settlers moved northwards along the coast to Magilligan Point, in County Londonderry; southwards to Dalkey Island, in County Dublin; and inland along the Bann and Lagan valleys.
About 3000 B.C., a second wave of settlers arrived who used domesticated animals and who knew how to make textiles and pottery. These settlers made tools of polished stone, tilled the land, and grew cereals. They lived in small communities in round or rectangular wooden houses thatched with straw. The most striking survivals of these people in Ireland are the megaliths (great stone monuments) that they erected over their dead. The simplest type of megalith is the dolmen, which consists of three or more upright stones, with a flat capstone laid across them. An impressive dolmen is at Legananny, in County Down. The most striking megaliths are passage graves, of which the one at Newgrange, in County Meath, is world-famous.

The original provinces, sometimes called the five fifths of Ireland, were probably Ulster, Leinster, Munster, Connacht and Mide. But the number of provinces and their boundaries were constantly changing. According to tradition, King Cormac mac Airt built a splendid palace at Tara, in Meath, formed the new kingdom of Meath, and called himself Ard Rig (high king). Though he was never the ruler of Ireland, his descendants claimed that he founded the high kingship of Tara.

**The entry of Christianity**

In 431 A.D, Pope Celestine sent Palladius as first bishop to the Irish. But Patrick, who landed in Ireland a year later, has become the patron saint of Ireland. Patrick was a native of Britain, the son of a wealthy official. When he was about 16 years of age, he was captured by Irish raiders and taken as a slave to Ireland. For six years, he herded sheep for his Irish master. He escaped and went to France to study. He became a bishop and returned to Ireland. According to tradition, Patrick landed at Saul, in Down, in 432, and built his first church there. He was called before the high king, Laoghaire, at Tara, but got his permission to preach. For thirty years, he traveled the country, founding churches and ordaining priests. He died in 461.
Modern scholars dispute this traditional account of St. Patrick’s life and argue that a number of missionaries converted the Irish to Christianity. But all scholars agree that the people eventually accepted the new religion without much opposition.

**Irish missionaries**

St. Patrick and other missionaries divided the country into dioceses and put a bishop in charge of each of them. In the years that followed, many monasteries were founded throughout the country. Gradually, monasteries became an important feature of Christian life in Ireland. The chief founders of Irish monasteries were St. Enda of the Aran Islands, St. Finnian of Clonard, St. Columba of Derry and Kells, who is also called Colmcille, St. Brendan of Clonfert, St. Brigid of Kildare, St. Comgall of Bangor, St. Finbarr of Cork and St. Kieran of Clonmacnois. The monasteries became so important that the system of dioceses founded by St. Patrick broke down. Each monastery was independent, and the abbots of the monasteries eventually became more powerful than the bishops.

During the Dark Ages in Europe (500-800), religion and scholarship almost disappeared in some other countries. But during this time, Ireland became a great centre of education and scholarship. Many scholars from Britain and the mainland of Europe travelled to Ireland to study in its famous monastery schools. At least two kings from overseas were educated in Ireland: Dagobert II of the Western Franks and Aldfrid of Northumbria. Scripture and theology were the chief subjects of study at these schools.

The arts owed much to the monasteries. Some of the finest metalwork of this period was specially made for them. Examples of such metalwork are the Ardagh Chalice, the Innisfallen Crozier and book shrines called Cumdachs. The supreme
artistic achievements of the period were the illuminated manuscripts written by the scribes in the monasteries. Among the best known are the Book of Kells, the Book of Durrow, and the Book of Armagh. The Irish monks believed that the greatest sacrifice they could make was to go into exile "for the love of Christ." St. Columba of Derry was one of the first missionaries to leave Ireland. In 563, he founded a monastery on Iona, a small island off the coast of Scotland. From there, he and his successors taught the Christian religion throughout much of Scotland and northern England. Other missionaries went to the mainland of Europe. Columbanus went to France and Italy; Gall, to Switzerland; Kilian, to Germany; and Livinius, to the Netherlands. They founded monasteries in many of the places that they visited. The monasteries of Bobbio, Iona, Lindisfarne and Luxeuil were among the most famous of them.

In time, a decline in the religious fervour of the monks set in. Some monasteries passed into the control of lay people, and many kinds of abuses resulted. In the 700's, a reform movement began, led by men called Celi De (servants of God), who preached a return to the former strictness of monastic life. But, before they could achieve much, bands of warriors from Scandinavia, called Vikings, began to raid the country.

**The Vikings in Ireland (795-950)**

The first Viking raid occurred in 795, when Vikings plundered the monastery on Lambay Island, off the Dublin coast. At first, they came in small parties, made surprise attacks on places along the coast, and sailed away with their plunder. But, after about 830, the Vikings changed their tactics. They sailed up the rivers to plunder inland places. They set up bases and attacked the surrounding countryside
from them. They also began to stay in the country during the winter. In 841-842, they wintered at Dublin at the mouth of the River Liffey, for the first time.

At first, the Irish were not successful in defending themselves against the invaders. Their weapons were inferior to those of the Vikings, and they had no permanent armies or fleets. Worse still, the country lacked political unity. Even during the worst periods of the Viking invasion, the provincial kings continued to quarrel among themselves. But, in the mid-800's, the Irish began to put up a stronger resistance and to win victories over Viking forces. But they did not drive the Vikings out of the country, and a second wave of Viking attacks on Ireland began in 914. The Irish counterattacked with increasing success, and in 944 the kings of Tara and Leinster sacked Dublin.

By this time, the Vikings had settlements at Wexford, Waterford, Cork, and Limerick, as well as at Dublin. These were the first towns in Ireland, and the Vikings who lived in them began to develop trade. They also married into Irish families and, eventually, became Christians. Viking leaders became like other rulers in Ireland and joined in the wars between rival Irish kings.

**Rival kings (950-1169)**

The struggle for power among provincial kings went on, in spite of the Viking invasions. By the end of the 900's, Brian Boru, the king of a small state in Clare called Dal Cais, had conquered his greater neighbours and made himself the strongest king in the southern half of Ireland. But Mael Morda, king of Leinster, began to plot against him. Mael Morda made an alliance with Sitric, the Viking king of Dublin, who got help from the Vikings of the Orkney Islands and the Isle of Man. Brian marched against them, and a great battle was fought at Clontarf, near Dublin, on Good
Friday, 1014. It ended in victory for Brian's army, but Vikings fleeing from the battle killed Brian himself in his tent.

For a hundred years after the death of Brian, rulers of powerful provincial kingdoms fought bitterly for supremacy. But none of them had any lasting success. In 1106, Turlough O'Connor became king of Connacht. He was a skilful warrior. He strengthened his kingdom by building fortresses in it. He put bridges over the River Shannon, so that he could attack the other provinces swiftly, and he made great use of fleets in his wars. He tried to weaken his rivals by dividing their kingdoms. He partitioned Munster and Meath among a number of petty kings. For a time, he was the most powerful king in Ireland. But when he died, in 1156, Murtagh MacLoughlin, king of Ulster, with the help of Dermot MacMurrough, king of Leinster, made himself king of Ireland. Ten years later, he was overthrown, and Turlough's son, Rory O'Connor, became the last native king of Ireland. But Dermot MacMurrough refused to recognize his authority and fled from the country to seek help from King Henry II of England.

The period after the Viking invasion was a time of recovery for religion and culture, in spite of the disturbed political life of the country. The Irish Church was reformed and reorganized into dioceses. At the Synod of Kells in 1152, the country was divided into 36 dioceses, and grouped into 4 provinces under the archbishops of Armagh, Dublin, Cashel, and Tuam. St. Malachy of Armagh was the greatest of the religious reformers and introduced the Cistercian Order into Ireland. In 1142, the first Irish Cistercian monastery was founded in Louth.

In the 1000's and 1100's, the economy of the country was mainly pastoral. A person's wealth was reckoned by the number of cattle he or she owned. The social unit was still the tuath, which was based on family groups. The ruler of a tuath lived
in a fortified house called a rath, or dun, together with a brehon (lawyer), minstrel, physician, and several craftworkers. The ruler's subjects lived in huts of wattle and clay. The people were poorly armed and no match for the warlike Normans who invaded Ireland in the mid-1100's.

**The Normans in Ireland (1169-1535)**

The Normans were descended from Vikings who had been granted a large province in northern France in the 900s, on condition that they ceased to raid the rest of the country. This province was called Normandy. In 1066, its ruler, William the Conqueror, claimed the throne of England, crossed the English Channel with a large army, and won a decisive victory at Hastings. A hundred years later, when one of William's descendants, Henry II, was king of England, Dermot MacMurrough crossed to England and asked for help. Henry allowed Dermot to recruit allies among the Norman barons of Wales, who were his subjects. Richard de Clare (Strongbow) was one among them. Dermot promised him his daughter Eva in marriage and the succession to the throne of Leinster if he would help him.

In 1169, a party of Normans under Robert Fitzstephen landed in Bannow Bay, on the southeast coast of Ireland. In 1170, Strongbow landed near Waterford with an army, captured the town, and married Eva MacMurrough there. The first part of the agreement had been kept. The second part soon followed. After the Normans had captured Dublin, MacMurrough died suddenly. Strongbow assumed the king of Leinster, and the other Norman barons began to seize territories.

**Political conflict between Ireland and England**

In the 12th century, Pope Adrian IV granted lordship of Ireland to Henry II of England. The English conquest of Ireland was begun by Richard de Clare, the 2nd earl of Pembroke, who intervened on behalf of a claimant to the throne of Leinster; in
1171, Henry himself went to Ireland, temporarily establishing his lordship over there. With this invasion commenced an Anglo-Irish struggle that continued for more than 800 years.

The English established themselves in Dublin. Roughly a century of warfare ensued as Ireland was divided into English shires ruled from Dublin, the domains of feudal magnates who acknowledged English sovereignty, and the independent Irish kingdoms. Many English intermarried with the Irish and were assimilated into Irish society. In the late 13th century, the English introduced a parliament in Ireland. In 1315, Edward Bruce of Scotland invaded Ireland and was joined by many Irish kings. Although Bruce was killed in 1318, the English authority in Ireland was weakening, becoming limited to a small district around Dublin known as the Pale; the rest of the country fell into a struggle for power among the ruling Anglo-Irish families and Irish chieftains.

Moreover, the Hundred Years War diverted English attention with France (1337–1453) and the Wars of the Roses (1455–85). However, under Henry VII new interest in the island was aroused by Irish support for Lambert Simnel, a Yorkist pretender to the English throne. To crush this support, Henry sent to Ireland Sir Edward Poynings, who summoned an Irish Parliament at Drogheda and forced it to pass the legislation known as Poynings' Law (1495). These acts provided that future Irish Parliaments and legislation receive prior approval from the English Privy Council. A free Irish Parliament was thus rendered impossible.

The English Reformation under Henry VIII gave rise in England to the increased fears of foreign, Catholic invasion; control of Ireland thus became even more imperative. Henry VIII put down a rebellion (1534–37), abolished the monasteries, confiscated lands, and established a Protestant "Church of Ireland"
(1537). But since the vast majority of Irish remained Roman Catholic, the seeds of bitter religious contention were added to the already rancorous Anglo-Irish relations. The Irish rebelled three times during the reign of Elizabeth I and were brutally suppressed. Under James I, Scottish and English Protestants settled in Ulster, and many of the Catholic inhabitants were driven off their lands; thus, two sharply antagonistic communities were established.

Another Irish rebellion, begun in 1641 in reaction to the hated rule of Charles I's deputy, Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford, was crushed (1649–50) by Oliver Cromwell with the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives. More land was confiscated (and often given to absentee landlords), and more Protestants settled in Ireland. The intractable landlord-tenant problem that plagued Ireland in later centuries can be traced to the English confiscations of the 16th and 17th centuries. Irish Catholics rallied to the cause of James II after his overthrow (1688) in England, while the Protestants in Ulster enthusiastically supported William III. At the battle of the Boyne (1690) near Dublin, James and his French allies were defeated by William. The English-controlled Irish Parliament passed harsh Penal Laws designed to keep the Catholic Irish powerless; political equality was also denied to Presbyterians. At the same time English trade policy depressed the economy of Protestant Ireland, causing many so-called Scotch-Irish to immigrate to America. A newly flourishing woolen industry was destroyed when export from Ireland was forbidden.

During the American Revolution, fear of a French invasion of Ireland led Irish Protestants to form (1778–82) the Protestant Volunteer Army. The Protestants, led by Henry Grattan, and even supported by some Catholics, used their military strength to extract concessions for Ireland from Britain. Trade concessions were granted in 1779, and, with the repeal of Poynings' Law (1782), the Irish Parliament had its
independence restored. But the Parliament was still chosen undemocratically, and Catholics continued to be denied the right to hold political office.

Another unsuccessful rebellion was staged in 1798 by Wolfe Tone, a Protestant who had formed the Society of United Irishmen and who accepted French aid in the uprising. The reliance on French assistance revived anti-Catholic feeling among the Irish Protestants, who remembered French support of the Jacobite restoration. The rebellion convinced the British prime minister, William Pitt, that the Irish problem could be solved by the adoption of three policies: abolition of the Irish Parliament, legislative union with Britain in a United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and Catholic Emancipation. The first two goals were achieved in 1800, but the opposition of George III and British Protestants prevented the enactment of the Catholic Emancipation Act until 1829, when it was accomplished largely through the efforts of the Irish leader Daniel O'Connell.

**Ireland under the Union**

After 1829, the Irish representatives in the British Parliament attempted to maintain the Irish question as a major issue in British politics. O'Connell worked to repeal the union with Britain, which was felt to operate to Ireland's disadvantage, and to reform the government in Ireland. Toward the middle of the century, the Irish Land Question grew increasingly urgent. But the Great Potato Famine (1845–49), one of the worst natural disasters in history, dwarfed political developments. During these years, blight ruined the potato crop, the staple food of the Irish population, and hundreds of thousands perished from hunger and disease. Many thousands of others emigrated; between 1847 and 1854 about 1.6 million went to the United States. The population dropped from an estimated 8.5 million in 1845 to 6.55 million in 1851 (and continued to decline until the 1960s). Irish emigrants in America formed the
secret Fenian movement, dedicated to Irish independence. In 1869, the British Prime Minister William Gladstone sponsored an act disestablishing the Protestant “Church of Ireland” and thereby removed one Irish grievance.

In the 1870s, Irish politicians renewed efforts to achieve Home Rule within the union, while in Britain Gladstone and others attempted to solve the Irish problem through land legislation and Home Rule. Gladstone twice submitted Home Rule bills (1886 and 1893) that failed. The proposals alarmed Protestant Ulster, which began to organize against Home Rule. In 1905, Arthur Griffith founded Sinn Féin among Irish Catholics, but for the time being the dominant Irish nationalist group was the Home Rule party of John Redmond.

Home Rule was finally enacted in 1914, with the provision that Ulster could remain in the union for six more years, but the act was suspended for the duration of World War I and never went into effect. In both Ulster and Catholic Ireland militias were formed. The Irish Republican Brotherhood, a descendent of the Fenians, organized a rebellion on Easter Sunday, 1916; although unsuccessful, the rising acquired great propaganda value when the British executed its leaders.

Sinn Féin, linked in the Irish public's mind with the rising and aided by Britain's attempt to apply conscription to Ireland, scored a tremendous victory in the parliamentary elections of 1918. Its members refused to take their seats in Westminster, declared themselves the Dáil Éireann (Irish Assembly), and proclaimed an Irish Republic. The British outlawed both Sinn Fein and the Dáil, which went underground and engaged in guerrilla warfare (1919–21) against local Irish authorities representing the union. The British sent troops, the Black and Tans, who inflamed the situation further.
Partition

A new Home Rule bill was enacted in 1920, establishing separate parliaments for Ulster and Catholic Ireland. This was accepted by Ulster, and Northern Ireland was created. The plan was rejected by the Dáil, but in autumn 1921, Prime Minister Lloyd George negotiated with Griffith and Michael Collins of the Dáil a treaty granting Dominion status within the British Empire to Catholic Ireland. The Irish Free State was established in Jan., 1922. A new constitution was ratified in 1937 that terminated Great Britain's sovereignty. In 1948, all semblance of Commonwealth membership ended with the Republic of Ireland Act.

Geographical description of Northern Ireland

Division of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (1989 est. pop. 1,583,500), 5,462 sq mi (14,147 sq km), and North East Ireland was made up of six of the nine counties of the historic province of Ulster in N E Ireland and it is frequently called Ulster. The capital is Belfast. The land is mountainous and has few natural resources. It comprises 26 districts. English is the official language. The majority of the population is Protestant, and nearly 40% is Catholic. Farming (livestock, dairy products, cereals, potatoes) is the largest single occupation. Heavy industry is concentrated in and around Belfast, one of the chief ports of the British Isles. Machinery and equipment manufacturing, food processing, and textile and electronics manufacturing are the leading industries; papermaking, furniture manufacturing, and shipbuilding are also important. Northern Ireland's fine linens are famous.

The New Northern Ireland Assembly has limited devolved powers from the British Parliament, and often has been suspended since its establishment in 1999. The
government is based on a power-sharing arrangement that requires that its members include a minimum number of both Protestants and Catholics, and that those members have the support of the representatives elected by their respective communities. Northern Ireland has 18 representatives in the British Parliament.

**A Troubled History**

Northern Ireland’s relatively distinct history began in the early 17th cent. when, after the suppression of an Irish rebellion, much land was confiscated by the British crown and "planted" with Scottish and English settlers. Ulster took on a Protestant character as compared with the rest of Ireland; but no question of political separation emerged until the late 19th century when William Gladstone presented (1886) his first proposal for Home Rule for Ireland. The large Protestant population of the north feared domination under Home Rule by the Catholic majority in the south. In addition, industrial Ulster was bound economically more to England than to the rest of Ireland.

Successive schemes for Home Rule widened the rift, so that by the outbreak of World War I civil war in Ireland was an immediate effect. The Government of Ireland Act of 1920 attempted to solve the problem by enacting Home Rule separately for the two parts of Ireland, thus creating the province of Northern Ireland. However, the Irish Free State, now the Republic of Ireland, which was established in 1922, refused to recognize the finality of the partition; and violence erupted frequently on both sides of the border.

The late 1960s marked a new stage in the region's troubled history. The Catholic minority, which suffered economic and political discrimination, had grown steadily through immigration from the Republic. In 1968, civil-rights protests by Catholics led to widespread violence. Prime Minister Terence O'Neill had sought to
end anti-Catholic bias as part of his policy of fostering closer ties between Ulster and the Irish Republic, but opponents within his ruling Unionist party forced his resignation in April 1969. His successor, James Chichester-Clark, was unable to restrain the growing unrest and in August called in British troops to help restore order.

**The Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Sectarian Struggle**

At the end of 1969 a split occurred in the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which is the illegal military arm of the Sinn Fein party; the new "provisional" wing of the IRA was made up of radical nationalists. Brian Faulkner became leader of the Unionist party and prime minister of Northern Ireland in March 1971, and began a policy of imprisoning IRA and other militants. However, the IRA and the Ulster Defense Association, a Protestant terrorist group, continued and even intensified their activities.

On March 30, 1972, the British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, suspended the government and appointed William Whitelaw secretary of state for Northern Ireland. Westminster's direct rule over the province was renewed in March 1973. An assembly was formed in June 1972, with the Unionist party, a moderate pro-British group, in the majority. In November, the Unionist party formed a coalition with the Social Democratic Labour party (SDLP), the major Catholic group, and the nonsectarian Alliance party. A Northern Ireland Executive was formed to exercise day-to-day administration.

In late 1973, the British prime minister, the head of the Executive, and the Irish Republic's prime minister agreed to form Council of Ireland to promote closer cooperation between Ulster and the Republic. However, both the IRA and Protestant extremists sought to destroy the Executive and the Council, as they found power-sharing between Protestants and Catholics unacceptable. In 1974, hard-line Ulster
Protestants won 11 of the province's 12 seats in the British House of Commons and pledged to renegotiate Ulster's constitution in order to end the Protestant-Catholic coalition and progress toward Council of Ireland.

In May, 1974, militant Protestants sponsored a general strike in the province, and the Northern Ireland Executive collapsed on May 28. The British government then took direct control of the province with the passage of the Northern Ireland Act of 1974. Meanwhile, bombings and other terrorist activities had spread to Dublin and London. In 1979 Lord Mountbatten was assassinated by the IRA, and in 1981 protests broke out in Belfast over the death by hunger strike of Bobby Sands, an IRA member of Parliament.

Throughout most of the 1980s and 1990s, terrorist violence by the IRA and other groups remained a problem. An assembly formed in 1982 to propose plans for strengthening legislative and executive autonomy in Northern Ireland was dissolved in 1986 for its lack of progress. In 1985, an Anglo-Irish accord sought to lay the groundwork for talks between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Dublin agreed not to contest Northern Ireland's allegiance to Great Britain in exchange for British acknowledgment of the Republic's interest in how Northern Ireland is run. A 1993 Anglo-Irish declaration offered to open negotiations to all parties willing to renounce violence, and in 1994 the IRA and, later, Protestant paramilitary groups declared a cease-fire. Formal talks began in 1995. A resumption of violence (1996) by the IRA threatened to derail the peace process, but negotiations to seek a political settlement went ahead.

In July, 1997, the IRA declared a new cease-fire, and talks begun in September of that year included Sinn Féin. The result was an accord reached in 1998 that provided for a new Northern Ireland Assembly as well as a North-South
Ministerial Council to deal with issues of joint interest to the province and the Irish Republic. The Republic of Ireland also agreed to give up territorial claims on Northern Ireland. The formation of a new government was slowed, however, by disagreement over the disarmament of paramilitary groups, but in Dec., 1999, a multiparty government was formed after further negotiations, and Britain ended direct rule of the province. Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble became leader of the Northern Irish government.

In February 2000, however, Britain suspended self-government after the IRA refused to agree to disarm, but subsequent concessions by the IRA led to the resumption of self-government in May. The Continued resistance by the IRA to disarming has threatened self-government and it led Trimble to resign on July 1, 2001. Subsequently, Britain twice suspended the Northern Irish government in an attempt to avoid its complete collapse. Negotiations on disarming the IRA and other paramilitary groups, however, were relatively fruitless until late 2001, when the IRA began disarming; Trimble subsequently returned to office.

The arrests, in October 2002, of Sinn Féin government members for intelligence gathering for the IRA threatened the power-sharing government once again, leading Britain to suspend home rule once more. The May, 2003, elections that would have reestablished the assembly were suspended by the British government. The ostensible reason was the insufficient specificity of the IRA’s commitment to the peace process, but Trimble and the moderate Unionists also seem likely to suffer losses if the elections were held. Disagreements over the way the IRA’s disarming was being handled continued. When the elections were held in November 2003, the more extreme Protestant and Catholic parties, Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists and the Sinn Féin, outpolled their more moderate counterparts. Home rule remained
suspended, but in early 2004 Britain, the Irish Republic, and Northern Irish political parties began a "review" of the 1998 agreement in hopes of reestablishing a Northern Irish government.

**Celtic Rituals**

Religion is the influential force that can change the face of a country. No other religion was fast spread in the world than Christianity. “In other parts of Europe, Christianity degraded the old Gods and Heroes to the level of shadows and things that go bump in the night. Only in Ireland where the heroes and poets permitted to have their say in the green light of day, with the woods and the seashores around them and their scorn and their doom equally upon their own lips”(Tony Conron 23). Irish tradition is categorized by Irish man’s loving concern for its people and for its place. It is a unified voice of Irish poets depending on their primary sources taken from their Celtic history, myths, legends, rituals etc. They are the cursors that help one study faith identity. On the other hand, the study of land identity also plays a major role highlighting the continuity of tradition that persists beyond the foreign invasions religiously and politically over Irish nation. What makes its tradition alive is Irish society’s eco-centered consciousness. And, the poets, even the modern poets, continue to represent the social and spatial identity of their nation. This research is an attempt to classify the major Celtic elements that determine Irish tradition and to discuss how the select poets have used those elements in their poems.

Originally, the Celtic people gave a keen respect to nature and related elements. There were different cults, corresponding to the forces of nature. The water cult -- sea, rivers, streams, springs, and fountains -- was undoubtedly one of the most frequently practiced by them. Lakes and marshes could also appear as magical places. Another popular cult the Celtic relished as their rite was erecting stone and they were
treated as sacred objects. Cauldron, spear/sword and magic stone were considered three important talismans of the Sidhe tradition, Sidhe/Scythe was one of the gods of ancient Ireland. It is said that the stone of Fal, sometimes called Cromm Cruaich (the curve of the mound) was destroyed by St. Patrick who buried it in the ground with the aid of his cross (Thierry Bordas, 36). There are many megaliths found in Ireland. They were menhirs, dolmens and raised stones in Ireland. These stonehenges were used by the Celts for religious purposes, cemetery, places of sacrifice, astronomical observatory etc. and no doubt the site where these stones were found are treated as sacred places by the Irish (46-47).

The following account of various worships of water, tree and stone would strengthen this study that how these symbols of nature are suggestive of Irish pre-Christian rituals and faiths that have been formulated by Celtic tribes. The scholars on Celtic religion have extensively dealt with these major cults. The following paragraphs detail the information - from the website, http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/rac- with regard to this thesis concerned.

**Water Worship**

The testimony of contemporary witnesses, inscriptions and other archaeological evidences show the cult of water and of water divinities observed by Celts. Mr. Gomme argues that Celtic water-worship was derived from the pre-Celtic aborigines, but if so, the Celts must have had a peculiar aptitude for it, since they were so enthusiastic in its observance. What probably happened was that the Celts, already worshippers of the waters, freely adopted local cults of water wherever they had migrated. For, some rivers or river-goddesses in Celtic regions seem to posses pre-Celtic names.
According to inscriptions, a river name is associated with epithets or divine personalities and they point to the idea that river-divinities might have affairs with mortals and beget offsprings called by their names. In Ireland, Conchobar was so named from the river whence his mother Nessa drew water, perhaps because he was a child of the river-god.

In general, the Celts regarded rivers as donors of life, health, and plenty, and offered them rich gifts and sacrifices. They are usually associated with goddesses. And, as most Celtic river names are feminine, female divinities of rivers and springs had the earlier and foremost place, especially as their cult was connected with fertility. Thus every spring, every woodland brook, every river in glen or valley, and the lake were haunted by divine beings, mainly thought of as beautiful females. It is very common tradition in India where most of the rivers have feminine names and are holy. As sources of fertility, they had a place in the ritual of the great festivals, and sacred wells were visited on Midsummer Day. Some of the goddesses were represented by statues or busts, which have been presented by worshippers in gratitude for the goddess's healing gifts. There they revealed themselves to their worshippers, and when paganism had passed away, they remained as féés or fairies haunting spring, or well, or river or lake. For instance, Lough Neagh is associated with many pagan rituals and legendary stories.

Lough Neagh is a lake in the central part of Northern Ireland. It is the largest lake of the British Isles, 29 km (18 mi) long and 24 km (15 mi) wide and has an area of 396 sq km (153 sq mi). Many streams flowing into the lake include the Blackwater, Main, and Lagan. Lough Neagh is drained by the Bann River, which flows north to the North Channel.
There are interesting tales related to the formation of Lough Neagh. One of them affirms that the great Fionn Ma-Coul, being in a rage one day took up a handful of earth and threw it into sea; and the handful was of such a size that formed the Isle of Man, and the hollow caused by its removal became the basin of the present Lough Neagh. Another legend is a holy well once existed in the locality, blessed and sanctified by a saint with the miraculous powers of healing. Every patient on leaving, after cure, carefully closed the wicket-gate that shut in the well. But once, a woman having forgotten this information left the gate open. And instantly the indignant waters sprang from their bed and pursued the offender. She fled in terror before the advancing waves; at last, she sank down exhausted. When the waters closed over her, she was no more seen. But along the track of her fight the waters remained, and formed the great lake now existing. Exactly the length the woman traversed in her flight from the angry spirit of the lake.

Mysterious influences still haunt the locality all round Lough Neagh. For, it is said to be the most ancient dwelling-place of the fairies. When they pass at night, from one island to another, soft music is heard floating by. Then the boatmen know that the fairies are out for a pleasure trip. Once a man saw them going by in the track of the moonbeam. They were a crowd of little men who all dressed in green with red caps, and the women in silver gossamer. And he liked these pretty creatures, and always left a little poteen for them in the bottle when he was on the island. In return, they gave him the best of good luck in fishing and in everything else; for never an enemy came next to his place while the fairies protected him, and many a time they led the enemy into a bog, and otherwise discomfited him. Consequently, the angler loved his little friends, and they took great care of him. For, even in the troubulous times of '98, they did him no harm. And, he always gave it to them with a heart and a
half; for they didn't tell him, they were going to free Ireland from the Sassenach (an offensive term for an English person) tyranny.

Those who have the power of fairy vision can see the columns and walls of the beautiful palaces under the waters of Lough Neagh. They were once inhabited by the fairy race when they were the gods of the earth. This tradition of a buried town beneath the waves has been prevalent for centuries among the people.

On the northern side of Lough Neagh there is still a holy well of great power and sanctity. Three ancient white thorn trees overshadow it, and about a mile distant is the fragmentary ruin of a wooden cross, erected in the olden time to mark the limit of the sacred ground. It was the custom up to a recent. Time for the pilgrims to go round this well thirteen times barefoot on the 27th of June and used to drink the water, wash in it holding themselves freed from all past sin, then return to the worldly life. At one time, an effort was made to change the name of Lough Neagh to Lough Chichester, in honour of the Lord Deputy, Sir Arthur Chichester, but the Irish would not accept the new baptism, and the old name remains unchanged.

Another lake is also popularly known for its magical power. Near the great mountain of Croagh-Patrick there is a lake called Clonveneagh, or the Lake of Revenge, to which evil-disposed persons used to resort in order to implicate maledictions on their enemies. It was the custom also to erect monuments round the well by placing on end a long flagstone, and heaping round it a pyramid of sand in order to keep it fixed firmly in its place. Over these pillar-stones certain mystic rites were then performed by the pilgrims, and prayers were said which took the form of the most terrible imprecations. It was therefore with awe and terror that one man said of another," He has been cursed by the stone."
In Ireland, there is a staunch belief in the curative power of the sacred wells that are scattered over the country. The ancient churches and cells of the saints were placed near a well, which then became sacred and endowed with healing power. The Druids might make them holy. Later these wells were selected by the saints as their dwelling places and they might bring them under the influence of Christianity. One of such wells is Tobre Mire, the well of the field of worship, in county Cork. The Bride’s well is the holy well, named after St. Bridget who took the name from the pagan goddess Brighita. A holy well in south was dedicated to St. Augustine. There is a place on the shore of Scattery Island – In the western coast of Ireland – where a holy well once existed. It is known as the holy well of St. Seenan. Thus, scores of fairy wells still exist in Ireland.

The Celts also believed in the sacred fish of wells or streams. Many wells with sacred fish exist in Ireland, and the fish have usually some supernatural quality--they never alter in size, they become invisible, or they take the form of beautiful women. For example, In old Irish beliefs, the salmon was the fish of knowledge. Thus, whoever ate the salmon of Connla’s well was dowered with the wisdom, which had come to them through eating nuts from the hazels of knowledge around the well.

In spite of twenty centuries of Christianity and the anathemas of saints and councils, the old pagan practices at healing wells have survived--a striking instance of human conservatism. St. Patrick found the pagans of his day worshipping a well called Slán, "health-giving," and offering sacrifices to it, and the Irish peasant to-day has no doubt that there is something divine about his holy wells. The Celts brought the belief in the divinity of springs and wells with them, but would naturally adopt local cults wherever they found them. Afterwards the Church placed the old pagan wells under the protection of saints, but part of the ritual often remained unchanged.
Hence, many wells have been venerated for ages by different races and through changes in religion and polity. Thus at the thermal springs of Vicarello offerings have been found which show that their cult has continued from the Stone Age, through the Bronze Age, to the days of Roman civilization, and so into modern times. But it serves to show that all races, high and low, preserve the great outlines of primitive nature religion unchanged. In all probability, the ritual of the healing wells has also remained in great part unaltered, and wherever it is found it follows the same general type.

**Tree and Plant Worship**

The Celts had their own cult of trees and they adopted local cults like Ligurian, Iberian, and others. Forests were also personified or ruled by a single goddess, like *Dea Arduinna* of the Ardennes and *Dea Abnoba* of the Black Forest. But ideas that are more primitive prevailed. Groups of trees like *Sex arbores* were venerated, perhaps for their height, isolation, or some other peculiarity.

The Celts made their sacred places in dark groves, the trees being hung with offerings or with the heads of victims. Human sacrifices were hung or impaled on trees, *e.g.* by the warriors of Boudicca. The offerings still placed by the folk on sacred trees, the trees were the abode of spirits or divinities that in many cases had power over vegetation.

Pliny said of the Celts that they considered the mistletoe and the tree on which it grows more sacred than anything else. But apart from this, they chose oak-woods for their sacred groves, and performed no sacred rite without using oak branches. The sacred fire might have been obtained by friction from oak-wood, and it is because of the old sacredness of the oak that a piece of its wood is still used as a talisman. A
group of people living in an oak region and subsisting in part on acorns might easily take the oak as a representative of the spirit of vegetation or growth. It was long-lived, its foliage was a protection, it supplied food, its wood was used as fuel, and it was thus clearly the friend of man. For these reasons, it was the most abiding and living thing men knew. It became the embodiment of the spirits of life and growth. Folklore survivals point out that the spirit of vegetation in the shape of its representative was annually slain and its life might benefit all things and be passed on undiminished to its successor. Hence the oak or a human being representing the spirit of vegetation, or both together, were burned in the Midsummer fires. It was believed that the fires were kindled to regulate the sun's life; they were fed with oak-wood, and an oak or a human victim representing the spirit embodied in the oak was burned. Hence, it might have been thought that the sun was strengthened by the fire residing in the sacred oak. It was thus "the original storehouse or reservoir of the fire which was from time to time drawn out to feed the sun." The oak that became the symbol of a bright god was also connected with growth. As the fire strengthened the sun, it marked the growth of vegetation and human life.

Dr. Evans argues that the original holy object within the central triliths of Stonehenge was a sacred tree, an oak image of the Celtic Zeus (qtd.in www.sacred-texts.com /chapter VII?). The tree and the stones, once associated with ancestor worship, had become symbols of celestial Spirit. Other trees--the yew, the cypress, the alder, and the ash, were venerated. The Irish Druids attributed special virtues to the hazel, rowan, and yew, the wood of which was used in magical ceremonies described in Irish texts. The Druids of rival armies lighted fires of rowan and said over them the magic charms in order to discomfit the foes. The wood of all these trees is still believed to be efficacious against fairies and witches.
In Celtic mythology, Dana, also known as Danu, Anu, or Danaan, is a major mother goddess. The descendants of Dana and her consort Bilé (Beli) were known as the Tuatha Dé Danaan (Celtic for “Children of Danaan”), a race of gods that in later legend became one of the early peoples of Ireland. In Irish tradition, these biles were associated with trees. The Irish bile was a sacred tree growing over a holy well or fort. Five of them are described in the Dindsenchas, and one was an oak. It yielded acorns, nuts and apples. A myth of trees on which all these fruits grew might then easily arise. Another Irish bile was a yew described in a poem as "a firm strong god," while such phrases in this poem as "word-pure man," "judgment of origin," "spell of knowledge," may have some reference to the custom of writing divinations in Ogham on rods of yew. Some bile were ash-trees, and one of them was the Fir Bile, called "men of the tree". The lives of kings and chiefs appear to have been connected with these trees, probably as representatives of the spirit of vegetation.

There are beliefs connected to the ghost of the person buried under the tree. Even now in Celtic districts extreme veneration exists for trees growing in cemeteries and in other places. It is dangerous to cut them down or to pluck a leaf or branch from them, while in Breton churchyards the yew is thought to spread a root to the mouth of each corpse. The story of the grave of Cyperissa, daughter of a Celtic king in the Danube region, from which first sprang the "mournful cypress,” is connected with universal legends of trees growing from the graves of lovers until their branches intertwine. These embody the belief that the spirit of the dead is in the tree, which was thus in all likelihood the object of a cult. Many instances of these legends occur in Celtic stories. Yew-stakes driven through the bodies of Naisi and Deirdre to keep them apart, became yew-trees and the tops of which embraced over Armagh Cathedral. A yew spread from the grave of Bailé Mac Buain, and an apple-tree from
that of his lover Aillinn, and the top of each had the form of their heads. The identification of tree and ghost is here complete.

Thus, in Irish sagas, plants have magical powers. "Fairy herbs" placed in a bath had restored beauty to women bathing therein. During the Táin Cúchulainn's wounds were healed with "balsams and healing herbs of fairy potency," and Diancecht used similar herbs to restore the dead at the battle of Mag-tured. The elder, rowan, and thorn are still planted round houses to keep off witches, or sprigs of rowan are placed over doorways--a survival from the time when they were believed to be tenanted by a beneficent spirit hostile to evil influences. In Ireland and the Isle of Man the thorn is worshiped to be the resort of fairies and Eke, the woodland fairies or "wood men" are probably representatives of the older tree spirits and gods of groves and forests.

Thus in Celtic religion plant-worship was rooted in the oldest nature worship, and the Church had the utmost difficulty in suppressing it. Councils fulminated against the cult of trees, against offerings to them or the placing of lights before them and before wells or stones, and against the belief that certain trees were too sacred to be cut down or burned. Heavy fines were levied against those who practised these rites, yet they continued. Amator, Bishop of Auxerre, tried to stop the worship of a large pear-tree standing in the centre of the town and on which the semi-Christian inhabitants hung animals' heads with much ribaldry. At last S. Germanus destroyed it, but at the risk of his life. S. Martin of Tours was allowed to destroy a temple, but the people would not permit him to attack a much venerated pine-tree which stood beside it--an excellent example of the way in which the more official paganism fell before Christianity, while the older religion of the soil, from which it sprang, could not be entirely eradicated. The Church often had to compromise with this paganism. Images
of the gods affixed to trees were replaced by those of the Virgin Mary. Legends arose
telling how the faithful had been led to such trees and there discovered the image of
the Madonna miraculously placed among the branches. These are analogous to the
legends of the discovery of images of the Virgin in the earth.

Stone-Worship

In many lands, shapeless stones have been worshiped. Among several ancient
nations, a rough stone symbolized the idea of Divinity. Ireland was no exception to
this lithic faith. It has been customary to call circles, cromlechs, Logan stones, pillar
stones, serpentine and alignment stones, by the appellation of Druidical. As these,
however, are found in Japan, China, India, Persia, Arabia, Palestine, Barbary, every
country of Europe, North and South America, as well as in the Pacific Isles, it would
imply certainly a very wide range of Druids. The Druids probably used such stones, as
objects of reverence, without crediting them either as their builders, or as the
originators of Stone-Worship. Ireland and the islands adjacent exhibit many remains
of so-called Druidical monuments. Some of these may be mentioned. There are
Singlestones found in Ireland. They are: Finn's finger-stone, Clonduff of Down,
thrown by Finn McCoul; Deer-stone, of Glendalough; Kiltulten of Kildare; Clogh-
griane, or Sun-stone; Kileena of Antrim; Ardfert of Kerry; and several on Innis
Murray. And, some old crosses have been rudely carved out of Bethels.

Circles have suffered more destruction in Ireland than in Great Britain. One at
Ballynahatna, near Dundalk, is a Stonehenge in its feature. In 1810, the Rostrevor
circle was found and was 120 ft. in diameter. One at Mount Druid, Dalkey, was about
150 ft. Killballyowen of Limerick has three circles. Carrowmore of Sligo is half a
mile across, and one near Belfast must have been nearly as large. Brefin of Cavan was
a celebrated one two centuries back. Then there are circles at Deuman of Neath,
Templebrian of Cork, Ballrichan of Louth, Innisoen of Donegal, Rath Hugh, Carrick-a-Dhirra of Waterford, and several in Louth. Cobhail was a stone enclosure. There were the Duns and Casiols, and were often converted into oratories. Ossian repeatedly mentions the Circle of Loda.

Logan Stones are the Rocking ones, and were held Divining stones. At Magee, south of Antrim, the weight of one is twelve tons. This is thought to be Ossian's Rocking stone of Cromla. His Stone of Power heard his hero's voice. In the Pass of Dunloe, Kerry is one about 24 ft. round. That of Carrig a-Choppian is near Macraon, and Sligo has one at Ballina.

The Dolmen or Cromlech is known in Ireland generally as the burying-place of a giant or hero, if not the bed of a Saint. Whether earth was fast or not, it had a leaning capstone, resting on two or more upright stones, which sometimes formed a sort of passage. The House of flagstones was known as the Fos-leac. And, the Leaba-na-b-fian, was the grave of heroes; as Leaba-na-Fearmore, the grave giants. An enormous one exists at Calry, in Sligo. One bed, at Mayo, is 15 ft. long; another is called Edward a Grace's bed; a third is named after the hero Diarmuid who ran off with the fair Graine. A Leaba-Diarmuid remains near Cleggan Bay, Galway. A Grannie's bed is at Glanworth of Cork. A warrior's rest lies at Hyde, in Cork. The capstones of some were as large as 24 ft. in length. One near Mount Brown weighed 110 tons. There are Cromlechs at Finvoy of Antrim, Dundonald of Down, Ballymascandlan of Dundalk, Rathkenny of Meath, Mount Venus of Dublin Co., Castlederg of Tyrone, Fairy Mount and others of Louth, Kinvyle of Galway, Leaba-na-bhfian, or Kissing-stone of Sligo, Loughrey of Tyrone, Sleigh-Grian of Kilkenny, Kilternan of Dublin Co., Castlehyde of Cork Co., Ballintoy of Antrim, Sliabbcroabb and Drumgoolan of Down, Garry Duff of Kilkenny, Sugarloaf of Waterford, Burran
and others of Clare, with those of Innishshark, Killeena, Fintona, Mullimast, Kilternail, Lennan, Knockeen, Dunmore, Lough Gur Isle, Headfort, Ballylowra, Gaulstown, Ballynageeragh, Killala, Castle Wellan, Mount Vernes, Brown, Rathkelly, Moytara, Carlow, Carrig-na-Crioth at Drumgoolan.

The cromlech of Howth, Dublin Bay, said to be the tomb of Oscar, son of Ossian. The New Grange, by Drogheda is the more romantic object. Formerly covered with earth, its interior was first made known in 1699. Standing on two acres of land, it rises 67 ft. at the base the diameter at the base is 319 ft.; at the top, 118 ft. There is a gallery of stones 62 ft. in length, with a number of chambers, one of which is 20 ft. in height.

Inscribed stones are not so common as in Wales and Scotland. But the symbols of discs, double discs, circles, concentric circles, bow and sceptre, volutes, wheels, spirals, zigzags, ogham writing, pentagons, triangles, spectacle-ornament, sceptres, serpents, horseshoes, mirrors and combs, fishes, boars, elephants, horses, bulls, camels, crosses, grooves, cups, &c., are known in Ireland. There are figures with kilts, and. others with crowns. Some slabs, as at Lough Crew, are seen covered with various inscriptions. They were simply regarded as places of pagan worship.

A letter of 1692, subsequently sent to the Society of Antiquaries, had these words:

Albeit from the general tradition that these monuments were places of pagan worship, and from the historical knowledge we have that the superstition of the Druids did take place in Britain, we may rationally conclude that these monuments have been temples of the Druids, yet I have found nothing hitherto, either in the names of these monuments, or the tradition that goes about them, which doth particularly relate to the Druids, or points them out. (http://www.sared-texts.com)
Not a few have detected in these monuments remnants the old phallic worship,--some illustrating the male principle and others symbolizing the female. Dudley's Symbolism detects the worship of the former in the circle, and the female in the quadrangular. Others would see the feminine in the circular, and the masculine in the standing stone.

Astronomy, some think, furnishes a solution. The circle of 12 stones, or any multiple of 12, might represent constellations, as 19 would suit a lunar period. Dr Kenealy, a proficient in mystic studies, wrote--"Druidical temples called Ana-mor were composed of stones, denoting the numbers of the old constellation with a Kebla of nine stones near the circumference, on inside, to represent the sun in its progress through Signs."

It was accepted that the stone circles were the temples of the British Isles; that do to the Reformation the general name in Gaelic for church was Teampull, and is still applied to the old Culdee churches of the Outer Hebrides. Furlong says, "In such monuments as these you see the very earliest idea of temple" The columns took the place of tree-stems, later on, became circular or solar forms. St Martin of Tours mentions "a turreted fabric highly-polished stones, out of which rose a lofty Cone. This had relation to Phallic superstition The worship stones was expressly forbidden by the Council of Nantes in the seventh century, and as late as 1672, by an ecclesiastical ordinance, ordering the destruction of circles. Welshmen were shown the impotence of these objects, by the power of St. David splitting the capstone of Maen Ketti, in Gower.

The Irish, like their neighbours, venerated their lithic temples. They not only anointed them, as may be still seen done to the sacred cone in India, but, down to a late period, they poured water on their sacred surface that the draught might cure their
diseases. Molly Grime, a rude stone figure, kept in Glentham church, was annually washed with water from Newell well; so was the wooden image of St. Fumac washed in water from a holy well near Keith. Babies were sprinkled at Cairns in Western or South Scotland down to the seventeenth century. Some stones were kissed by the faithful, like the Druid’s Stone in front of Chartres Cathedral, once carefully kept in the crypt.

The Cloch-Lobhirais, of Waterford, had a great reputation for deciding difficult cases. But this virtue was lost under circumstances thus narrated—"But the Good Stone, which appears to have been a remnant of the golden age, was finally so horrified at the ingenuity of a wicked woman in defending her character, that it trembled with horror and split in twain." It seems to have been as sensible and sensitive as were those Pillar-stones near Cork, which, as devoutly attested, being carried off to serve some vulgar building purposes, took the opportunity of nightly shades to retreat to their old quarters. At last, in vexation, the builder shot them into the water. After waiting the departure of their sacrilegious captors, they mysteriously glided back to their former standing-place.

These were not the only Holy stones endowed with sense and motion. At the command of a Saint, they have safely borne over bays and streams one standing upon them, the stone at the grave of St. Declan was seen to float over the sea with his bell, his vestments, and his candle. St. Senan, sitting on a stone, was carefully lifted with it by angels to the top of a hill.

St. Patrick is connected with the cromlech of Fintona, the so-called Giant’s Grave. To rebuke one sceptical at to the Resurrection, he is said to have struck the gravel with his Staff of Jesus, when the giant rose from the dead thankful for a temporary respite from the pains of hell. After learning he had been swineherd to
King Laogaire, the Saint recommended him to be baptized. To this rite, he submitted. He then lay down in his grave in peace secure against further torment. Stories of giants were common of old. Jocelin speaks of Fionn Mac Con as one of them, and Ossian's heroes were often gigantic. Boetius records Fionn as being fifteen cubits high. But St. Patrick's giant was represented by one bard as one hundred and twenty feet in length. The twelve stones of Usnech were said to have been cursed by the Saint, so that they could not be built into any structure.

In the cromlech on the Walsh Hills, Fin-mac-coil was said to have kept his celebrated hounds. A cromlech was a Bethel, or house of God. St. Declan's Stone, Waterford, had a hole through which people crawled for the cure of maladies. The Pillar Stone of Fir Breige had the gift of prophecy, and was duly consulted by those who had lost their cattle. One Pillar Stone, much frequent in pagan times, split with a great crash after a discourse on the better faith, when out leaped a cat--doubtless a black one.

The Rock of Cashel--for ages a consecrated place--once known as St. Patrick's Stone. Cashel was said to have been the place where angels were waiting for the Saint's arrival in Erin. The tooth of the Saint was a venerated piece of sandstone, which somewhat resembled a tooth in shape; possibly as much as Guatama's footstep on Adam's Peak in Ceylon.

St. Columba, likewise, among the Hebrides, had a reputation for stones. There is his Red Stone and his Blue Egg Stone in Skye. His Blue Stone of Glen Columkillo, his stony beds of penitence and his Lingam Stones, worked miracles. He was born on a stone; he was sustained in famine by sucking meal from the Holy Stone of Moel-blatha.
There are Pillar Stones, indicating Phallic origin. That on the Tara Hill was popularly known as Bod Thearghais, with special reference to generative force. Several of them bore names connecting them with the Tuatha; as the Cairtedhe Catha Thuatha de Danann, their pillar stone of battle. The Ship Temple of Mayo was Leabha na Fathac, the Giant's Bed.

The Clochoer, or gold stone, at Oriel, Monaghan County, spoke like an oracle. So did the Lia Fail, the Ophite Stones of old, the anointed Betyles of Sanchoniathon. It is even reported of Eusebius, that he carried such in his bosom to get fresh oracles from them. Mousseaux calls some mad stones. Pliny notices moving stones. The old Irish had their rumbling stones. The Celtic Clacha-brath, or judgment stones, must have been gifted with sounding power. Yet La Vega has a simple way of accounting for these reverential objects, as--"the demons worked on them." One may credit priests with hypnotic power, or we may think, with a writer, that without magic there could have been no speaking stones.

Some holy stones had curious histories. The hallowed Pillow stone of St. Bute had been flung into the brain of Conchobar mac Nesse, where it stayed seven years, but fell out one Good Friday. Another stone was mentioned, in the Book of Leinster, as causing the death of an old woman, 150 years old, who, having been brought into a great plain, was so charmed with the sight, that she would never go back to her mountains, preferring death there by knocking her old head upon the stone.

Elf-shots--the stone arrow-heads of their ancestors--were long regarded with reverence. As with Western Islanders, they served as charms for the Irish protecting the wearer against the spiritual discharges of elf-shots from malignant enemies. They were the arrows of fairies. They ought not to be brought into a house. In 1713, Llwyd found this superstition existing in the west.
Martin speaks of finding at Inniskea a rude-looking stone kept wrapped up in flannel, and only in the charge of an old woman, as formerly with a pagan priestess. On stormy day, it might be brought out, with certain magical observances, in the confident expectation of bringing a ship on shore, for the benefit of the wreck-loving Islanders. The Neevougi, as the stone was called, did service in calming the sea when the men went out fishing. It was equally efficacious in sickness, when certain charms were muttered over the stone. Gomme esteems "stone worship as opposed to the general basis of Aryan culture." The unshapely stones worshipped in India belong to non-Aryan tribes.

The story told by a Welsh visitor into Ireland, seven hundred years ago, preserves an Irish tradition of stones. There was in Ireland, in ancient times, a pile of stones, worthy of admiration, called the Giants' Dance, because giants from the remotest parts of Africa brought them into Ireland. Those stones, according to the British story, Aurelius Ambrosius, King of the Britons, procured Merlin, by supernatural means, to bring from Ireland into Britain.

Forbes Leslie conceives that many figures represented on stones "are disconnected from any Christian symbol." Certainly, the Comb shape, so common upon inscribed stones, may be viewed on Indo-Scythian coins. The zigzag was a Gnostic sign. The double disc and sceptre symbol may refer to solar worship, as that of the crescent and scepter to lunar worship.

The most wonderful and deeply reverenced Irish stone was the Fâl, by some strangely enough identified with the Coronation Stone brought by King Edward from Scotland to Westminster Abbey. Arbois de Jubainville gives this account of it -- Conn Cetchathach, the chief king of Ireland, in the second century, accidentally put his foot on a magical stone called Fâl, which had been brought to Ireland by the Tuatha de
Danann. It cried out, so that all in Tara heard it. Three Druids present were asked what the cry meant, where the stone came from, whither it would go, and who had brought it to Tara? They asked a delay of fifty-three days, when they answered all but the first question. They could only say that the stone had prophesied. The number of its cries was the number of the kings of the royal race, but the Druids could not tell their names. Lug then appeared to them, took Conn to his palace, and prophesied to him the length of his reign, and the names of his successors. Thus, a number of such legends are attached to the Fal stone.

As late as 1649, Commissioners were appointed by the Scottish General Assembly to dispel the popular superstitions respecting sacred stones. In Ireland, the superstitious observances had a longer possession of people's minds. Thus, many historians have noticed the fact that the ancient practice of consecrating pagan antiquities to religious purposes has been continued to modern times.

This study would help the researcher how these dominant cults of Celtic origin, water, tree, and stone are kept alive in the poems of Yeats, Heaney and Muldoon though each poet varies in using these elements. To the Irish, who belongs to an island, water is the key source of consciousness. It is quite natural that a poet belonging to such landscape would unconsciously be fascinated towards the natural resources abundantly available in his native land. In ancient Tamil Literature of India, a poetic theory by name, ‘Thinai’, theorized a relational connection between nature space and sources of poetry. The landscape decides the tone and the meaning of the poem. Thus, Thinai Poetics has been used as a critical tool to study the traditional as well as cultural features found in the Irish poetry. A kind of cultural biology that ensures the continuum of some dominant behavioural patterns has been named as Meme Theory, a term first used by Richard Dawkins, in 1976; the interpretation on religion and culture among a particular group of humanity could be termed as meme.
In the case of Ireland the identification of meme is possible in the religious observance of Catholic community, which are not observed by the other Catholic community of the rest of the world. Here lies what one could call ‘identity meme’ or ‘Irish meme complex’. It is not entirely catholic; it is exclusively Irish. This could be read in faith practice demonstrated by rituals of worship or other life practices accepted as rituals. This researcher has used the Meme Theory to read the traditional roots of the three modern poets.

The poetry collections mentioned below have been used as primary sources for the study:


About thirty poems of each poet have been chosen for analysis of the major symbols like, water, tree and stone; though they are widely used by the poets of the world, irrespective of time, nation, religion and ethnicity, this study attempts to relate them to the unique consciousness of Irish tradition.

This dissertation has been structured as follows:

Part – I Introduction

Chapter – 1 Tracing Irish History

Chapter – 2 Figuring out Irish Literary Tradition

Part – II Water, Tree and Stone Symbols in the poems of Modern Irish Poets

Chapter – 3 W.B. Yeats : Revival of Tradition

Chapter – 4 Seamus Heaney: Resistance and Continuity

Chapter – 5 Paul Muldoon: Tradition and Transition
Apart from this introductory part, this thesis is structured into two perspective analyses. And, the first one is being an exclusive analysis of water, stone, and tree symbols and the next is a note on Irish poetics. The part II is devoted to the consolidation of tradition beginning with W.B.Yeats, the conflicting forces of resistance and continuity that defines Seamus Heaney’s poetry and the blossoming of transition without sacrificing the tradition in the case of Paul Muldoon. This has been analyzed in the chapters, three, four and five respectively. The part III attempts to theorize the poetic art of the chosen poets emanating from the landscape tradition. It has been attempted in the chapters six and seven, the former trying to place Irish poetry in the context of Meme theory, and the latter attempts to make a universal comparison with thinai poetics of ancient Indian Tamil literature. The Meme theory and thinai poetics provide a longer perception of well-anchored voyage poetry and landscape tradition in Ireland. The Fourth Part is a conclusion that the Irish poetry tradition is notably based on landscape tradition, and the essential markers are available in the three-tier symbolism, and that it has been substantiated with the analysis of select poems of the three poets.

The thesis seeks a paradigm of tradition in the use of water, tree and stone rendered in the poems of Yeats, Heaney and Paul Muldoon. These symbols are studied as archetypal elements on the model that Frye has suggested. This archetypal pattern is associated with creation, which is built on some account of how the cosmos,
nature and humankind were brought into the existence by some supernatural beings. The study of these archetypes enables this researcher to illuminate the primitive culture of Ireland and to explain the way that Irish poetry is informed by pre-literary categories such as rituals, myths and folktale. According to Frye, archetype is an “element of one’s literary experience” (365). He finds the function of four seasons as archetypal seasonal cycle combining man and nature. Eliot introduces Fire sermon in *The Wasteland*, as ritual linked with fertility myth. Margaret Lawrence’s *The Stone Angel* surveys the nature archetype of Canadian landscape. Patrick White’s *Voss* is an attempt to cross the Australian desert that represents isolation, quest, agony and tragedy of man. Thus, the symbols found in the poets chosen for study figure out the ethnic and cultural make up of the poets. Hence, this study is done through images, metaphors and elemental archetypes to point out how the collective unconsciousness of each poet involves in promoting the value of tradition and in identifying the ethnicity and religion of Ireland.

The key terms discussed in the thesis are Irish Tradition, Memeplex Theory and Tamil Thinai Poetics.

The next chapter is the continuation of this introduction part and gives an account of the literary history of Ireland which may fairly deals with the themes related to Celtic religion, social customs, seafaring life, mythical elements and voyages, ethnicity and resistance against various invasions.
Chapter 1

Notes and References

Books and Nonperiodical Publications


Electronic Sources


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