ABSTRACT

AMANDA LEIGH BRYAN. “Decolonization and Mysticism in William Butler Yeats’s *The Celtic Twilight* and *The Secret Rose*” (Under the direction of Professor Mary Helen Thuente.)

Yeats’s responsibilities as one of Ireland’s most prominent artists commenced with his aspiration to make Ireland a nation. His writings incorporate the three phases of development that Frantz Fanon posited for all new nations. Although Fanon described his three phases of decolonization well after *The Celtic Twilight* and *The Secret Rose* were compiled, Fanon’s framework elucidates Yeats’s writings. Yeats’s use of mystical elements such as collective memory and folk beliefs embodies Fanon’s idea of the colonial binary. The negritude binary, as described by Fanon, allowed Ireland to rotate the lens of perception. By accepting mystical elements, Yeats demonstrated how Ireland’s alleged negative aspects, such as beliefs in magic and the supernatural, were to be admired not condemned. The English embodied reason and science; the Irish, consequently, welcomed the associations with the fairies and magic. However, in order to become a fully conscious nation, Ireland needed a broader understanding of human experiences and nationhood that surpassed binary opposition and moved towards Fanon’s third phase of decolonization: accepting the conflicting tensions and synergy that surround national and transnational consciousness. Yeats discovered the answer to achieving the final stage of decolonization in mysticism. His insights about folklore when coupled with imagination brought about many mystical revelations that linked Ireland to mysticism of global dimensions. Yeats’s insights moved Ireland beyond binaries and solely nationalistic thinking to encourage Ireland to develop a transnational consciousness, transcending post-colonial binaries to achieve nationhood. Fanon’s framework thus illuminates our understanding of Yeats’s use of mystical elements and Irish folklore to bring about Ireland’s true decolonization.