Social Realism and Escapism: The Land of Heart’s Desire

This chapter discusses one of the early plays of W.B. Yeats, The Land of Heart’s Desire. The play has been interpreted so far in terms of a tension in the mind of its protagonist Mary Bruin to choose between the subjective freedom of fairyland and the objective self-denial of Christianity. The chapter contradicts such a simplistic interpretation of the play. It grounds the issues of the play in the matrix of cultural contradictions within Ireland. The chapter brings out deeper rebellious aspects of the cultural politics submerged under this ritualistic drama of materialistic existence and the land of fairies.

Yeats plays depict a tension between realism and escapism. This tension appears to be highly pronounced in The Land of Heart’s Desire. The play has not been interpreted in the terms of its relevance of its form and technique to sociopolitical and national issues of Ireland. The chapter posits the view that the writer’s technique of merging the opposite modes, the realistic and the mystic reflects the dialectical interaction of the colonizer and the colonized in Ireland. The main assumption in the chapter is that literature is a social product arising like every cultural artifact out of the dialectical interaction between a particular historical consciousness and social reality.

The Lukacian theory of Realism may be applied to interpret Yeats’s Plays. George Lukacs in Studies in European Realism states:

The true artistic totality of a work depends on the completeness of the picture of the essential social factors that determine the world depicted. Hence it can be based only on the author’s own intensive experience of the social process. Such
experience can uncover the essential social factors and make the artistic presentation centre around them freely and naturally (Lukacs, 147-184).

The inner truth of the great realists rest on the fact that that they arise from life itself, that their artistic characteristics are reflection of the social structure of life lived by the artist himself. Realist literature reflects human being in action. The more vigorously the social and individual character of men finds expression in the external circumstances, their emotions and their deeds, the greater the scope of realistic presentation.

Historical and social conflicts do not appear as simple class conflicts in literary works. They may appear in a transmuted form in personal and domestic situation which apparently do not have a social determining factor, Raymond Williams puts this as:

But social experience, just because it is social does not have to appear in any way exclusively in these overt public forms. In its very quality as social reality, it penetrates, is already at the roots of a relationship of every kind. We need not look into, a transforming history for direct public, historical event and response when there is real dislocation, it does not have to appear in a strife or breaking. It can appear as radically and as authentically in what is apparently, what is actually personal or family experience (Williams, 65).

In this chapter realism is taken as an approach to art which depicts everyday life in its various facets, including the most miserable poor and dull, which situates characters in a social and for the most part, historical setting, but does not deprive them of their personalities, which brings a critical light to bear on the life and society it portrays.
The Land of Heart’s Desire on a surface level dramatizes the escape of the main protagonist Mary Bruin into mysticism of the fairy world. It has all the ostentations of a ritualistic music, dance and nature celebration. It is a play about a family with strong Christian beliefs. The Scene is laid in the Barony of Kilmacowen, in the County of Sligo, and at a remote time. The action of the play is not so believable than that of the other play like The Countess Cathleen, but it is certainly more straightforward in outline and more tightly constructed. The central figure Mary Bruin is seen at a point of momentous decision between the contradictions of the real and the mystic. The action of the play is totally within the folk tradition. Unlike Cathleen, Mary is introspective, emotional woman who is instinctively dissatisfied by the kind of life she leads. Her imagination is fired by the mystic reading when she reads of the Princess Edain of the Fairyland. Mary reads:

How a Princess Edane,
A daughter of a King of Ireland, heard
A voice singing on a May Eve like this,s
And followed half awake and half asleep,
Until she came into the Land of Faery,
Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue.
And she is still there, busied with a dance
Deep in the dewy shadow of a wood,
Or where stars walk upon a mountain-top. (W.B. Yeats The Land of Heart’s Desire, Project Guttenberg)
Fed up with a life of responsibilities, restrictions and materialistic routine, Mary is infatuated by the idealistic freedom in the mystic escape and for that abandons her family. Mary’s Husband, Shawn and Father Hart, a priest in the family, try to stop Mary in lieu of her commitment towards the family. But all their efforts become useless.

The play marks an important development in Yeats’s play writing, both in content and form. It swings between the poles of realism and mystic pantheism evoking a dialectics characteristic of Yeats’s style. The critics have overlooked the relationship between the technique and the content of Yeats’s plays. They have attributed these tendencies in Yeats’s plays to his upbringing in the Anglo-Irish community of Ireland in Sligo. A new dimension to the play may be found in the argument that Yeats’s technique is integral to the dramatic form that evolved with him. The critics have paid scant attention to important socio-cultural development in the time of Irish literary revival from 1870’s to1900s. It was a revival of the old folk culture; folklore, dance and music against the hegemony of England in Ireland. The ritualistic folk performances in the plays were a part of a conscious counter-culture strategy of Yeats. This shows that Yeats was aware of these cultural currents and The Land of Heart’s Desire was a kind of counter discourse against the English hegemony. A brief background of the Irish Revival is necessary to authenticate the above argument. Yeats’s playwriting in 1890’s and 1900’s coincides with the Irish socio-cultural, political as well as literary revival. The revival touches all aspects and individuals of the nation. As the Irish culture and folklore gripped the majority of the people it influenced Yeats as well. Yeats himself played a lead role in the Irish literary revival of drama. The general revival of drama at the end of the nineteenth century was the result of something more than the usual conjunction of talent, intellectual climate, and social and economic factors. It came into existence by the determination of amateurs who could realize that drama was unaware of the great changes
in men and things the century had witnessed. In Britain, the seeds of this revival were scattered in London, Glasgow, Manchester, and most effectively, in Dublin. Although Ireland had given to the English theatre some of its most distinguished playwrights such as Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, the theatre in Ireland had never been more than a poor relation of the English theatre. In 1898, under the leadership of Yeats, Lady Augusta Gregory and Edward Martyn, an attempt was made to establish an Irish Literary Theatre. In his lecture delivered to the Royal Academy of Sweden on receiving the Nobel Prize, Yeats chose as his theme "the Irish Dramatic Movement" because he believed that the English committees would never have sent his name if he had written no plays, no dramatic criticism, or if his lyric poetry had not a quality of speech practised upon the stage. About the Irish Dramatic Movement, he said that the great mass of the Irish people were accustomed to political speeches and read little, so from the very start they had feeling that they needed a theatre of their own. It was not, however until he met in 1896 Lady Gregory, a member of an old Galway family, that such a theatre had become possible (Yrd. Doç. Dr. Belgin ELBR, Importance of the Irish Dramatic Movement).

The Irish Revival or renaissance was perceived in England and even as lying outside the dominant paradigm. The intellectual generation of the time however embraced the revival as an honest, direct and Irish people’s alternative to the ‘establishment culture’. In its counter cultural construction, the Irish revival seemed unbelievably exotic and romantic as well. It was already the voice of an alienated and oppressed people, misunderstood and dined by the dominant-culture for the Irish obsessively-compulsively ambivalent about anything English, the Irish Revival provided the opportunity to have it both ways: to reject the British imperialism and, at the same time, to tap into the cultural potency by embracing a form that was indigenous. The result was a wide adoption of the Irish Nationalistic Movement. The people got so excited with
the revival movement that they perhaps failed to perceive the cultural dialectics which this revival aimed to introduce into the Irish society. The chapter attempts to bring out this cultural dialectics through the text of the play.

While writing the *The Land of Heart's Desire* Yeats was concerned about the Irish people. He had observed that the Irish public was infatuated towards the ordinary fantasy, the dream like quality that the colonial world supplied. The problem was that the Irish consciousness was left out of the dream, the natives, the peasants, the common people, the native culture was conveniently excluded from the ‘turned-on’ existence. Only those with sufficient knowledge and know-how of the socio-cultural scenario were the part of the revival. As a nationalist Yeats saw an over-indulgence of the nation in the short-sighted values, those of the realist world. There was he knew, faulty national consciousness that did not encompass the broad view of nationality and nativity. The vision of the people may be emotionally charged but did not encompass a broad view of nationalism. It did not, for example grow out of a fundamental issue like racism or suppression. The national renovation fulfilled a useful purpose in disrupting English complacency, in agitating generally for peace and for freer society, but instead of proceeding to a second phase of revolution, where effective, long term work might have been done, the people and intelligentsia stopped short. Yeats believed that since most of the people lacked sufficient knowledge of their own or the other’s past, history was dead to them and therefore the vital perspectives were missing. This evolves in the play as a confrontation of the race and missing understanding of the past where a character Father Hart with Christian belief takes the fairy child (a prominent symbol of the Irish past) as something evil. Father Hart Says:
Colleen, they are the children of the fiend,
And they have power until the end of Time,
When God shall fight with them a great pitched battle
And hack them into pieces. (W.B. Yeats. *The Land of Heart’s Desire*, project Guttenberg)

The historical dependence of Ireland can be understood in the terms of Linda Hutcheon. Linda Hutcheon acknowledges the Canadian historical dependence on the British empire and the effects of an imminent cultural and economic American neo-colonialism. She argues that the writings of immigrant settlers is counter discursive strategies (172). Same is the case of Yeats in Ireland. Akin to Hutcheon’s view is Abdul Jan Mohammd’s Views in his essay “The Economy Of Manichean Allegory, the function of Racial Difference in Colonialist litearature”, wherein he identifies two phases of colonialism, dominant and hegemonic. The dominant phase starts with the establishment of a colony and ends at its independence. Here, the natives are under direct control of the colonizer. During this phase, the consent of the native is passive and direct. The native is not subjugated, though his land is taken away. His culture also remains fairly integrated because the colonizer labels the native and his culture as ‘savage’. However in the hegemonic phase the native accepts a version of the colonizer’s culture, his system of values, attitudes, morality, institutions and also his mode of productions. By the time a colony is independent, the colonized has internalized all the mores, values, educational institutions, laws, and the judicial systems of the colonizer. Thus a colonizer exploits the colonized psychologically by controlling his mind through a system of education which alienates him from his own culture and language.

The dialogues of Father Hart, Bridget, and Mary Bruin and Shawn:
FATHER HART. The Cross will keep all evil from the house
While it hangs there.

…

BRIDGET. You've given milk and fire
Upon the unluckiest night of the year and brought,
For all you know, evil upon the house.

…

MARY. Come, faeries, take me out of this dull house!
Let me have all the freedom I have lost;
Work when I will and idle when I will!
Faeries, come take me out of this dull world,
For I would ride with you upon the wind,
Run on the top of the dishevelled tide,
And dance upon the mountains like a flame.

FATHER HART. You cannot know the meaning of your words.

MARY. Father, I am right weary of four tongues:
A tongue that is too crafty and too wise,
A tongue that is too godly and too grave,
A tongue that is more bitter than the tide,
And a kind tongue too full of drowsy love,
Of drowsy love and my captivity.
(SHAWN BRUIN leads her to a seat at the left of the door.)

SHAWN. Do not blame me; I often lie awake
Thinking that all things trouble your bright head.
How beautiful it is—your broad pale forehead
Under a cloudy blossoming of hair!
Sit down beside me here—these are too old,
And have forgotten they were ever young.

MARY. O, you are the great door-post of this house,
And I the branch of blessed quicken wood,
And if I could I'd hang upon the post,
Till I had brought good luck into the house…

(W.B. Yeats. *The Land of Heart’s Desire*)

The dialogues sound like a romantic musing over the life. But the dialogues of Mary Bruin express a sense of entrapment. The modern colonial establishment-culture in the form of Father Hart and Bridget seems to be encroaching upon the individuality of Mary Bruin. Mary yearns for a natural, free existence which the colonial culture denies her. Yeats uses a linguistic technique to reveal lack of meaning in the prevailing existence. The desire for a free primitive life symbolically points to the individual’s search for heritage. The subtext of the dialogue re-enacts the historical process of the imperial oppression and interference into the cultures and territory of the native people of Ireland.
The ‘Cross’ in Father Hart’s speech refers to be as the colonizer’s symbol and the ‘fairy’ as the counterpart of Satan who tempts, cheats, corrupts and kills.

Yeats was born in Dublin but the family moved between London, Dublin and Sligo, and Sligo must have been where Yeats heard first what was later to influence his whole art and literature: was the fairy tales of the ordinary Irish people. His mother told him of leprechauns and goblins, and later he heard the country people talk of their beliefs and experiences with the "little people." A world where even the grown-ups believe in fairy tales must be a child's wonderland. "The place that really influenced my life most was Sligo," he wrote years later. (Richard Elman 7).

In his autobiographical sketches, Yeats in the book, Selected Criticism and Prose explains how he gathered some of the stories that later became his collections, or were used as foundations for his own literary works:

"We had a regular servant, a fisherman ... (My mother) and the fisherman's wife would tell each other stories that Homer might have told, pleased with any moment of sudden intensity and laughing together over any point of satire. There is an essay called Village Ghosts in my Celtic Twilight which is but a report of one such afternoon, and many a fine tale has been lost because it had not occurred to me soon enough to keep notes." (279)

This was in Howth, near Dublin. Yeats not only kept notes of the stories which his mother and the fisherman's wife told each other, but also went to the country to collect stories in a more active way:
Yes, he noticed, if you are a stranger, you will not readily get ghost and fairy legends, even in a western village. You must go adroitly to work, and make friends with the children and the old men, with those who have not felt the pressure of mere daylight existence, and those with whom it is growing less, and will have altogether taken itself off one of these days. The old women are most learned, but will not so readily be got to talk, for the fairies are very secretive, and much resent being talked of; and are there not many stories of old women who were nearly pinched into their graves or numbed with fairy blasts?" (415)

His experiences with living traditions led Yeats to postulate that "every Celt is a visionary without scratching." (415). Thus Yeats’s claimed firsthand experiences find their way into the chapter.

‘Fairy’ is however a symbol that has been understood and interpreted variedly. The image of the fairy changed greatly throughout the nineteenth century; in fact, the fairy of popular culture hails from the Victorian era. She is a dainty beauty that possesses the wings of a butterfly. However, the fairies of legend were actually quite different. The fairies of legend were not winged creatures at all. But, if not, what were they? W.B. Yeats’s *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888) offers an explanation:

The Irish word for fairy is sheehogue [sidheóg], a diminutive of “shee” in banshee. Fairies are deenee shee [daoine sidhe] (fairy people). Who are they? “Fallen angels who were not good enough to be saved, nor bad enough to be lost,” say the peasantry. “The gods of the earth,” says the Book of Armagh. “The gods of pagan Ireland,” say the Irish antiquarians, “the Tuatha De Dan n, who, when
Yeats uses fairies as well as fairy architecture to establish the origins of Ireland and to recreate Ireland as an original entity. All authors writing about the life in the country can be expected to deal with goblins, fairies and banshees, as well as those interested in the resurrection of the old myths (which are mainly the authors of the Irish Renaissance, Yeats, Lady Gregory and AE).

According to James Bonwick in *Irish Druids and Old Irish Religions* (1894), St. Patrick is said to have “burnt the one hundred and eighty books of the druids”; thus, destroying the superstitious belief in Druidism (14). Before Patrick, the people of Erin “adored things of Faery”; (135) however, Patrick reputedly “blessed the ground, and it swallowed up the Druids” (27). So, like the Tuatha De Danaan, the Druids would exit under the earth to inhabit another world. Additionally, St. Patrick is most famously known for his initiative in casting out the snakes from Ireland. At present, the limestone coast which had “once been given up to sexual worship,” has been worn “into shapes often tortuous or serpentine.” If tradition is to be believed, “this coast is the site in which St. Patrick “cast the snakes out of Ireland into the sea; that is to say, in other words, that Christianity extirpated the libidinous deities” (129).

The position of Father Hart in the play *The Land of Heart’s Desire* can be realized same as to that of St. Patrick establishing the imperial dominance over the aboriginal. The central relationship in the play is not between Father Hart and the fairies, but in fact between Mary Bruin and the Fairy Child. Under the influence of this relationship with the Fairy Child, Mary develops a desire for the fairyland. The family members are well aware of the consequences to follow and try every way to stop her, but Mary is hardly bothered and her desire to escape to the fairyland keeping on increasing. But the subtext of this motif points towards a larger issue.
Mary’s escapism exposes the ambivalence in the attitude of the family towards the native mysticism. The surrogate culture with which the colonial society replaces the native does not satisfy and cares enough, who like welfare agents, are contemptuous of the people they assist, want to keep them as subservient. All the false guardianship is more concerned with rules than the people and their advice is always to conform the others. Father Hart wants Mary Bruin to restrict herself from the Fairy Child and her temptation.

The fairy song in the play *The Land of Heart’s Desire* in the form of an anonymous voice has a call for the escape:

The Voice: The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
And the lonely of heart is withered away.
While the faeries dance in a place apart,
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air
For they hear the wind laugh and murmur and sing
Of a land where even the old are fair,
And even the wise are merry of tongue
But I heard a reed of Coolaney say,
When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung
The lonely of heart is withered away. (W.B. Yeats. *The Land of Heart’s Desire*)

And when the Fairy child enters into the house, she gradually possesses the house with her ritualistic dance but at the same time resists to the ‘Cross’ kept in the room. This colonial-native
confrontation emerges very clearly from the dialogues between The Child, Maurteen and Father Hart:

**THE CHILD.** Put on my shoes, old mother.

Now I would like to dance now I have eaten,

The reeds are dancing by Coolaney lake,

And I would like to dance until the reeds

And the white waves have danced themselves asleep.

(BRIDGET puts on the shoes, and the CHILD is about to dance, but suddenly sees the crucifix and shrieks and covers her eyes.)

What is that ugly thing on the black cross?

**FATHER HART.** You cannot know how naughty your words are!

That is our Blessed Lord.

**THE CHILD.** Hide it away,

**BRIDGET.** I have begun to be afraid again.

**THE CHILD.** Hide it away!

**MAURTEEN.** That would be wickedness!

**BRIDGET.** That would be sacrilege!
THE CHILD. The tortured thing

    Hide it away!

MAURTEEN. Her parents are to blame.

FATHER HART. That is the image of the Son of God.

THE CHILD (caressing him) Hide it away, hide it away!

MAURTEEN. No, no.

FATHER HART. Because you are so young and like a bird,

    That must take fright at every stir of the leaves,

    I will go take it down.

THE CHILD. Hide it away!

    And cover it out of sight and out of mind!

(FATHER HART takes crucifix from wall and carries it towards inner room.)

FATHER HART. Since you have come into this barony,

    I will instruct you in our blessed faith

    And being so keen witted you'll soon learn.

(To the others.)
We must be tender to all budding things,

Our Maker let no thought of Calvary

Trouble the morning stars in their first song.

(Puts crucifix in inner room.)

THE CHILD. Here is level ground for dancing; I will dance.

(Sings.)

"The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
And the lonely of heart is withered away."

(She dances.)

MARY (to SHAWN). just now when she came near I thought I heard

Other small steps beating upon the floor,
And a faint music blowing in the wind,
Invisible pipes giving her feet the tune.

SHAWN. I heard no steps but hers.

MARY. I hear them now,
The unholy powers are dancing in the house.
MAURTEEN. Come over here, and if you promise me
Not to talk wickedly of holy things
I will give you something.

(W.B. Yeats. *The Land of Heart’s Desire*)

Till this time in the play, the confrontation is not so violent. But very soon it turns volatile. Its only hereafter that the real identity of the Child as fairy is realized, which shakes the entire family. The following dialogues from the play make it clear:

THE CHILD. Come, tell me, do you love me?

MAURTEEN. Yes, I love you.

THE CHILD. Ah, but you love this fireside. Do you love me?

FATHER HART. When the Almighty puts so great a share
Of His own ageless youth into a creature,
To look is but to love.

THE CHILD. But you love Him?

BRIDGET. She is blaspheming.

THE CHILD. And do you love me too

MARY. I do not know.
THE CHILD. You love that young man there,
Yet I could make you ride upon the winds,
Run on the top of the dishevelled tide,
And dance upon the mountains like a flame.

MARY. Queen of Angels and kind saints defend us!
Some dreadful thing will happen. A while ago
She took away the blessed quicken wood.

FATHER HART. You fear because of her unmeasured prattle;
She knows no better. Child, how old are you?

THE CHILD. When winter sleep is abroad my hair grows thin,
My feet unsteady. When the leaves awaken
My mother carries me in her golden arms;
I'll soon put on my womanhood and marry
The spirits of wood and water, but who can tell
When I was born for the first time? I think
I am much older than the eagle cock
That blinks and blinks on Ballygawley Hill,
And he is the oldest thing under the moon.

FATHER HART. O she is of the faery people.
THE CHILD. One called,
I sent my messengers for milk and fire,
She called again and after that I came.

(All except SHAWN and MARY BRUIN gather behind the priest for protection.)

SHAWN (rising) Though you have made all these obedient,
You have not charmed my sight and won from me
A wish or gift to make you powerful;
I'll turn you from the house.

FATHER HART. No, I will face her.

THE CHILD. Because you took away the crucifix
I am so mighty that there's none can pass,
Unless I will it, where my feet have danced
Or where I've whirled my finger-tops.

(SHAWN tries to approach her and cannot.)

MAURTEEN. Look, look!
There something stops him—look how he moves his hands
As though he rubbed them on a wall of glass!

FATHER HART. I will confront this mighty spirit alone.
Be not afraid, the Father is with us,
The Holy Martyrs and the Innocents,
The adoring Magi in their coats of mail,
And He who died and rose on the third day
And all the nine angelic hierarchies.

(The CHILD kneels upon the settle beside MARY and puts her arms about her.)

Cry, daughter, to the Angels and the Saints. (W.B. Yeats. *The Land of Heart’s Desire*)

The cultural confrontation present in the dialogues brings forth the colonial mindset of declaration of pagan as blasphemous. From the dialogues between Father Hart, Maurteen and the Fairy child it becomes very clear that with the performance of the ritualistic song and dance the colonial cultural consciousness is over-powered by the grown power of the colonized. And whatever follows here after is the celebration of the achievement of the colonized. At this stage Mary Bruin has a boggled mind. Like the others she too is afraid of the child and prays to the queen of the angels and saints for safety. At the same time she feels a transition in her unconscious. By the time her transition is over and her conscience revived, she escapes. This transition can be observed in the following dialogues:

THE CHILD. You shall go with me, newly-married bride,
And gaze upon a merrier multitude.
White-armed Nuala, Aengus of the Birds,
Feacra of the hurtling foam, and him
Who is the ruler of the Western Host,
Finvarra, and their Land of Heart's Desire,
Where beauty has no ebb, decay no flood,
But joy is wisdom, Time an endless song.
I kiss you and the world begins to fade.

SHAWN. Awake out of that trance—and cover up
Your eyes and ears.

FATHER HART. She must both look and listen,
For only the soul's choice can save her now.
Come over to me, daughter; stand beside me;
Think of this house and of your duties in it.

THE CHILD. Stay and come with me, newly-married bride,
For if you hear him you grow like the rest;
Bear children, cook, and bend above the churn,
And wrangle over butter, fowl, and eggs,
Until at last, grown old and bitter of tongue,
You're crouching there and shivering at the grave.

FATHER HART. Daughter, I point you out the way to Heaven.

THE CHILD. But I can lead you, newly-married bride,
Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue,
And where kind tongues bring no captivity;
For we are but obedient to the thoughts
That drift into the mind at a wink of the eye.

FATHER HART. . By the dear Name of the One crucified,
I bid you, Mary Bruin, come to me.

THE CHILD. I keep you in the name of your own heart.

FATHER HART. It is because I put away the crucifix
That I am nothing, and my power is nothing,
I'll bring it here again.

MAURTEEN (clinging to him) No!

BRIDGET. Do not leave us.

FATHER HART. O, let me go before it is too late;
It is my sin alone that brought it all.

(Singing outside.)

THE CHILD. I hear them sing, "Come, newly-married bride,
Come, to the woods and waters and pale lights."

MARY. I will go with you.

FATHER HART. She is lost, alas!
THE CHILD (standing by the door)
But clinging mortal hope must fall from you,
For we who ride the winds, run on the waves,
And dance upon the mountains are more light
Than dewdrops on the banner of the dawn.

MARY. O, take me with you.

SHAWN. Beloved, I will keep you.
I’ve more than words, I have these arms to hold you,
Nor all the faery host, do what they please,
Shall ever make me loosen you from these arms.

MARY. Dear face! Dear voice!

THE CHILD. Come, newly-married bride.

MARY. I always loved her world—and yet—and yet—

THE CHILD. White bird, white bird, come with me, little bird.

MARY. She calls me!

THE CHILD. Come with me, little bird.

(Distant dancing figures appear in the wood.)

MARY. I can hear songs and dancing.
SHAWN. Stay with me.

MARY. I think that I would stay—and yet—and yet—

THE CHILD. Come, little bird, with crest of gold.'

MARY (very soft,) And yet—

THE CHILD. Come, little bird with silver feet!

(MARY BRUIN dies, and the CHILD goes.) (W.B. Yeats. *The Land of Heart’s Desire*)

The result of the child’s confrontation with the colonial consciousness is that at the end Mary Bruin resists the colonial beliefs and leaves the colonial consciousness even at the cost of her life and escapes into the mystic consciousness of the colonized. Although the natives were excited by the exoticism and romanticism of the play but the generation perhaps failed to perceive the cultural dialectics, which this play aimed to introduced into the Irish. The chapter attempts to bring out this cultural dialectics through the text of the play.

While writing the *The Land of Heart’s Desire*, Yeats seems to have been most concerned about the younger generation. The protagonist of the play Mary Bruin becomes an epitome of cultural nationalism. Her escape into the fairy world is a clarion call to the natives to strongly assert and get back to their cultural roots. Mary’s reading about the fairy world and her subsequent escape into this world actually signifies a need of national and cultural consciousness on the part of the native. The play calls the natives to completely shun away their orthodox Christian complacencies in favour of a separate national identity.